

**WHAT MOVES US:
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST THEOLOGY**

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Adults



BY REV. DR. THANDEKA

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This program and additional resources are available on the UUA.org web site at
www.uua.org/re/tapestry.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express deepest appreciation to Judith A. Frediani and Sarah Gibb Millspaugh for believing in this theological project from its very inception. Deepest gratitude to Gail Forsyth-Vail for her wise judgment and keen critiques as I worked through early drafts of this program. Very special thanksgiving goes to the Rev. Constance L. Grant, who read numerous early drafts of each of these workshops and offered advice, critique, editing, and ongoing collegial, unswerving support to steer this workshop series home to the hearts and minds of our beloved Unitarian Universalist community. Enormous thanks to librarians Laura K. Whitney, Michelle A. Gauthier, and Gloria J. Korsman at Harvard Divinity School Andover-Harvard Theological Library, whose graciousness and steadfast assistance enabled me to dive deeply into our Unitarian and Universalist theological history. And finally heartfelt praise to my partner, the Rev. Naomi King, whose steadfast belief in my work enabled me to begin and stay the course of this intense two-year theology project.

— Reverend Dr. Thandeka

PREFACE

As a longtime religious educator and a parent of three young adult Unitarian Universalists, I have long been aware of the need for faith development materials that provide a framework for deep and longtime Unitarian Universalists to engage in theological reflection, not as an intellectual exercise, but as a process of meaning-making that equips one for living in the world as a Unitarian Universalist person of faith.

And here it is: a program that explores the life experiences of both historic and contemporary Unitarian Universalist theologians, highlighting that which caused in them a change of heart, a new direction, new hope, and a deeper understanding of their own liberal faith. These workshops offer participants a chance to engage with and bring their personal experiences to bear on the very questions explored by each theologian in turn. The program offers a pathway for developing not only one's own personal theology but also one's deep understanding of the threads of our Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist theological heritage.

As a Tapestry of Faith curriculum for adults, What Moves Us weaves Unitarian Universalist values, Principles and Sources with four strands: spiritual development, ethical development, Unitarian Universalist identity development, and faith development:

Spiritual Development. In *Everyday Spiritual Practice*, Scott Alexander defines spirituality as our relationship with the Spirit of Life, however we understand it. Our spirituality is our deep, reflective and expressed response to the awe, wonder, joy, pain and grief of being alive. Tapestry of Faith programs seek to form children, youth, and adults who:

- Know they are lovable beings of infinite worth, imbued with powers of the soul and obligated to use their gifts, talents and potentials in the service of life
- Appreciate the value of spiritual practice as a means of deepening faith and integrating beliefs and values with everyday life.

Ethical Development. When we develop our ethics, we develop our moral values—our sense of what is right and wrong. We also enhance our ability to act on those values, overcoming oppressions and despair. Tapestry of Faith programs seek to form children, youth, and adults who:

- Realize they are moral agents, capable of making a difference in the lives of other people, challenging structures of social and political oppression and promoting the health and well-being of the planet
- Accept that they are responsible for the stewardship and creative transformation of their religious heritage and community of faith in the service of diversity, justice and compassion.

Unitarian Universalist Identity Development. Participation in a Unitarian Universalist congregation does not automatically create a Unitarian Universalist identity. Personal identification with Unitarian Universalism begins when individuals start to call themselves Unitarian Universalist and truly feel a part of a Unitarian Universalist congregation or community. Identity is strengthened as individuals discover and resonate with the stories, symbols and practices of Unitarian Universalism. Tapestry of Faith programs develop children, youth, and adults who:

- Affirm they are part of a Unitarian Universalist religious heritage and community of faith that has value and provides resources for living
- Recognize the need for community, affirming the importance of families, relationships and connections between and among generations
- Accept that they are responsible for the stewardship and creative transformation of their religious heritage and community of faith in the service of diversity, justice and compassion.

Faith Development. When we develop in faith, we develop our heads and our hearts as a transformative way of life. We become meaning-makers who stand on the side of love. Faith is about embracing the heart of life's transforming possibilities and growing in our sense of being at home in the universe as part of the interdependent web of life. Faith is practice of right relationship with others that inspires trust and care. While faith has aspects that are internal and personal, it is best supported and sustained in a community with shared symbols, stories, traditions and values. Unitarian Universalist faith development emphasizes each person's religious journey, each person's lifelong process of bringing head, heart and hands to seeking and knowing ultimate meaning as part of beloved religious community.

Each What Moves Us workshop weaves these strands together, to help participants grow in their identity and faith as Unitarian Universalists as they find the grounding to live out their values in the world. May these values come to life through your facilitation of these workshops, in collaboration with those who bring their stories, their spirits, their minds and their hearts in the process of engaging our theological heritage and making meaning for themselves, with others, and in the world as ongoing spiritual practice.

— Gail Forsyth-Vail, Unitarian Universalist Association Adult Programs Director

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THE PROGRAM

Almost universally among [Unitarian Universalists], personal experience is considered the most important source of religious conviction. — Engaging Our Theological Diversity: The May 2005 Commission on Appraisal Report of the Unitarian Universalist Association

When we say "That service was very moving," "I always love that song," "I cry whenever we," "I feel safe here," "My heart is stronger," or "I'm ready for what comes next," we know what moves us as Unitarian Universalists: personal experience. These comments and so many others demonstrate every week that our religious feelings and practices are changing and transforming us through direct personal experience as a major source of our Unitarian Universalist faith. Yet, we often stumble when trying to explain our Unitarian Universalist theology of personal experience to ourselves and to others. We falter when we try to explain how our Unitarian Universalist faith heals, saves, liberates, holds, and moves us to ethical action and compassion.

The What Moves Us program peels back the doctrine-rich theological language that can prevent us from affirming our faith experiences with one another and in the wider world. Through shared direct experiences and reflection exercises, readings and lessons, and ethical deliberations, What Moves Us creates an adult faith journey for Unitarian Universalists who want to preach and teach what they already experience but have not been able to articulate: the spiritual power of our faith.

What Moves Us consists of ten, 90-minute workshops that can be extended to two hours. The facilitator will begin each workshop with a simple story of a Unitarian, Universalist, or Unitarian Universalist forebear, naming the emotion—the change of heart—that moved them to new theological understanding in their liberal religious faith. The stories include:

- Physician George de Benneville's experience of boundless Divine Love that pulled him from a deep despair and led him to become one of the spiritual fathers of American Universalism.
- Puritan minister Charles Chauncy's response to the emotionalism of the Great Awakening, which led him to affirm the place of human reason in religious renewal, inadvertently sparking a new American liberal theological tradition.
- Universalist forebear Hosea Ballou's shift from dejection to happiness when he read, on his own, the book banned by his Baptist preacher father because it had turned his son into an apostate: *The Bible*.

- Unitarian forebear William Ellery Channing's celebration of human nature as divine, while at the same time engaging in a struggle to gain control and mastery of his own emotions, believing such struggle to be the route to moral perfection.
- Transcendentalist forebear Margaret Fuller's personal discovery of an uplifting religion of the heart that turned her into a liberal religious champion for human rights for all people, everywhere.
- Unitarian Universalist founding religious educator, theologian, and minister Sophia Lyon Fahs' personal experience of the emotional impulses that prompt people to be religious because these feelings are part of human nature "everywhere and apparently always."
- Beloved 20th-century Unitarian theologian James Luther Adams' encounter with Nazism which led to his understanding that our religious beliefs and our faith are reflected in our actions rather than in our words.
- Renowned theologian and minister Forrest Church's personal discovery of the liberating feelings of awe and humility that prompted to preach, teach, and write his Universalist Theology for the Twenty-First Century.
- Celebrated human rights activist, author, minister, and third-generation Unitarian William F. Schulz, whose own personal discovery of a steadfast "organic faith" that can teach all of us how to stay the course through anxious feelings, led him first as president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (1985-1993) and then as president of Amnesty International, USA from 1994-2006, and now as president and CEO of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, to practice his Unitarian Universalist ministry on the world stage.
- Respected contemporary theologian, writer, and teacher Thandeka, whose discovery that personal experience is the basis of our faith commitments has led her to advocate for building networks of care and compassion in our faith communities through her We Love Beyond Belief program (revthandeka.org) and the spiritual practice of small group ministry.

The selections represent some major theological streams of our faith tradition and display our racial, ethnic, gender, and class diversity.

Some congregations may wish to expand and extend this theology workshop series into a Small Group Ministry program. In Workshop 10, Thandeka, find

guidance for taking this next step in Leader Resource 2, Healing Community.

GOALS

This program will:

- Demonstrate how personal experiences become the primary source of our religious convictions as Unitarian Universalists, by exploring stories from the lives of key Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalists
- Explore why personal experience is foundational to our faith, by examining:
 - How our Unitarian Universalist theology flows out of our personal reflections on unexpected shifts in our emotional lives
 - How such acts of self-reflection, unrestricted by traditional religious doctrine or dogma, inform our ethical behavior
 - How our identities as Unitarian Universalists emerge in our own religious communities of care and compassion as our personal experiences of a change of heart and our doctrinal freedom to explore its meaning are transformed into our personal Unitarian Universalist convictions and their expression in faith-in-action initiatives to heal and transform the world.
- Equip adult learners to recognize and articulate their own responses to their own personal feelings and explore how these responses illuminate the foundations of their personal theology, ethical behavior, and Unitarian Universalist identity
- Support participants to systematically articulate their Unitarian Universalist theology of personal experience using a personal theology journal
- Affirm that the variety of theological streams within our liberal faith tradition simultaneously represents an amazing diversity and displays our unity as one religious people.

LEADERS

A religious professional or a layperson who strives for a deeper understanding of Unitarian Universalism should facilitate the What Moves Us workshops. We recommend a two-person team so workshop leaders can plan together and share facilitation responsibilities. These workshops require significant preparation time for both reading and reflection. Be sure facilitators understand the commitment they are making and plan to spend as much as three or four hours preparing to lead each session.

Facilitators with these strengths may be especially effective:

- Experience in facilitating a group process
- Ability to create and nurture a supportive, respectful, and safe community in the workshops and follow all congregational safe congregation guidelines and policies
- Time to prepare thoroughly for each workshop
- Readiness to take appropriate action in the event of unexpected cancellations
- Willingness to listen deeply and to let "answers" emerge from the group process
- Integrity, and the ability to maintain strong boundaries, especially during challenging conversations
- Commitment to Unitarian Universalist Principles and to the faith development components of this curriculum
- Respect for individuals, regardless of age, race, social class, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability, and willingness to modify workshops to support the full inclusion of all participants
- Willingness to support healthy group process by reinforcing ground rules politely and confidently
- Ability to model respect for the congregation, its mission, and its lay and professional leadership.

PARTICIPANTS

What Moves Us is designed for adult participants of all ages and stages of life, young adult through elder, who seek an in-depth faith development experience. Because of the small-group process, the ideal workshop size is nine to twelve participants, although the workshops can accommodate as few as six persons or as many as 20.

Participants will be invited to bring their own stories to the group and to share some of their own experiences in both small and large groups.

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

People with obvious and not-so-obvious disabilities need accommodation in order to participate fully. As a presenter, you may or may not be aware of a participant's need for accommodations. In addition to accommodating the accessibility needs of participants who request them, you are urged to follow these basic accessibility guidelines for every workshop activity.

- Prepare a few large print copies of all handouts.
- Write clearly and use large letters on newsprint. Use black or brown markers for maximum visibility (red and green are difficult for some to see).

- Make a printed copy of information you plan to post on newsprint, to give to any who request it.
- Face the group when you are speaking and urge others to do the same. Be aware of facial hair or hand gestures that may prevent or interfere with lip reading.
- In a large space or with a large group of people, use a microphone for presentations and for questions and answers. If a particular activity will likely make it difficult for speakers to face those who are listening (e.g., a fishbowl, forced choice or role play activity), obtain a portable microphone to pass from speaker to speaker.
- In a brainstorm activity, repeat clearly any word or phrase generated by the group in addition to writing it on newsprint.
- During small group work, position each group far enough from other groups to keep minimize noise interference.
- Keep aisles and doorways clear at all times during a workshop so that people with mobility impairments or immediate needs may exit the room easily.
- Offer a variety of seating options, e.g. straight chairs, soft chairs, chairs with arms, and chairs without arms so that participants may find seating that best accommodates their needs.
- When re-arranging furniture for small groups or other purposes, ensure clear pathways between groups.
- Enlist workshop participants in being vigilant about removing bags, books, coffee cups and other obstacles from pathways.
- Use the phrase, "Rise in body or spirit," rather than "Please stand."
- Use language that puts the person first, rather than the disability (e.g., "a person who uses a wheelchair," rather than "a wheelchair-user"; "a child with dyslexia," rather than "a dyslexic child; "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled.")
- Do not ask individuals to read aloud. Avoid read-alouds that require everyone in the group to automatically take a turn. Request volunteers or read the material yourself.
- Ask participants in advance about any food allergies. Add to your group covenant an agreement to avoid bringing problem foods for snacks or to always offer an alternate snack food.
- Ask participants in advance about any allergies to scents or perfumes. If participants have

allergies or sensitivities, invite members of the group to refrain from wearing perfumes and add this agreement to your covenant.

Find more guidance on the Unitarian Universalist Association website, including information about [accommodating people with specific accessibility needs](#).

Though focused on inclusion of children, *Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities* by Sally Patton (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004) can also help leaders of adult workshops.

In addition, some workshop activities suggest specific adaptation under the heading "Including All Participants."

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Each workshop provides a five-step structure.

First, participants hear a faith story disclosing what emotionally moved one of our spiritual forebears. Each story begins with the subject's own personal experience of an unexpected change in their emotional life (a change of heart) that required new, liberal theological reflections and insights in order to make sense of what the person felt and how the person should now act toward others.

Second, participants are invited to find a personal story that feels akin to the story just read. The salient element is an emotional similarity rather than a factual one. Participants share personal stories in three-person breakout groups.

Third, participants learn how the forebear's reflection on the emotional experience reshaped their theology and ethical action. The facilitator will lift up significant factors that shaped the forebear's new liberal theological lens.

Fourth, three-person breakout groups are invited to share personal reflections, using the forbearer's theological lens to test whether this particular perspective helps elucidate the participants' own personal experiences of faith and action as Unitarian Universalists today.

Finally, a portion of each workshop is devoted to personal reflections in the participant's theology journal. Participants are invited to write or sketch insights about their own theologies of personal experience after using the particular theological lens presented in the workshop. They are also invited to determine how their discoveries might change how they practice their liberal faith in word and deed.

Each What Moves Us workshop includes these elements:

Introduction

The Introduction summarizes the workshop content and offers guidance for implementing the workshop.

Goals

The goals provide the desired outcomes of the workshop. As you plan, apply your knowledge of your group, the time and space you have available, and your own strengths as co-leaders to determine how you will provide the content and achieve the goals of the workshop.

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives describe specific participant outcomes that the workshop activities are designed to facilitate. They describe what participants may learn and how they may change as a result of the experience of the workshop.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

This useful table lists the core workshop activities in order and provides an estimated time for completing each activity.

Workshop-at-a-Glance is offered as a road map. It is offered as a guide for planning the workshop. Keep in mind that many variables inform the actual completion time for an activity. Consider the time you will need to form small, breakout groups and reconvene.

Spiritual Preparation

Under the heading Spiritual Preparation, each workshop includes instructions for primary and secondary source background reading (included as Leader Resources) as well as guidance for personal theological reflection based on the reading. The readings, reflections, and other preparation are necessary in order that leaders are prepared to facilitate with spiritual confidence and intellectual depth.

Part of growing as a leader is learning to pay attention to the accessibility needs of workshop participants. Review Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, before each workshop.

Workshop Plan

The workshop plan presents every element of the workshop:

Welcoming and Entering. This section offers steps for welcoming participants as they arrive. It is recommended that you complete the preparations in the Welcoming and Entering section 15 minutes before a workshop's scheduled beginning.

Opening. Each workshop begins with a short opening ritual, including a welcome, a chalice-lighting, and a reading or song. Shape the opening ritual to suit your group and the culture and practices of your congregation.

Activities. Several activities form the core content of each workshop. To provide a coherent learning experience, present the activities in the sequence

suggested. Generally, workshops balance listening with talking, and include individual, small group and whole group activities.

Each activity presents the materials and preparation you will need, followed by a description of the activity:

- **Materials for Activity** — List of the supplies you will need.
- **Preparation for Activity** — "To do" list that specifies all the advance work you need to do for the activity, from copying handouts to writing questions on newsprint just before participants arrive. Look at the preparation tasks several days ahead to make sure you have ample time to obtain items and make special arrangements if needed.
- **Description of Activity** — Detailed directions for implementing the activity with your group. Read activity descriptions carefully during your planning process so you understand each activity and its purpose. Later, when you lead the group, use the description as a step-by-step, how-to manual.
- **Including All Participants** — Specific accessibility guidance for activities that have unusual physical circumstances or for which a reminder about inclusion may benefit leaders. Please consult Workshop 1, Leader Resource 1, Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters, for suggestions to meet some common accessibility needs.

Closing. Each workshop offers a closing ritual that signals the end of the group's time together. During the Closing, you might introduce the workshop's Taking It Home or Faith in Action ideas, invite participants to share briefly, and offer closing words. Like the Opening, the Closing grounds a shared learning experience in ritual. Shape your closing ritual to fit the group and the culture and practices of your congregation.

Leader Reflection and Planning. Find time as co-facilitators to discuss these questions after each workshop to strengthen your skills and your understanding of the group.

Resources. What Moves Us workshops conclude with all the materials you will need to lead the workshop:

Stories — Narratives from the lives and experiences of the highlighted theologians that illuminate and support the workshop activities.

Handouts — Sheets you will need to print out and copy for participants. Some handouts are for use in the workshop and others provide additional information for participants to take home and read.

Leader Resources — Background information to read and reflect on before the workshop.

LEADER GUIDELINES

It is very helpful for leaders to prepare by reading through and reflecting on Workshop 10, Thandeka, to gain understanding of the author's Unitarian Universalist Theology of Personal Experience. This theological frame determines the approach she uses to engage with the lives and work of those profiled in the workshops.

Leaders are urged to pay particular attention to their own intellectual, emotional, and spiritual preparation for leading the workshops. You may want to set aside time for personal study, prayer, meditation, and journaling AND you may choose to form a study group with others who are facilitating the program. Study groups might be formed through your UUA District or your professional organization. Consider a group that meets electronically as an alternative to face-to-face meetings.

At times, the workshops invite participants to explore emotional territory that some may find challenging. Be sure to maintain appropriate boundaries for yourself and the group while at the same time affirming each person's sharing of experiences. Some participants will need time to retrieve their own emotional stories and find their voices to share them; become comfortable with allowing silences. Respecting these silences is critical important here, as a spiritual practice. As theologian Nelle Morton would put it, allow the silence to hear the other into speech.

IMPLEMENTATION

The workshops of What Moves Us are designed to be used sequentially and completely. Yet, every congregation has its own culture and its own way of scheduling adult programming. If you choose to abbreviate the program by eliminating some workshops, we strongly recommend presenting the 20th and 21st century theologians using Workshops 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

BEFORE YOU START

Determine the calendar schedule for workshops.

Once you have determined your program, choose dates and times for all the workshops. Enter the information in the congregational calendar.

Invite participants. Make an effort to personally invite individuals to participate. If appropriate, also use flyers, announcements, and other publicity channels.

Choose a meeting space. The workshop space should be large enough to comfortably seat all participants and should have an easel or wall space for newsprint. Some activities call for a different arrangement of furniture, breakout spaces for small groups, or tables for working with art materials as part of the theology journal reflection time.

Arrange for childcare. If participants need childcare in order to participate, make arrangements to offer it.

PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

Unitarian Universalist Principles

There are seven Principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalist Sources

Unitarian Universalism draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions, which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

FACILITATOR FEEDBACK FORM

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Faith Development Office
Ministries and Faith Development
Unitarian Universalist Association
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1409
religiouseducation@uua.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)?

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

Did you enrich the program with any resources that you would recommend to others?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

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Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation or group:

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

WORKSHOP 1: GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE

INTRODUCTION

The spirit of Love will be intensified to Godly proportions when reciprocal love exists between the entire human race and each of its individual members. — George de Benneville

This workshop introduces George de Benneville's Liberal Theology of Boundless Universal Love. The workshop tests the relevance of his Universalist theological legacy for our religious lives as Unitarian Universalists today. De Benneville (BEN-eh-ville) was a medical doctor, preacher, teacher, writer, translator, friend of the refugee, advocate for Native American rights and the welfare of indentured servants, host to European nobility through his own aristocratic background, and friend to such men as Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush through his liberal foreground. Today, de Benneville is recognized as one of the spiritual forebears of the Universalist Church of America. For 20 years in France, the German States, and the Netherlands, and for more than 50 years in Pennsylvania, he preached the restoration of all human beings "without exception," building religious communities united by fellowship and action rather than by church doctrine and creed. "My happiness will be incomplete," he declared, "while one creature remains miserable." This declaration of heartfelt compassion for the human race was born from his inner life, tried by sorrow and despair, and transformed by his personal experience of the spirit of universal love. By example, he gave those around him courage to pay attention to their feelings, emotions, and sentiments. "Let us search ourselves well," he said, "and test thoroughly what is within us, whether it degrades or elevates us." The pathway to Universal Love begins here, he said. Can his life, words and his deeds help us discover and practice a Unitarian Universalist liberal theology of Universal Love relevant to our own lives today?

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read the [George de Benneville](#) entry in the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography.

Read the story, "Remarkable Passages (Excerpt)," which includes excerpts from George de Benneville's autobiographical text. As you read, note each occurrence of the words "heart," "inward," and "inner." You may wish to circle or highlight the words to help you focus on the place where de Benneville believes human

beings are regenerated by Divine Love: the human heart. Use these questions to help you understand the passages in the story. You may wish to write your responses in your theology journal.

- De Benneville recounts an experience where he initially felt anger toward some Moors, anger which was transformed as he became deeply moved rather than repelled by their behavior. Why did his emotions shift from negative to positive feelings about their behavior? Why did he feel as if his heart would break?
- De Benneville tells us that he had discovered the root of all his sins. What did he discover? Why did he believe there was no remedy for his troubles?
- De Benneville discovers Christ *between* God as judge and himself as criminal. What function does Christ play at this moment in de Benneville's life? What has Christ, according to de Benneville, done for him? Why does he describe Christ's love as penetrating? Is it penetrating his heart? De Benneville imagines Christ carrying on a conversation with his Father (God) on de Benneville's behalf. What's the point here?
- After his soul sank into a state of nothingness, de Benneville began to feel a "holy love." Why does de Benneville call this feeling holy?
- In another part of *Remarkable Passages*, De Benneville writes of a vision of "universal and everlasting restitution of all things." What does he mean?

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build historical knowledge about the power of personal, emotional awareness to create compassion for self and others as a faith in action practice of Unitarian Universalist theology
- Engage participants in thinking theologically about human feelings of guilt and shame, and about how those feelings can be transformed into compassion for oneself and for others as injured and broken souls.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain basic knowledge about the life and work of George de Benneville (1703-1793)

- Examine de Benneville as a model for exploring emotional insights and discovering a living foundation of liberal faith
- Consider how feeling "loved" contributes to a personal feeling of well-being
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about the emotional foundations of their own faith.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Recalling Experiences of Being Loved	10
Activity 2: Surprising Emotions	10
Activity 3: Introducing George de Benneville	15
Activity 4: Testing de Benneville	30
Activity 5: Large Group Reflection	15
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Use the following exercises and questions to help you find connections between your own faith journey and de Benneville's:

- In his narrative, de Benneville says his soul sank into nothingness and humiliation before experiencing an ocean of love. How does his soul in this state experience an ocean of love?

Find a personal example of a time in which you were sad or depressed and somehow a gentle word or a loving presence or embrace brought you back to feelings of well-being. How did the positive signs of affection you internally felt begin to shift your own emotional attitude? Using your own personal example, analyze, step by step, as precisely as you can, how the shift in your emotions occurred. Use this personal experience to help you make sense of de Benneville's own Protestant Christian experiences of Christ.

- De Benneville tells us that the "most Holy Trinity" (i.e., God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost) "hath a boundless universal love towards all the human race, without exception." Do you aspire as a Unitarian Universalist to feel universal love towards all members of the human race, without exception? Do you believe some persons are unworthy of your love?
- De Benneville tells us that a "profound humility" is necessary for true religious work. Can you think of a religious leader today who seems to have this kind of humility? Is this kind of humility something to which you would aspire?
- Which, if any, emotions ignite your faith?

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you share Reading 493 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Fire of the Spirit," by Hildegard of Bingen (adapted).

Invite participants to join in reading the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: RECALLING EXPERIENCES OF BEING LOVED (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Notebooks with unlined pages, to be used as journals, for all participants
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain notebooks with unlined pages, enough for all participants. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.

Description of Activity

Introduce this activity using these or similar words:
George de Benneville used a Christian mystical motif to describe his feeling of being

unconditionally loved by Christ. De Benneville realized that if he, who housed ignoble feelings of arrogance and pride in his heart, could be so loved, so, too, must other undeserving souls be loved and saved by Christ. This link between his contrite heart, his humility, and his experience of unconditional love transformed de Benneville into a man who could no longer abide by the traditional Catholic and Protestant division of the world into the damned and the elect. De Benneville discovered through his own personal experience of emotional restoration to health and wholeness that everyone will be restored by, through, and to the eternal love of God.

Note that all of us in one way or another have felt loved or have a sense of what such a feeling of being loved and cherished would be like. Explain that these personal experiences can help us understand de Benneville's experience of feeling loved. Invite participants to recall one experience of being deeply loved. Suggest they find their story and jot notes or draw about it in their theology journals. Allow a couple of minutes, then invite them to form groups of three and each briefly share their experience of being loved or cherished.

ACTIVITY 2: SURPRISING EMOTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a piece of newsprint with these questions:
 - Did this experience challenge your understanding of who you thought you were?
 - How did you learn (or are you still learning) to make peace with this experience?

Description of Activity

Introduce this activity using these or similar words:

When he was twelve years old, George de Benneville first discovered a difference between what he expected to feel as a self-exalted member of the English aristocracy and what he actually felt. This difference astonished him, and eventually transformed him into a humble man of God who preached universal love and salvation for all. As preparation for our investigation of de Benneville's experience, we

will look for an experience within our own life that replicates, at least in small part, de Benneville's experience.

Invite participants to recall an experience in which they expected to feel one set of emotions about something that happened to them, but instead felt a very different set of emotions that surprised them. Assure participants they will not be asked or expected to share the details of this exercise with others. Invite them to make notes and comments in their journals describing the experience. Invite them also to respond to the questions you have posted on newsprint. Allow participants five minutes to reflect in their journals.

ACTIVITY 3: INTRODUCING GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, [Introducing George de Benneville](#) (included in this document)
- Story, "[Remarkable Passages \(Excerpt\)](#)" (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story so you can present it effectively.
- Copy the handout and the story for all participants.
- Arrange for two volunteers to read the story, one serving as narrator and the other reading the excerpts from *Remarkable Passages*. If possible, give the story to the volunteers ahead of time.

Description of Activity

Introduce George de Benneville using these or similar words:

George de Benneville was a medical doctor, preacher, teacher, writer, translator, friend of the refugee, and advocate for Native American rights and the welfare of indentured servants. He was a host to European nobility through his aristocratic background and friend to such men as Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush through his liberal foreground. Today, de Benneville is recognized as one of the spiritual forebears of the Universalist Church of America. For 20 years in France, the German States, and the Netherlands, and for more than 50 years in Pennsylvania, he preached the restoration of all

human beings "without exception," building religious communities united by fellowship and action rather than by church doctrine and creed. "My happiness will be incomplete," he declared, "while one creature remains miserable." This declaration of heartfelt compassion for the human race was born from his own inner life, tried by sorrow and despair, and transformed by his personal experience of the spirit of universal love. By example, he gave those around him courage to pay attention to their feelings, emotions, and sentiments. "Let us search ourselves well," he said, "and test thoroughly what is within us, whether it degrades or elevates us." The pathway to Universal Love begins here, he said.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about de Benneville's life, and invite participants to read it at home.

Distribute the story and invite participants to listen to de Benneville's recounting of his experiences as the two volunteers read it aloud, one as the narrator and the other as de Benneville's voice. After the reading, ask participants to reflect in silence on de Benneville's account of his vision and then to write or draw a response in their journals.

ACTIVITY 4: TESTING DE BENNEVILLE (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Write on newsprint and post:
 - Have you ever experienced a spiritual crisis? If so, how did the spiritual crisis differ from a purely emotional crisis? How were they similar?
 - Are your personal experiences of humility, contrition, and of receiving love from others linked to a Unitarian Universalist affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of every person? If so, how?
 - Is the feeling of being loved a feeling that is or could be a foundational experience for your own Unitarian Universalist faith?
 - Does it make sense to you to talk of the feeling of being loved unconditionally as "the spirit of Love?" If not, what, if any, spiritual or religious terms would you use when

talking about your liberal faith and the emotional foundations upon which it rests?

Description of Activity

Share de Benneville's words:

The spirit of Love will be intensified to Godly proportions when reciprocal love exists between the entire human race and each of its individual members.

Invite participants to form groups of three and share their personal feelings and reflections on the ways de Benneville's writings and experience illuminate their own thoughts and experiences, using the posted questions as they are moved to do so. Explain that groups should give each person about four minutes to share their experiences. After everyone has spoken, participants may share insights and further reflections prompted by their experience of listening to the others in their small group. Remind them that they are not to critique the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others, but rather to share personal reflections, thoughts, and insights prompted by their small group experience. Invite groups to appoint a timekeeper or to share that function to make sure each member has their opportunity to speak.

ACTIVITY 5: LARGE GROUP REFLECTION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone

Description of Activity

Gather participants in one large group and invite comments, observations, and insights. Use these questions:

- Do your own experiences of personal emotional discovery inform and deepen your spiritual practice as a Unitarian Universalist?
- Has the receiving and giving of love played a role in your faith journey? Do you want to give such experiences an expanded role in your own spiritual practice?
- Do you want to explore new practices that might help you generate and sustain love and compassion as a foundation for your own liberal faith as a Unitarian Universalist? If so, how will you begin this new work?

Each person who wants to should be allowed to speak before anyone speaks a second time.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle

- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family. Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer a benediction from Richard Jeffries, "Immortality," Reading 527 in *Singing the Living Tradition* or share these words of George de Benneville:

... adore in spirit and in truth the ocean of love, and the great wonders of the wisdom and power of thy God, who hath employed all these boundless, incomprehensible miracles to restore and to save thee, and not thee only, but all the human species...

Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?
- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?

- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

The spirit of Love will be intensified to Godly proportions when reciprocal love exists between

the entire human race and each of its individual members. — George de Benneville (1703-1793)

Think of an action you might take to offer an unbounded moment of love to someone without expectation of a return. Do it such that your kindness is given as a gift without strings. Keep the gesture small, as a test for this way of being in the world. Decide, afterward, whether a theology of the Unbounded, Universal Love might become part of your spiritual practice.

Faith in Action

Look over the entries in your journal about personal practices that could help you generate and sustain love as foundational to your faith. Try three new ways to make love and compassion an active part of your spiritual practice. Invite others to join you in this work. Meet for dinner and share what you did and what you discovered.

STORY: REMARKABLE PASSAGES (EXCERPT)

Excerpted from [Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of Dr. George de Benneville](#), translated by Rev. Elhanan Winchester (Germantown, PA: Converse Cleaves, Publisher, 1890), with material to explain the context for each.

George de Benneville was raised by his godmother, Queen Anne of England. Both of his parents, who were part of the French aristocracy, had fled to the British Royal Court of London because they were Protestants threatened by the ruling French Catholic crown.

George was sent to sea at age 12 to learn navigation. He was a midshipman in a war vessel attached to a small fleet bound for the Barbary Coast on a diplomatic mission. At this point in his life, he was "wildly believing," as he put it, that he "belonged to a different class from mankind in general [and was] self-exalted." His ship arrived at Algiers. De Benneville explains what happened next:

[A]s I walked upon deck, I saw some Moors who brought refreshments to sell; one of them fell and injured one of his legs; two of his companions having laid him on deck, kissed the wound and shed tears upon it; then turning towards the rising of the sun, they cried in such a manner that I was moved with much anger, and ordered my servant to bring them before me. Upon demanding the reason of their outcry, they, perceiving that I was angry, implored my pardon, and told me the cause was owing to one of their brothers having hurt his leg by a fall, and that they kissed the wound in order to sympathize with him, and likewise shed tears upon it, and as tears were saltish, they were a good remedy for the hurt; and the reason for their turning towards the rising sun was to invoke him who created the sun to have compassion upon their poor brother and be pleased to heal him. Upon that I was so convinced and moved within that I thought my heart would break, and that my life was about to leave me; my eyes were filled with tears, and I felt such an internal condemnation that I was forced to cry out and say, "Are these men Heathens? No; I confess before God they are Christians, and I myself am a Heathen!" Behold the first conviction that the grace of our Sovereign Good [God] employed: he was pleased to convince a white person by blacks, one who carried the name of a Christian, by a Pagan, and who was obliged to confess himself a Heathen. Still that was soon overcome and forgotten.

Upon his return to England, de Benneville went to a dance and so overheated himself he fell into a faint and had a vision in which he again was unexpectedly forced to pay attention to his own emotions of vanity, pride, self-exaltation and arrogance. He saw himself burning in Hell. Returning to consciousness, he cried out: "I am damned."

For 15 months he remained in a state of irreconcilable self-loathing and depression, rejecting assurances by court ministers that he, of his rank and station, had done nothing wrong, unmoved by their counsel. The court ministers eventually deemed de Benneville predestined to be damned because they could not console him.

De Benneville had come face to face with his sinful arrogance and hardheartedness toward the wellbeing of others. He could no longer avoid the truth of his heart: He was a wretched being utterly undeserving of forgiveness or love. De Benneville knew his sins and acknowledged to himself that he indeed had too many of them to be forgiven. He awaited his death for he had discovered within himself, as he put it:

... the root of all my sins and iniquities to be within my heart [and] that discovery brought me into an extreme agony, and despair took possession of my soul, which was now pressed on all sides with misery, caused especially by great unbelief and hardness of heart. I could discover no remedy for my troubles I desired to die, but death fled from me.

He knew that God, his judge, damned him. This awareness brought de Benneville's arrogance to its knees. He had discovered the place of emotional humility within himself: a contrite heart. Now he could abandon himself to the mercy of God.

At this moment, his religious transformation began: the moment of utter contrition linked to a deep and abiding sense of humility. Contrite rather than arrogant, and humbled rather than depressed, de Benneville discovered he was not standing alone before the judgment seat of God. In de Benneville's words:

... a most majestic appearance [stood before him], whose beauty, brightness, and grandeur can never be described: he looked upon me with grace and mercy, and with a penetrating look of love, the fire of which so embraced my soul that I loved him in return. He persuaded me in my heart that he was my Saviour, Mediator, and Reconciliator, and while I thought thereon, he began to intercede for me in the following manner, saying "... I have suffered all kinds of ignominy for him. I have suffered the shameful death of the cross for him ... I have descended into the abyss of Hell for him, that I might deliver him ... O my Heavenly Father, pardon this poor sinner, and cause thy mercy to descend upon

him." The Judge or Justice had nothing more to say. The sentence disappeared. Then I heard his eternal, universal voice, which penetrated me with divine power, saying, "Take courage, my son, thy sins and iniquities was removed, all the stings and reproaches ceased, a living faith came in their stead, and the tears of sorrow were all wiped from my eyes. ... O my dear soul! sink thyself into nothingness and the deepest humiliation, and adore in spirit and in truth the ocean of love, and the great wonders of the

wisdom and power of thy God, who hath employed all these boundless, incomprehensible miracles to restore and to save thee, and not thee only, but all the human species, through Jesus Christ our Lord ... He loved me before I was born. Oh, what grace! He loved me in my fallen estate when I was wholly lost. Oh, what mercy! He even loved me when I was altogether unworthy, and freely too. Oh, what love ... Hallelujah! Amen."

HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCING GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE

Information drawn from Albert D. Bell, *The Life and Times of Dr. George de Benneville (1703-1793)* (Boston: The Universalist Church of America, 1953) and David Robinson, "George de Benneville," *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1985).

George de Benneville is the father of non-creedal Universalism in America. This man, whose 90-year life span began in the first decade of the 18th century, believed that "no church is pure in all things, so none can be found that does not contain some truth. Glorious truths are found in every church and religion under the sun. And this glorious chain of truths which we believe will someday unite all of them into one form of love." De Benneville did not want to create another Christian sect or denomination, but rather to unite those which already existed. By contrast, John Murray, who is usually recognized as the founder of the Universalist movement in America as a new Christian church denomination, believed "we never shall be able to form a friendly union with any one denomination of Christian [confessors of faith]." De Benneville arrived in America the same year John Murray was born, 1741, and propagated Universalist faith for 39 years before Murray arrived in America from England. This is why de Benneville is called the first preacher of Universalism in America.

De Benneville was a highly educated man whose range of vocations and interests was wide and broad. He wrote six or seven volumes on the medical therapeutics of his day using parallel columns to formulate remedies in English, German, and Latin. He worked as a medical doctor in Europe and America. He established a ministry to Native Americans. As a schoolmaster he taught German, French, and Native American youth. He preached widely and regularly, and built a stone mansion with an upper room consecrated for religious services that accommodated 50 within and 50 more in the hallway. Moreover, he maintained extensive correspondence with European associates. Louis XVI of France even sent a royal commission to urge his return to France as his advisor. He declined. Working with a local publisher, de Benneville oversaw the publication and translation of numerous tracts on the doctrine of universal salvation that helped foster the rise of Universalist faith in America.

Like his fellow religionists of the Radical Reformation, de Benneville rejected the ordinance of baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, affirmed the Gospel as an experience of inward revelation, and affirmed the universal restoration and salvation of all human beings to God's eternal and everlasting love. Also, like the German Pietists with whom he associated in Europe and America, de Benneville believed, as one of his biographers notes, "Catholic sacraments and Protestant dogmas cannot make men Christ-like." He was influenced by the mystical legacy of Jacob Boehme and associated with reformers who emphasized *spiritual conversion* rather than *creedal conformity*. Members of these nontraditional Christian groups had migrated, like de Benneville, to enclaves in Pennsylvania.

Thanks to de Benneville, an English translation from the German of Paul Siegvolck's 1700 manuscript, "The Everlasting Gospel," was printed in 1753 and widely disseminated as a primary sourcebook for Universalist faith in America. This book, like the Universalist movement linked to it, affirmed the doctrine of the restoration of each and every human soul to the eternal love of God. Eternal damnation and the election of a select few espoused by Lutheran and Calvinist Protestants were roundly rejected as unbiblical and logically untenable claims.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: DE BENNEVILLE'S THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

*This is a 30-minute activity. You will need copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, one for every two participants; paper and pens/pencils; and newsprint, markers, and tape.*

Engage participants to consider how contemporary Unitarian Universalism reflects de Benneville's theology of Boundless Universal Love. Post a sheet of blank newsprint and invite participants to name ways universal "love" is held up in their congregation—for example, in prayers or meditations, spoken covenant, hymns, messages for children, or the literature and website of the congregation. Allow participants to brainstorm for about five minutes. List what they name.

Then, invite participants to examine the list and consider what they mean by the word "love." Tell them that there will be time to share those reflections with one another later in the activity.

Ask participants to pair up and give each pair a copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite them to examine the lyrics of some of the hymns to get a sense of what contemporary Unitarian Universalists mean when they say love. Point out the category "Love" in the topical index (p. 675), and suggest participants start by looking at some of those hymns or at others that speak of love.

Distribute paper and pens/pencils and allow pairs 15 minutes to examine the hymnbook and jot down any notes about hymns in which they find an understanding of "love" which is similar to their own.

Then, invite participants to share what they have found and to express what they mean when they say the word "love" in a religious sense.

Conclude by singing together Hymn 131, "Love Will Guide Us," or another favorite.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

This is a 30-minute activity. You will need newspaper, markers, and tape.

Write the reflection questions on newsprint, and post them. Invite participants to form groups of three or four and reflect for 25 minutes on de Benneville's life and theology using the posted questions as a guide. Then re-gather the large group and ask for comments and observations.

Questions

- Describe an experience of spiritual crisis in your life. What was the precipitating factor(s)? What were your questions in that time? What new directions in your faith journey resulted from the crisis?
- Do you aspire as a Unitarian Universalist to feel universal love towards all members of the human race, without exception? Do you believe some persons are unworthy of your love?
- What message are you hoping to convey when you use the word "love" in worship (with adults, with youth, with children, or with all generations)? What is it you mean by using the word "love" as a way to name the transcendent?

FIND OUT MORE

Albert D. Bell, *The Life and Times of Dr. George de Benneville* (1703-1793), (Boston: The Universalist Church of America, 1953).

John C. Morgan and Nelson C. Simonson, [George de Benneville](#) entry on the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography website.

[Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of Dr. George de Benneville](#), trans. Rev. Elhanan Winchester (Germantown, PA: Converse Cleaves, Publisher, 1890).

WORKSHOP 2: CHARLES CHAUNCY

INTRODUCTION

And let me tell you, if you have indeed been renewed in the spirit of your minds, it will [show] it self in your lives. — Charles Chauncy

This workshop introduces Charles Chauncy's Theology of Spiritual Renewal. The workshop translates Chauncy's mid-18th-century theological program for spiritual wholeness and moral action into viable theological steps relevant to our own lives today as Unitarian Universalists.

Called the "historical progenitor" of American Unitarianism in David Robinson's 1984 book, *The Unitarians and The Universalists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), Chauncy was pastor from 1727 to 1787 at the First Church of Boston, the city's oldest and most prestigious congregational church. He was also the leading defender of the religious interests and political power of Boston's ruling elite merchant class against a rising tide of evangelical preachers of the Great Awakening. These evangelical preachers made public, intensely charged, emotional conversion experiences foundational to Christian faith. They condemned congregational ministers like Chauncy and urged the members of these ministers' churches to abandon ship and join the rising tide of revivalism.

Chauncy refused to accept emotional conviction as the sole criterion and foundation for religious faith. The human mind, he insisted, must also give assent to the written word of God, and human behavior toward self and others must also be transformed. His rigorous use of reasoning to find, analyze, and explain the fundamental human elements entailed in spiritual experience is his legacy to us. Can Chauncy's legacy help us construct a Unitarian Universalist Theology of Spiritual Renewal relevant to our lives today?

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read background information about the Great Awakening from Answers.com, About.com, or another encyclopedia and read the story, "Introducing Charles Chauncy."

Read the five excerpts from Charles Chauncy's sermon, *A Sermon on the Out-pouring of the Holy Ghost*, in Handout 2. As you read, reflect on some of the following questions, looking for connections he makes among emotion, reason, behavior, and what he calls a Christian

spiritual state. Keep in mind that Chauncy was a traditional, conservative Christian whose own reasoning began to challenge the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin, which claims that humans, because of their fallen sinful nature passed down to them from Adam in the Garden of Eden, lack the capacity to call forth and participate in their own spiritual salvation.

You may wish to write your reflections in your theology journal.

First Excerpt

- Chauncy says that experiencing the Holy Ghost means experiencing the way in which a person is being influenced or operated upon. To get a sense of what he means by experiencing something internally, recall a way in which your parents have "influenced" you and in this way had an effect on your internal life. How might you use this example to help understand and explain what Chauncy means when he says that the Holy Ghost, as an expression of the Divine Parent, internally influences someone?

Second Excerpt

- Chauncy emphasizes the "great diversity" of ways in which the human experience of the Spirit occurs. Do you believe there is a diversity of ways in which persons can have "spiritual experiences?" Explain.

Third Excerpt

- Chauncy believes that the spirit of your mind has to be transformed by participation in the Divine nature of God. How are we to understand what Chauncy means by "participation?" To answer this question, think about what the word "participation" means to you when you affirm, as a member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation, that you are "part" of the interdependent web of existence. Explain your answer to this question by first using a personal experience of being part of the web of life. Then use your own example to unpack what you might mean by "participation" in the web of life. Would you call this participation spiritual? Explain.

Fourth Excerpt

- Citing Scripture, Chauncy argues that "if we ask [Luke 11:9], we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find, if we knock, it shall be opened to us." This argument affirms the human capacity to participate in one's own process of spiritual healing by inviting it. Chauncy thus goes against orthodox Puritan beliefs that humans do not

have any power or capacity to facilitate their own religious salvation. Rather, he argues that it is "unreasonable," "base and ungrateful" to doubt or hesitate to affirm this human capacity. Chauncy thus begins to build a rational argument for human agency in one's own spiritual transformation.

Fifth Excerpt

- Describe a personal transforming spiritual experience. Compare and contrast it to Chauncy's description of the "Gift of the Holy Ghost." How is your transforming personal experience linked to your identity as a Unitarian Universalist? Or how would you like for it to be so linked?

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present historical knowledge from our liberal faith tradition about views on the need for both reason and emotion to live spiritually transformed, moral lives
- Engage participants in creating a Unitarian Universalist Theology of Spiritual Renewal that will help heal and transform.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain basic knowledge about the life and work of Charles Chauncy (1705-1787)
- Examine Chauncy as a model for linking emotions and reasoning in ways that can move persons beyond religious doctrines which disparage the inherent dignity, worth, and value of human life

- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about how their own spiritual experiences can link emotions, rational reflection, and behavior to enrich and transform their own lives.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Four Human Capacities	20
Activity 2: Introducing Charles Chauncy	25
Activity 3: Testing Chauncy's Ideas	20
Activity 4: Reflecting on Personal Experience	20
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflect on the following questions, looking for connections between your theology and Chauncy's. You may wish to write your reflections in your theology journal.

- Have you ever had an experience that you would call "spiritual"? If so, describe the experience in your journal. Then, *after* you have described the experience, define what you mean by the term "spiritual." In other words, use your experience to help you define what you mean by the term "spiritual experience."
- How does human agency, the ability to work toward your own spiritual transformation, show up in your life? Explain. What do you do to begin this process: meditate, pray, go to a religious service, sing in the choir, participate in a small group ministry program? Explain.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you read aloud Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Come into the circle of love and justice" by Israel Zangwill (adapted) or share these words of Charles Chauncy:

Have you, in truth, been made partakers of the Divine nature ... ? And let me tell you, if you have indeed been renewed in the spirit of your minds, it will [show] it self in your lives.
In one word, there will be an amendment of your carriage in all the relations you sustain. You will be better husbands and wives; better parents and children; better masters and servants: You will be better neighbours, better friends, better subjects yea, you will be better in every station, and in every condition of life: Nor otherwise may you think you have been renewed after the image of him that created you. Let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous.

Invite participants to join in reading aloud the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: FOUR HUMAN CAPACITIES (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- Timepiece (minutes)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Write on newsprint, and post, the four human capacities affected by a spiritually transforming experience: Sensations, Emotional Feelings, Thoughts (ideas and concepts), and Physical Action.

Description of Activity

Introduce Charles Chauncy as the "historical progenitor" of American Unitarianism, using these or similar words:

Chauncy was pastor from 1727 to 1787 at the First Church of Boston, the city's oldest and most prestigious Congregational church. He set out to shore up the religious traditions, practices, doctrines, and beliefs of the Boston's elite merchant class against the rising tide of evangelical preachers of the Great Awakening. These preachers not only condemned Congregational ministers like Chauncy, but also urged the members of these ministers' churches to abandon ship and join the rising tide of revivalism. Chauncy rejected the evangelical preachers' claims that public, highly charged emotional conversion experiences were a reliable foundation for faith. Instead, he put forth his own studied analysis of the four elements in human experience he deemed necessary for a true spiritual transformation: physical sensations, emotional feelings, thoughts (ideas and concepts), and modified behavior toward self and others.

Invite participants into an exercise to help them understand Charles Chauncy's concept of the four human capacities affected by a spiritually transforming experience. Ask them to pay attention to the four different ways in which they experience the sound of your voice as you speak. Explain:

- They hear your voice: thus **sensation** (sound waves affect the ear drum, etc.).
- They find the tone and timbre of your voice pleasant or unpleasant: thus the **emotional feelings**.
- They think about what the sounds you are making mean: thus the **ideas and concepts**.
- Finally, they physically alter their behavior (take notes, for example) in response to the sounds

you have made with your voice: thus the **physical action**.

Point out the four human capacities you have listed on newsprint. Explain that Chauncy's Theology of Spiritual Renewal is based, in part, on his analysis of how these four human capacities combine to create a spiritual experience. Invite participants to break down their own experience of listening to your voice into these four categories and to write four sentences in their journal, one for each respective aspect (sensations, emotions, thoughts, physical action) of *their* experience of your voice. Allow four minutes.

Ask participants to move into groups of three and use the following process to share with the other members of their group:

- Each person reads their first sentence aloud to the other members of the group. After all have read their first sentence, proceed to the second. After all have read aloud their second sentence, proceed to the third. Follow the same process for the fourth.
- After all group members have read all four of their sentences aloud, each member of the triad is invited to reflect aloud on thoughts, insights, and feelings that have come to the fore as a result of this exercise.
- After all have shared their sentences and their reflections, triads may begin a second round of sharing to offer further thoughts, feelings, insights, and reflections.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING CHARLES CHAUNCY (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Newsprint sheet listing the four categories of experience (Activity 1)
- Story, "[Introducing Charles Chauncy](#)" (included in this document)
- Handout 1, [Chauncy's Four Categories of Experience](#) (included in this document)
- Handout 2, [From A Sermon on the Out-pouring of the Holy Ghost](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [Charles Chauncy Portrait](#) (included in this document)
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Optional: Computer and digital projector
- Optional: Bell or chime

- Optional: Costume and lectern for person playing Chauncy

Preparation for Activity

- Copy handouts for all participants.
- Prepare to project Leader Resource 1, Charles Chauncy Portrait, or make copies.
- Post the newsprint with four categories of experience from Activity 1.
- Optional (recommended): Arrange for a participant or guest to play the role of Chauncy and read the sermon excerpts (Handout 2). If possible, provide the handout to the volunteer ahead of time.

Description of Activity

Display or distribute Leader Resource 1, Charles Chauncy Portrait. Briefly introduce Charles Chauncy using these or similar words:

Chauncy was the leading opponent of the Great Awakening, the Protestant evangelical movement that swept through the British North American colonies between 1739 and 1745. Prompted by the verbal attacks of the evangelical preachers and his growing distrust of the mass outbursts of enthusiasm they stoked in their followers, Chauncy used his highly-disciplined, dispassionate, rational mind to analyze the major elements he believed were really involved in a personal, spiritual experience of religious conversion and renewal. In the process, he constructed a rational foundation for a theologically progressive but socially conservative liberal faith tradition, inadvertently sparking a new American liberal theological tradition.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about Chauncy's life, and invite participants to take it home.

Invite participants to explore whether Chauncy provides a useful frame to help us understand what we mean when we say we have or want to experience personal, spiritual renewal as Unitarian Universalists. Tell them you will use excerpts from his 1742 sermon, "The Out-pouring of the Holy Ghost" for this purpose. Mention that the excerpts include some paraphrasing.

Distribute Handout 2 and invite participants to take a few minutes to read it. If you have arranged for a participant or a guest to play the role of Chauncy, introduce that person and invite them to read aloud Chauncy's words.

When the reading is done, direct participants' attention to the list of Chauncy's four categories of experience and the reflection prompt you have posted. Invite participants to identify something they have experienced in a Unitarian Universalist worship service (a reading, story, sermon, music, prayer or meditation) and analyze it according to Chauncy's categories. Invite participants

to use Chauncy's categories as a guide for learning new ways to think more concretely about what they mean when they talk about personal spiritual experiences as part of their liberal faith tradition. Allow five minutes for reflecting and writing.

ACTIVITY 3: TESTING CHAUNCY'S IDEAS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements

Preparation for Activity

- Write questions for small groups on newsprint and post:
 - Does it make sense to you to use Chauncy's four categories as a guide for thinking about what you mean when you talk about your own "personal spiritual experiences" as part of your liberal faith tradition?
 - Do you consider the physical, emotional, and mental experiences that are linked together in your religious service an active and ongoing source of renewal for your liberal faith?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to move into the same three-person groups they formed in Activity 1, and share their reflections about spiritual experiences using Chauncy's categories as a guide. Remind them of Chauncy's words: "[I]f you have indeed been renewed in the spirit of your minds, it will [show] it self in your lives."

Ask participants to each, in turn, share their analysis of an element of a Unitarian Universalist worship service. Then, invite participants to share thoughts about each posted question sequentially, so that each person speaks to the question at hand before the group moves on to the next question. Remind them that they are not critiquing the thoughts and feelings and experiences of others, but rather are sharing their own thoughts, feelings, experiences, and insights. Tell participants that after all who wish to have spoken in response to each of the questions, they might each, in turn, offer final reflections, feelings, and insights based on their experiences in this small group exercise.

ACTIVITY 4: REFLECTING ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare, but do not post, a sheet of newsprint with these prompts:
 - How do Chauncy's four categories help you to strengthen and deepen your own understanding of what Unitarian Universalist spiritual renewal might mean for you today as a personal experience?
 - Identify one thing you can do this week to enhance the spiritual power of your Unitarian Universalist faith in your life.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to remain in their three-person groups. Post the two questions you have written on newsprint and explain participants will have a chance to reflect on them quietly, and then share responses within their triad, before sharing with the whole group. Remind participants they are not being asked to critique the thoughts, reflections, feelings, and experiences of others, but rather to disclose to the group their own thoughts, reflections, and feelings. If there is time, invite participants to share with the group further insights and reflections based on this exercise.

After ten minutes, invite participants to rejoin the large group. Invite persons to share their thoughts, feelings, and insights with the group, with each person speaking only once until all have had a chance to speak. If there is time, invite a second round of personal sharing.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family. Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer as a benediction Reading 527 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, Richard Jeffries' "Immortality" or these words of Charles Chauncy:

In one plain, short word, The great thing you have to get satisfied about is, whether you are the subjects of that change, which will, in the estimation of the gospel, denominate you new creatures . . . The great thing necessary is to experience a real and effectual renovation of heart and life; and as to the way and manner, how this, by the divine SPIRIT, was bro't about, it's not of so great importance: Nor is it of any importance, whether the SPIRIT OF GOD has gone on, in just the same method with you which he has taken with others. Be rather concern'd about the thing, than the way in order to get to it. Get satisfied you have been thus wro't upon, and you need be at no further pains.

Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?
- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

And let me tell you, if you have indeed been renewed in the spirit of your minds, it will [show] it self in your lives. — Charles Chauncy (1705-1787)

Think of a practice you might do to help you deepen your spiritual life. Try it and decide if, indeed, you have begun to construct a Unitarian Universalist Theology of Spiritual Renewal relevant for your life today.

Faith in Action

With the help of ministerial staff, arrange to meet with another group in the congregation—for example, a Coming of Age class, a youth group, a New UU Group, or with an interfaith group. Talk together about the ways spiritual experiences show themselves in our lives and in our actions. Offer this quote from Chauncy as a springboard for sharing: "[I]f you have indeed been renewed in the spirit of your minds, it will [show] it self in your lives."

STORY: INTRODUCING CHARLES CHAUNCY

Charles Chauncy was the leading opponent of the Great Awakening, the Protestant evangelical movement that swept through the British North American colonies between 1739 and 1745.

Chauncy was born into the elite Puritan merchant class that ruled Boston. His great-grandfather, after whom he was named, was the second president of Harvard. His father was a successful Boston merchant. As one biographer puts it, "Chauncy was first and foremost a traditional Puritan cleric." Moreover, "As a rule, Chauncy throughout his life supported the clergy who observed the traditional decorum of the New England [ruling elite] way" (Charles H. Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1981, p. 12). Although this Puritan stock had been dissenters in England (thus the liberals), in America they were the Standing Order, the ruling elite (and thus the conservatives against other religious groups like the Baptists and Quakers). Chauncy was thus a staunch and loyal supporter of the political, social, religious, and economic merchant class status quo.

Chauncy received both his undergraduate degree and his master's in theology from Harvard. He was ordained at the First Church in Boston in 1727, where he spent the rest of his life: 60 years as pastor of "Old Brick," as his church was called. Not only was it the oldest Congregational church in Boston, it was also one of the most important in New England.

In his book, *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705-1787*, Edward M. Griffin presents a thumbnail summary of Chauncy's life and work:

[Chauncy] played a role in the major events of his time: not only the Great Awakening, but also the French and Indian wars, the controversy over the proposed establishment of the Anglican episcopacy in America, political events from the Stamp Act through the Revolution, the rise of the Enlightenment, the growth of "liberal Protestantism", social changes in Boston, [and] the development of Unitarianism ...

Chauncy organized American clergy and corresponded with English dissenting clergy to protest and prevent the encroachment of the Church of England in its colonies. Although his effort to unify the clergy ultimately failed, Chauncy received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Edinburgh. He was a charter member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was recognized by the Massachusetts Historical Society (when his portrait was hung there) as "eminent for his talents, learning, and lover of liberty, civil and religious." He was, in short, honored as one of the leading intellects of 18th-century America. He was also an unapologetic elitist. Biographer Lippy wrote that Chauncy believed "the laymen should simply follow the lead of the clergy who were, after all, the theological professionals."

Chauncy published his major theology work, *The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations*, in 1785, two decades after he had completed it. He had held back publication because he recognized the rigorous logic of his arguments ended up affirming an innate moral sense in humankind, a belief in human free will, an affirmation of universal salvation and thus the spiritual equality of all. These claims undermined the doctrinal traditions of his own Calvinist faith tradition and the social hierarchy he extolled from the beginning to the end of his life. The construction of a rational, Enlightenment foundation for a theologically progressive but deeply embedded, socially conservative liberal faith tradition began with Charles Chauncy. Thanks in no small part to Chauncy's life and work, by 1804 a liberal Christian view was the dominant one in Boston. This complex conservative man had inadvertently sparked a new American liberal theological tradition: American Unitarianism.

HANDOUT 1: CHAUNCY'S FOUR CATEGORIES OF EXPERIENCE

By Charles Chauncy.

The Four Categories

First: Sensations

For traditional Christians like Chauncy, spiritual awakening is prompted by the minister's sermon, and thus his voice, the sounds of the words impressing themselves upon the bodies (eardrums) of the congregants become the sensations first entailed in a spiritual experience. Chauncy says the Spirit awakens our attention and brings us to consider our sins in a way we have never done before.

Second: Intense Emotions

Persons now feel emotional guilt. They become aware of how their actions, thoughts, and feelings have hurt others and compromised their own soul. Their emotional reaction to this awareness is a spiritual awareness prompted by what Chauncy calls at various times the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, or the Spirit of God. This conviction of sin is the first step towards the experience of religious conversion, Chauncy insists. Evangelists end their work here. But for Chauncy, it is only the beginning, an initial preparation step, as he puts it, for the conversion of the mind.

Third: New Thoughts

Persons now read the Christian scripture in a new way. They read it as Gospel Truth. Chauncy calls this new mindset "mental revelation." The Holy Ghost, Chauncy says, has transformed the human mind. It has produced in persons a true gospel faith, one much celebrated in the writings of the New Testament. This faith is not merely an assent of the mind to Gospel truths... The scripture is seen everywhere as full. This scriptural faith, Chauncy concludes, is the operation of the Spirit. It is the intentional work of God upon the mind of the sinner. (American Unitarian Christianity, in this way, began as a new way of reading and interpreting Christian scripture.)

Fourth: Physical Moral Behavior

With the alignment of emotions (step two) and thoughts (step three), a spiritual transformation of the heart is now produced. Now there is a change of religious and moral values within the person. The Spirit operates in such a way as to make such persons new creatures. This change of heart is spoken of under a variety of names, Chauncy says: as conversion, regeneration, resurrection, a new creation. This change is not physical, Chauncy insists; it is religious and moral. This

change is wrought in the heart *and* in a person's life, in a person's inward principles as well as in altered outward behavior in the world. It is not the product of mere reason, Chauncy insists, nor of external revelation. It is not brought about by the bare influence of moral motives. It is the effect of the power of the Spirit, working effectually in persons that believe.

According to Chauncy, four results follow:

New inner strength, vigor, cheerfulness, and delight

The Holy Ghost excites sincere Christians to practice their duty, increases grace in them, preserves them unto the end. It excites good motions in them, animates their resolutions, quickens their graces and assists them in their exercise with strength and vigor, with cheerfulness and delight.

Comfort

The Holy Ghost provides support and consolation for persons who are suffering or in some way afflicted. Persons so inspired are ready to undergo the trial of cruel mockings and scourging, bonds and imprisonment. They willingly undergo such torment. They will endure anything for the honor of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Inward Joy

The Holy Ghost produces within persons an inward joy. This joy is the fruit of the Spirit This joy is not a mere effect of nature; neither does it result from the sole exercise of the mind, either upon itself, or the truths revealed in the Gospel, but is the produce of the Holy Ghost, which is given to them This joy is the testimony of our conscience To be sure, whoever have this peace of God, this joy of the Lord, they are blessed persons, tho' they know not the meaning of those raptures some others may experience; and the state of mind they are brought to, they may assure themselves, is an effect of the Holy Ghost in them.

Self-esteem

The feeling of being spiritually accepted by God. The gift of the Holy Ghost is the witness of the Spirit that satisfied good Christians of their adoption into God's family. Some may expect an immediate whisper from the Spirit, or some secret extraordinary impulse, assuring them, they are children of God. This can happen, but this does not appear to be the way of the Spirit's witnessing. Moreover, it can be dangerous for persons to ground their hopes of heaven upon mere impulses and impressions, especially if they rely upon them instead of Scripture.

HANDOUT 2: FROM A SERMON ON THE OUT-POURING OF THE HOLY GHOST

Charles Chauncy preached this sermon May 13, 1742, at the First Church of Boston. Printed by T. Fleet, for D. Henchman and S. Eliot in Cornhill, 1742. Excerpts 3 and 5 include paraphrasing as well as direct quotes from the sermon.

First Excerpt

The Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, as the word is elsewhere translated; —It's the name of the Third of the Sacred Three [names of God]. [The Holy Spirit] is otherwise [called] sometimes, by Spirit of God, the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of beliefs; sometimes, he is spoken of as the comforter, the Sanctifier, and the like. That glorious person is pointed out, under all these appellations, in whole name, as well as in the name of the Father and the Son, we are baptized, and by this instituted rite take upon us the character of Christians.

Only, let it be remembred [sic], where the Holy Ghost is spoken of as a gift from God, we are not to understand hereby the person, but the influences of this blessed Spirit. Not that the Holy Ghost is nothing more than an emanation, operation or influence, from the Father. He is often represented, in the bible, as an agent, as truly properly so, as either the Father or the Son. But tho' he be a real, living, active, infinitely glorious person, yet when he is spoken of as a gift, we are to understand hereby his influences and operations.

And these are either extraordinary or ordinary.

Second Excerpt

In the beginning of Christianity, the Holy Ghost was given to men, in an extraordinary manner, i.e., in miraculous gifts and powers. It does not appear, that the Holy Ghost, in this sense, was confin'd to the apostles, or their fellow labourers in the work of the Lord. The apostles [of Jesus Christ], 'tis true, were the first, after our Saviour's ascention [sic] up to heaven, to whom the Holy Ghost was thus given. It was upon them that he descended, on the day of Pentecost in cloven tongues like as of fire, to their being enabled to speak in various languages; yea, and to [show] signs and wonders, and to work miracles, to the astonishment and conversion of multitudes. [Acts 2: 1-4]. But it should seem, as if the gift of the Holy Ghost, in this extraordinary manner, was not the sole privilege of the apostles, or first ministers of the Christian religion. It rather appears to have been a gift bestowed upon Christians in common. Some of the persons, chosen from among the people to be Deacons, were thus miraculously endowed . . . And in the Church at Corinth, there was a great diversity of these extraordinary gifts; and they seem to have been common among the people. To one was given, by the

Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of Spirits; to another, diverse kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues. And perhaps there were few, in the first days of the gospel, but were endowed with some extraordinary gift of the Spirit or another.

Third Excerpt (includes paraphrasing)

Have you experienced that change, which will denominate you the children of God, and born from above? Be critical in your inquiry into this matter. Is the change you have passed under, a change only in your affections [i.e., your emotions]? Is it nothing more than a little outward reformation? Does it lie only in an attendance of sermons and lectures? Or is it indeed a change from the power of sin and satan, a change into the likeness of God? Have you, in truth, been made partakers of the Divine nature... ? And let me tell you, if you have indeed been renewed in the spirit of your minds, it will [show] it self in your lives.

In one word, there will be an amendment of your carriage in all the relations you sustain. You will be better husbands and wives; better parents and children; better masters and servants: You will be better neighbours, better friends, better subjects yea, you will be better in every station, and in every condition of life: Nor other wise may you think you have been renewed after the image of him that created you. Let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the Devil. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither be that loveth not his brother.

Some, perhaps, may think these things of no great importance; but deceive not your selves, impose not on your Souls; the work of the Spirit, wherever it is savingly wrought, will have a influence upon the whole man, not only the heart, but the life...

Fourth Excerpt

[T]he outpouring of [God's] Spirit . . . This is a necessary gift; that indeed without which nothing else will be effectual to our having that temper of mind formed in us, without which we shall never be qualified for an admission into the coming and eternal kingdom of God. We may not be sufficiently apprehensive of it, but 'tis a certain truth, 'tis only by the Spirit of God, sin can be rooted out of our hearts, and the dispositions of holiness implanted there. No means, nor instruments, will of themselves be able to effect this. It can be accomplish'd by no other power, but that of the divine Spirit. And is it then a needless thing to make our prayer to God for his Spirit? There is nothing we can go to him for, that is a matter of greater necessity.

And prayer upon this occasion is the more proper, as it's the way we are directed to in the bible, in order to our obtaining the Spirit. Our Saviour has commanded us to ask this gift of our heavenly Father [Luke 11:9]: And God himself has said, he will be inquired of by his people to bestow it upon them [Ezek. 36:39].

And O what encouragement have we to pray for the holy Spirit! Our Saviour promised, before he left the world, that his Spirit should abide with his Church for ever [sic]; and has expressly declared, that if we ask [Luke 11:9], we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find, if we knock, it shall be opened to us: Yea, he has condescended to argue with us, to convince us of the readiness of our heavenly Father, to give us his holy Spirit, if we suitably seek to him herefore. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him [Ezek: 11:13]. 'Tis unreasonable, 'tis base and ungrateful to harbour in our minds the least doubt or hesitation as to this matter. For he is God and not man; and therefore infinitely more kind and merciful than the most tender-hearted parents on earth.

Fifth Excerpt (includes paraphrasing)

The Gift of the Holy Ghost to persons: There is a change wrought both in their hearts and lives, in all their inward principles as well as outward behavior in the world. They are, as it were, new molded and fashioned. They have other thoughts and sentiments, other springs of action, other views and aims; they are so altered as to be quite other persons, they have another temper of mind, another taste and relish, another heart and soul, and they lead another kind of life, are pious towards God, righteous towards men, and sober in respect of themselves.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: CHARLES CHAUNCY PORTRAIT



LEADER RESOURCE 2: CHAUNCY'S THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

This is a 30-minute activity.

Invite participants to explore ways Chauncy's theology might illuminate the place of spirituality in your congregation. Use these questions as a guide:

- How does our congregation pay attention to spirituality development?
- Are we intentional in the ways in which we seek to move the spirit and grow people's faith? Is it our expectation and intention that when people are moved spiritually, it will change the ways in which they act in the world? Does it happen?
- What opportunities and challenges would be presented by an increased attention to spirituality development in our congregation?
- Are there groups in our congregation who might be invited to share their skills, knowledge and experience in spirituality development with the broader congregation? Possibilities include youth groups, young adult groups, and women's spirituality groups.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

This is a 30-minute activity. You may wish to write reflection questions on newsprint, and post.

Invite participants to reflect on the place of Chauncy's theology in contemporary Unitarian Universalism. Provide these questions to guide their reflection:

- How can Chauncy's analysis help you understand your own spiritual experiences?
- How might it help you design worship that aims to deepen spiritual experiences for adults? For children? For youth? For multigenerational groups?
- Chauncy said the intense emotional experiences offered by Great Awakening preachers stopped at the second step of his analysis. In his understanding, an experience of the Holy Spirit engages both reason *and* emotion, and leads one to act differently in the world. How can we be intentional about helping people link their spiritual experiences, whether in a congregation or elsewhere, with the ways they act in the world?
- Do you consider the physical, emotional, and mental experiences that are linked together in a worship service an active and ongoing source of renewal for individuals? For your congregation? For Unitarian Universalism?

FIND OUT MORE

- Edward M. Griffin, *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705-1787* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).
- Charles H. Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1981).
- Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (Hamden, CT: Archon Book, an imprint of The Show String Press Inc., 1976); (published as a Beacon Paperback in 1966, copyright Starr King Press, 1955).

WORKSHOP 3: HOSEA BALLOU

INTRODUCTION

There is an immortal desire in every soul for... happiness. — Hosea Ballou, in A Treatise on Atonement

This workshop introduces Hosea Ballou's Theology of Happiness. The workshop tests the relevance of Ballou's theological legacy for our religious lives as Unitarian Universalists today. Ballou was the most influential and singularly important Universalist preacher, public theologian, editor, author, and pastor in 19th-century America. He believed human happiness is a mandate of liberal faith. We have a God-given right to be happy, Ballou insisted. Do you agree?

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read the [Hosea Ballou](#) entry in the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography. Read the Story, "Hosea Ballou's Conversion," Handout 1, Introducing Hosea Ballou, and Handout 2, Excerpt from *A Treatise on Atonement*, a selection from early Universalist leader Hosea Ballou's most influential work. Use these questions to help you understand the passages in the handout. You may wish to write your responses in your theology journal.

- What is the argument Ballou is making in his story about the young woman?
- Does the word "happiness" have the same meaning to us today as it did in the time of Ballou? How would you define happiness? Do you use a different word to name what Ballou calls "happiness"?
- What does the orange metaphor express about what Ballou sees as the way humans "taste" or experience God?

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build historical knowledge about a Universalist theology of happiness

- Engage participants in thinking theologically about happiness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain basic knowledge about the life and work of Hosea Ballou (1771-1852), one of the founders of Universalism in America
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about the emotional foundations of their own faith.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Introducing Hosea Ballou	5
Activity 2: The Story of Hosea Ballou's Conversion	10
Activity 3: Personal Experience	30
Activity 4: Testing Ballou	35
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflect on the following questions, looking for connections between your theology and Ballou's. You may wish to write your reflections in your theology journal.

- Do you agree that all human actions are motivated by the desire for happiness?
- Ballou wrote, "[There is] no such thing as disinterested benevolence." Do you agree?
- What are the messages you have received or currently receive about the human right to happiness? Is this a counter-cultural notion?
- Ballou considered human happiness a God-given right. What is your own attitude toward human happiness? Does your attitude have a connection to your liberal faith? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you read aloud this passage from *A Treatise on Atonement*, by Hosea Ballou:

There is an immortal desire, in every soul, for future existence and happiness: For the truth of this assertion I appeal to the consciences of my readers. Why should the Almighty implant this desire in us, if he never intended to satisfy it?

Invite participants to join in reading aloud the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCING HOSEA BALLOU (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Introducing Hosea Ballou](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [Hosea Ballou Portrait](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Computer and projector

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.
- Prepare to project Leader Resource 1 or make copies.

Description of Activity

Explain that in this workshop participants will explore theological insights from the life and work of Hosea Ballou and use these to guide their own exploration of human happiness as an emotional foundation for liberal faith.

Project or distribute copies of Leader Resource 1. Introduce Hosea Ballou, one of the founders of American Universalism, using these or similar words:

Hosea Ballou preached his liberal faith to everyday people, men and women of the laboring classes. He was a self-educated man from rural New Hampshire and Massachusetts who was spurned by the Boston Unitarian elite. Thanks in no small part to Ballou, by the end of the 19th-century one out of every eight Americans called themselves Universalists. He was an author, a public lecturer, an itinerant preacher, editor of various Universalist journals, and minister of the Second Universalist Society of Boston for a quarter of a century until his death in 1852, at age 81. His most important theological work was *A Treatise on Atonement*. Ballou insisted that human beings are created to be fulfilled and happy. He rejected the belief that human nature is fallen (the doctrine of original sin) and subject to eternal damnation. He believed a loving God would not condemn humanity to eternal damnation. Ballou believed human emotions prompt us to moral or immoral actions, so we are invited to strengthen the emotions that reap happiness for self and others. He believed we have a God-given right to be happy. God is love, Ballou insisted, and when we feel this love we are happy.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about Ballou. Invite participants to read it at home.

ACTIVITY 2: THE STORY OF HOSEA BALLOU'S CONVERSION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Ballou's Conversion](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story so you can present it effectively.
- Copy the story for all participants.

- Read the [Ballou Family](#) entry in the online Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography.

Description of Activity

Distribute copies of the story, "Hosea Ballou's Conversion." Read the story aloud.

ACTIVITY 3: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Write on newsprint, but do not post:
 - Ballou believed it is impossible for you to act in ways that are not motivated by personal desires to feel happy. How might he challenge your claim that you have acted without such a personal desire? How would you refute his claim?
 - Ballou considered human happiness a God-given right. What is your own attitude toward human happiness? What were the messages you received growing up or that you currently receive from family or society about happiness? Does your attitude have a connection to your liberal faith? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

Description of Activity

Tell participants that Hosea Ballou believed our personal desires motivate our actions and all of these desires—for example, benevolence, greed, self-sacrifice, love—boil down to one: the personal desire to feel internally happy. Invite them to recall two personal experiences, one which they believe was motivated by a personal desire for happiness and one which they believe was not. Allow five minutes for participants to write or draw about these experiences in their journals.

Post the newsprint you have prepared. When the five minutes are up, sound the bell or chime if you have one. Call participants' attention to the newsprint by reading the questions aloud. Invite participants to move into groups of three to reflect together on each of the questions. Explain the group process using these or similar words:

Each person in your group is invited in turn to offer personal reflections in response to the first set of questions. The group's major role here is active, caring listening, rather than discussion or debate about what others share.

After all have responded to the first set of questions, move on to the second set, with each person in turn responding to these. So all may have an opportunity to respond, please limit your individual speaking time to about three minutes for each set of questions. You may wish to appoint a timekeeper or share that responsibility to ensure that all have time to speak.

Give the small group part of this activity 20 minutes. After 10 minutes, signal the group to move into the second set of questions. Signal the group again when time is up.

ACTIVITY 4: TESTING BALLOU (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Excerpt from A Treatise on Atonement](#)
- Participants' journals
- Variety of writing and drawing materials
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Read and make copies Handout 2, Excerpt from *A Treatise on Atonement*.

Description of Activity

Invite the large group to discuss the family and social messages they receive about happiness, using these questions:

- What are the family and social messages we have received or currently receive about the right to human happiness?
- Do we have the right to be happy? Are there conditions or limits on that right?

Distribute Handout 2 and read aloud the sections in bold text in the handout, inviting participants to read the remainder at their leisure.

Give participants a minute or two to reflect on Ballou's thoughts in their journals. Then invite volunteers to share their reflections with the larger group. Ask: Does Ballou's writing draw into sharper focus any of those family and social messages we have received or currently receive about the right to human happiness?

Explain that this exercise invites participants into deep listening and sharing; they are to share their own thoughts and feelings, rather than comment on the feelings and insights of others. Encourage each person

in turn to share their reflections and to listen deeply with an open heart and an open mind while others speak. Allow at least five seconds between shared thoughts or feelings. If there is time, invite a new round of sharing in which participants may share their new thoughts and feelings based on what they have learned from the first round of personal reflections.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth.
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family. Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer a benediction from Hosea Ballou: Reading 705, in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?
- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

There is an immortal desire in every soul for ... happiness. — Hosea Ballou, in *A Treatise on Atonement*

Think of something you might do that could increase the happiness of others or yourself. Then, do it, as a personal faith project to explore your own "theology of happiness." You might pick up a cup of coffee for a co-worker when you buy your own and give it to them as an unasked for, unexpected gift. You might decide to ask a person how they are and really listen, asking more questions to demonstrate interest rather than trying to break into the narrative with your own personal tale. Perhaps, on a particular day, you will figure out how to make a comment or request in a positive, supportive manner to bring happiness rather than guilt, shame, anger, or other negative responses.

After doing this faith project, decide how your own theology of happiness might inform a regular spiritual practice.

Faith in Action

Alone or with others, commit to noticing what makes you happy and what increases your happiness by increasing the happiness of others. Make a practice of deepening and increasing your experience of happiness and the happiness of others—a spiritual practice. Make time with others to share your experiences of happiness. Consider journaling about your happiness experiences.

WHAT MOVES US: WORKSHOP 3: STORY: HOSEA BALLOU'S CONVERSION

In 1789, Hosea Ballou attended the Baptist revival held in his hometown of Richmond, New Hampshire. Moved by the preaching during this event, which was touted as "The Great Reformation," Ballou, age 19, stepped forward to be baptized. Like his friends and the hundred or so others around him who also stepped forward to be saved, Ballou had been gripped by fear. But unlike the others professing their new, aching need for God's forgiveness and grace, Ballou was not fearful enough. He did not feel what he was supposed to feel: gut-wrenching fear. He believed the dominant Calvinist theology of his era which claimed God separated the elect from the damned before they were born and that except for these chosen few, all were doomed to eternal damnation, fire and brimstone for their sins. Yet, he did not feel clenched in the grip of an angry, vengeful, wrath-filled God described by the two preachers who led the revival. Ballou was upset because he wasn't upset enough. People were supposed to be terrified of this God and fearful that they might not be one of His chosen people.

Ballou described his predicament years later, in a letter to a friend: "I was much troubled in my mind because I thought I did not stand in such fear of the divine wrath as I ought to do, or as others had done before they found acceptance with God." Worse yet, the doctrines he was now supposed to believe about God and Christ rung hollow.

To figure out what was going on, Ballou turned to the Bible to make sense of the doctrines of his newly professed faith. His mind became troubled anew. It seemed to him that nothing in the Bible supported belief in the Baptist doctrines he was supposed to espouse: belief in eternal damnation for all human beings except a preordained "elect" few; belief in the sacrifice of Christ to reconcile an aggrieved God to sinful man; belief that Christ as the Son of God was also, at the same time, his own Father. Ballou's keenly rational mind rejected such notions as illogical and thus patently absurd. The Bible seemed to affirm Universalism—universal salvation for all—and Unitarianism—the unity of the Godhead rather than in a Triune God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

With these discoveries, Ballou felt happy. Happiness abounded in his heart. And he now knew why he had not felt fearful enough: There was nothing to fear. The God of wrath preached by angry ministers was a human-made God, a false God. By removing the false teachings and the errant theology, Ballou felt the God of love. Ballou felt loved and he was happy. But when Ballou tried to explain to local ministers what he felt and what he had discovered, they screamed at him about his burgeoning Universalist faith, rather than reason with him over the interpretation of biblical texts. So Ballou's Universalism and Unitarianism took firmer hold of his heart and his mind and his new, liberal faith now flowed forth from happiness. He believed that all human beings would be blessed in their afterlife. God condemns no one to eternal punishment and damnation. Universal salvation, Ballou discovered, is a grace-filled gift of an eternally loving God for humanity.

Ballou finally believed that our personal desires motivate our actions and all of them (benevolence, greed, self-sacrifice, love, etc.) boil down to one: the personal desire to feel internally happy.

HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCING HOSEA BALLOU

Hosea Ballou preached his liberal faith to everyday people, men and women of the laboring classes. He was a self-educated man from rural New Hampshire and Massachusetts who was spurned by the Boston Unitarian elite. But in no small part thanks to Ballou, by the end of the 19th century, one out of every eight Americans called themselves Universalists.

He was an author, a public lecturer, an itinerant preacher, editor of various Universalist journals and minister of the Second Universalist Society of Boston for a quarter of a century until his death in 1852, at age 81.

Hosea Ballou's most important theological work was *A Treatise on Atonement*. In this work he defined theology as a science of human experience. Theology is not a speculative art, it is always about human experience, so, he concluded, "we ought not to argue [over religious matters of] truth which we have no knowledge of by experience."

Ballou insisted that human beings are created to be fulfilled and happy. In Ballou's own words: "... if the Almighty, as we believe him to be, did not possess power sufficient to make all his creatures happy, it was not an act of goodness in him to create them . . . If it be granted that God has both power and will to save all men, it is granting all I want for a foundation of my faith." Ballou rejected the beliefs that human nature is fallen (doctrine of original sin) and that human beings are subject to eternal damnation (doctrine of the elect and the damned).

Ballou believed that human emotions prompt us to moral or immoral actions, so we are invited to strengthen the emotions that reap happiness for self and others. In Ballou's words: "We cannot be profitable to others unless we savor of the Spirit within us."

Ballou believed we have a God-given right to be happy. God is love, Ballou insisted. And when we feel this love we are happy.

Ballou, in sum, believed that a loving God would not condemn humanity to eternal damnation. Get rid of errant theology, Ballou said, and you will get rid of the clergy, politicians, and public figures who stoke fear in order to keep their own vested interests, personal greed, and moral corruption from public view.

Ballou's legacy to us as Unitarian Universalists today is our awareness of our God-given right to be happy. Hosea Ballou made human happiness a mandate of liberal faith.

HANDOUT 2: EXCERPT FROM A TREATISE ON ATONEMENT

From Hosea Ballou, A Treatise on Atonement in which, The Finite Nature of Sin is Argued, Its Cause and Consequences as such; The Necessity and Nature of Atonement; And its Glorious Consequences in the FINAL RECONCILIATION OF ALL MEN TO HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1902, 14th Edition), pp. 33-36.

The bold type in parts of the text is not original. It was added for Activity 4.

Man's major object, in all he does, is happiness; and were it not for that, he never could have any other particular object. What would induce men to form societies; to be at the expense of supporting government; to acquire knowledge; to learn the sciences, or till the earth, if they believed they could be as happy without as with? The fact is, man would not be the being that he now is, as there would not be any stimulus to action; he must become inert, therefore cease to be. As men are never without this grand object, so they are never without their wants, which render such an object desirable. But their minor objects vary, according as their understandings vary, and their passions differ.

Then, says the objector, there is no such thing as disinterested benevolence. I answer, words are used to communicate ideas; there is that often in our experience, which is meant by disinterested benevolence. An American is traveling in Europe; he meets in the street a young and beautiful fair, bathed in tears, her breast swollen with grief, and her countenance perfectly sad. His heart, fraught with the keenest sensibility, is moved compassionately to inquire the cause of her grief; he is informed that her father, in a late sickness, became indebted to his physician twenty guineas, for which he was that hour committed to gaol, when he had but partially recovered his health. Our traveller no sooner hears the story than he advances the twenty guineas to discharge the debt, and gives her fifty more as a reward for her generous concern. As our traveller did not expect any pecuniary reward, either directly or indirectly, his charity is called disinterested benevolence. But, strictly speaking, he was greatly interested; he was interested in the afflictions of father and child; their relief was his object, and charity his passion. Now did he not act for his own happiness? Yes, as much as ever a man did in life. What must have been his misery, possessing the same disposition, without the means to relieve? And what a sublime satisfaction he enjoyed by the bestowment of his favor! Sacred truth informs us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

We find some men honest and industrious who think, and think justly, that happiness is not to be found in any

other way. Others are indolent and knavish, and they expect to obtain happiness in so being. But they are deceived in their objects, and will finally learn that they must be, what conscience has often told them they ought to be, honest and just, in order to be happy.

The objector will say, to admit that our happiness is the grand object of all we do, destroys the purity of religion, and reduces the whole to nothing but selfishness. To which, I reply, a man acting for his own happiness, if he seek it in the heavenly system of universal benevolence, knowing that his own happiness is connected with the happiness of his fellow-men, which induces him to do justly and to deal mercifully with all men, he is no more selfish than he ought to be. But a man acting for his own happiness, if he seek it in the narrow circle of partiality and covetousness, his selfishness is irreligious and wicked.

I know it is frequently contended that we ought to love God for what he is, and not for what we receive from him; that we ought to love holiness for holiness' sake, and not for any advantage such a principle is to us. This is what I have often been told, but what I never could see any reason for, or propriety in. I am asked if I love an orange; I answer I never tasted of one; but I am told I must love the orange for what it is! Now I ask, is it possible for me either to like or dislike the orange, in reality, until I taste it? Well, I taste of it, and like it. Do you like it? says my friend. Yes, I reply, its flavor is exquisitely agreeable. But that will not do, says my friend; you must not like it because its taste is agreeable, but you must like it because it is an orange. If there be any propriety in what my friend says, it is out of my sight. A man is travelling on the sands of Arabia, he finds no water for a number of days; the sun scorches and he is exceedingly dry; at last he finds water and drinks to his satisfaction; never did water taste half so agreeably before. To say that this man loves the water because it is water, and not because of the advantage which he receives from it, betrays a large share of inconsistency. Would not this thirsty traveller have loved the burning sand as well as he did the water if it had tasted as agreeably and quenched his thirst as well? The sweet Psalmist of Israel said, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." And an apostle says, "We love him because he loved us first." What attribute do we ascribe to God that we do not esteem on account of its advantage to us? Justice would have been no more likely to be attributed to the Almighty than injustice if it had not first been discovered that justice was of greater advantage to mankind than injustice. And so of power, were it of no more advantage to human society than weakness, the latter would have been as likely to have been esteemed an attribute of God as the former. If wisdom were of no greater service to man than folly, it would not have been adored in the Almighty any more

than folly. If love were no more happifying to man than hatred, hatred would as soon have been esteemed an attribute of God as love.

Undoubtedly the Almighty loves without an influential object, as it would be erroneous to suppose that an infinite being could be operated upon. He loves because His nature is to love. An apostle says, "God is love." The sun does not shine because our earth influences it; it is

the nature of the sun to shine. But all created beings love because of influential objects; and they always love according to the influence which objects have on their minds and passions. It seems, then, says the objector, that our vices are not to be attributed to the devil, but to the influence which objects have on our minds. Surely the reader ought to expect that after I have denied the existence of a being, I should, likewise, deny his power.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: HOSEA BALLOU PORTRAIT



LEADER RESOURCE 2: BALLOU'S THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

This is a 30-minute activity.

Materials

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Leader Resource 1, Excerpt from *A Treatise on Atonement*
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation

- Post newsprint.
- Optional: Copy Leader Resource 1 for all participants.
- Optional: Read background information about Hosea Ballou. Suggestions:
 - [Ballou Family](#) entry in the online Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography
 - Ballou, Maturin M. [Biography of Hosea Ballou](#), by His Youngest Son, Maturin M. Ballou (Boston, 1852)
 - Cassara, Ernest. Hosea Ballou: The Challenge to Orthodoxy (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982)
 - Whittemore, Thomas. [Life of Rev. Hosea Ballou](#); with accounts of His Writings, and Biographical Sketches of His Seniors and Contemporaries in the Universalist Ministry, 4 volumes, 1854-55; vol. 1 (1854).

Description

If you have made copies of Leader Resource 1, distribute them. Read aloud this excerpt from Hosea Ballou's *A Treatise on Atonement*:

I know it is frequently contended that we ought to love God for what he is, and not for what we receive from him; that we ought to love holiness for holiness' sake, and not for any advantage such a principle is to us. This is what I have often been told, but what I never could see any reason for, or propriety in. I am asked if I love an orange; I answer I never tasted of one; but I am told I must love the orange for what it is! Now I ask, is it possible for me either to like or dislike the orange, in reality, until I taste it? Well, I taste of it, and like it. Do you like it? says my friend. Yes, I reply, its flavor is exquisitely agreeable. But that will not do, says my friend; you must not like it because its taste is agreeable, but you must like it because it is an orange. If there be any propriety in what my friend says, it is out of

my sight. A man is travelling on the sands of Arabia, he finds no water for a number of days; the sun scorches and he is exceedingly dry; at last he finds water and drinks to his satisfaction; never did water taste half so agreeably before. To say that this man loves the water because it is water, and not because of the advantage which he receives from it, betrays a large share of inconsistency. Would not this thirsty traveller have loved the burning sand as well as he did the water if it had tasted as agreeably and quenched his thirst as well? The sweet Psalmist of Israel said, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." And an apostle says, "We love him because he loved us first." What attribute do we ascribe to God that we do not esteem on account of its advantage to us?

Engage participants to respond to this reading by guiding a whole-group discussion with these questions:

- How is Ballou's 19th-century Universalist understanding of God manifested in Unitarian Universalism today?
- What could "love" as an abstract concept or an attribute of the divine be part of your personal theology? What place does it have in the worship life of the congregation?

Allow ten minutes for discussion.

Then, invite participants to move into groups of four, arranging themselves so each group includes people with as wide a range of experiences in the congregation as possible. Ask participants to take into account one another's age, gender, and primary type of congregational involvement (for example, the music program, religious education for children, adult programs, social justice work) and try to group themselves with people whose experiences have been different from their own. Arranging themselves may require participants to ask questions and learn new things about one another—so much the better!

Once the groups have formed, invite them to consider the ways in which Ballou's theology is manifested in various areas of congregational life. Remind them that Ballou's theology includes the human right to happiness.

Give the groups about ten minutes to work. Then invite groups to come together and share. List the responses on newsprint. Note responses that are repeated group to group and those which are unique to particular groups.

Seek assent from the group to publish the lists in the congregation's newsletter along with a brief explanation of Ballou's theology of happiness. Ask a volunteer to transcribe the lists and send them to the newsletter editor, or offer to do it yourself.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

This is a 30-minute activity.

Materials

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation

- Prepare and post newsprint with these questions:
 - What does it mean to be happy?
 - Do you believe that you personally have the right to happiness?
 - What is the difference between pursuing personal happiness and being selfish?
 - Ballou believed we can become happy by extending happiness to others. How can religious professionals encourage adults, youth, and children to act to enhance the happiness of others? How can we help congregants balance self-care (personal right to happiness) with acting to enhance the well-being and happiness of others?

Description

Invite participants to meet in groups of three or four and respond to Ballou's theology of happiness. Ask them to use the posted questions to guide their discussion. After 20 minutes, invite the groups to come together and to share insights or observations.

FIND OUT MORE

[The Ballou Family](#), online Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist biography

Ballou, Hosea. [*A Treatise on Atonement in which, The Finite Nature of Sin is Argued, Its Cause and Consequences as such; The Necessity and Nature of Atonement; And its Glorious Consequences in the FINAL RECONCILIATION OF ALL MEN TO HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS*](#) (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1902, 14th edition).

Ballou, Maturin M. [*Biography of Hosea Ballou*](#), by His Youngest Son, Maturin M. Ballou (Boston, 1852).

Cassara, Ernest. *Hosea Ballou: The Challenge to Orthodoxy* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

Whittemore, Thomas. [*Life of Rev. Hosea Ballou*](#); with accounts of His Writings, and Biographical Sketches of His Seniors and Contemporaries in the Universalist Ministry, 4 volumes, 1854-55; vol. 1 (1854).

WORKSHOP 4: WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

INTRODUCTION

Nothing is so hard as to root out bad passions, to be upright, at whatever the cost, and to be benevolent and charitable under all provocations and difficulties. — William Ellery Channing (1780-1842)

This workshop introduces William Ellery Channing's Theology of Emotional Struggle and invites them to test the relevance of Channing's theological assessment of emotional struggle for our own Unitarian Universalist faith today. Channing has been called "the single most important figure in the history of American Unitarianism" and recognized as the man who gave "the liberal Christians of his day a party platform." He was the celebrated minister of the Federal Street Church in Boston for 39 years, and a renowned man of letters whose essays, sermons, and discourses during the 19th century sold more than a 100,000 copies in Europe and America. Channing affirmed human beings' kindred nature with God; he said we "know God through our own soul;" he celebrated our "likeness to God," and confessed he met "perpetual testimonies to the divinity of human nature." Channing's theology was a rational celebration of our rational nature. We celebrate his legacy to us as part of our rational liberal faith tradition. But we do not often peer behind his rational faith to examine his theological understanding that the route to moral perfection was through control of emotions. Channing believed that our ongoing personal, internal struggle to gain control over our tumultuous emotions, immoral feelings, wanton desires, and inappropriate physical passions strengthened our moral character. Emotional struggle, Channing insisted, was a major way to develop the moral perfection of our character. A spirit founded, in part, on the "crucifixion of selfish affections," Channing insisted, animates the "real beauty of religion" and all its harmonious sentiments, views, and desires. How do we reconcile the extraordinary positive message we take from his celebration of rational human nature as divine with his harsh pronouncements against his own unwanted emotional struggles and his harsh treatment of his own body that made him an invalid for life? What can we learn from Channing's theology of emotional struggle that is informative, insightful, and productive for faith development of our head *and* our heart today?

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read the [William Ellery Channing entry](#) in the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography. Read Handouts 1 and 2 and Leader Resource 2. Use the questions that follow to help you understand the passages in Handout 2 and Leader Resource 2. You may wish to write your responses in your theology journal.

Handout 2

- Channing believed that "God is another name for human intelligence," as he says later in this sermon. The source of our intelligence is God, Channing says. God is the perfection of human nature. What do you feel are the pros and cons of these claims?
- Later in this sermon, Channing says that God is "unbounded spiritual energy." He believes that in proportion as we receive this spiritual energy, we can discern rays of light and hope even in evil, "that dark cloud that hangs over creation." How do you define "spiritual energy? For you, is it mental? Emotional? Sensate?

Leader Resource 2

Section I

- Channing, after careful reflection, considers his contempt for the woman of "active benevolence" mistaken. What, according to Channing, was the source of his mistaken contempt?
- Why does Channing believe that to be "in the world," he must throw away his "ridiculous ecstasies?"
- Why does Channing believe it a mistake to call him a stoic, that is, someone who is ruled only by the dictates of virtue and is singularly disinterested in the external world and the passions and emotions linked to it?

Selection II

- According to Channing, human nature is designed and created to love the God that the Bible calls upon us to love. This human awareness of God, Channing insists, produces a sublime, rational happiness in humans. Assume for a moment, that someone does not perceive the Infinite as Channing perceives it, as a source of unfailing happiness. How might Channing explain this? How would you explain it? Do you agree with Channing?

Selection III

- When Channing says we have "felt" a nature within us that is superior to our physical, brutish emotions, to what kind of feeling is he referring?

In other words, what does Channing mean when he says we can *feel* our intellectual nature? Draw on personal experience to determine if his claim makes sense to you. What, according to Channing, is an intellectual feeling? What, from his perspective, are physical, brutish emotions? Is love a physical emotion or an intellectual emotion or both? Explain.

- What does Channing mean when he says we can enlarge ourselves beyond our present self?
- What does Channing mean when he says that something eminently perfect invites us to move beyond our emotional bondage to earthly objects of pleasure? According to Channing, what is the nature and source of this invitation?
- For Channing, in what does true happiness consist?
- According to Channing, what prompts us to thirst for deliverance from sin?
- God, according to Channing, is the most worthy object of our hearts. In Channing's view, how does a feeling of God's eminence alter our consciousness of what our hearts should be fastened to?

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build historical knowledge about a Unitarian theology of emotional struggle
- Engage participants in thinking theologically about their own emotional struggle, as a spiritual practice
- Encourage participants to think about emotional struggle as well as reason as personal sources of their own liberal faith.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain basic knowledge about the life and work of William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), recognized today as the founder of American Unitarianism
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about personal emotional struggles as a theological concern and a spiritual practice.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Recalling Personal Experiences	15

Activity 2: Introducing William Ellery Channing	20
Activity 3: Personal Experience	30
Activity 4: Critical Reflection, Testing Channing	15
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read and reflect on the story, "William Ellery Channing's Struggle with His Unwanted Emotions," using some or all of the following to guide you:

- Compare how Channing handled his unwanted physical emotions with the way you personally handle your own unwanted physical and emotional distress. How are they similar? How do they differ?
- Respond to Channing's image and metaphor of a "crucifixion" of unwanted emotions.
- What cultural notions regarding masculinity and sexuality are reflected in the ongoing emotional struggles Channing describes in his journal? How are the cultural notions the same in our own time, and how do they differ?
- Is emotional struggle always stifling? Can it be transformative in ways that affirm both the head and the heart? Draw on personal experiences to answer these questions. When you are in the midst of emotional turmoil, what do or could you draw on to remember that your faith affirms the inherent worth and dignity of your head and your heart? How do you know you have inherent worth and dignity? What does the worth and dignity feel like? How does it show up in your life and in the lives of others?
- How is Channing's idea of making progress toward moral perfection reflected and also qualified in this story? How is moral progress reflected in your own Unitarian Universalist faith? Use personal stories to answer these questions.
- Do you think Channing despises a part of himself? If so, what part? Do you despise parts of yourself? Are they similar or different from the feelings Channing despises in himself?
- How can a Unitarian Universalist theology help us make sense of our own struggles with what we deem to be our worst feelings? Do this investigatory work as a Unitarian Universalist faith development and spiritual practice.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you read aloud Reading 651 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "The Great End in Religious Instruction" by William Ellery Channing, noting that this reading, found in our hymnbook is one of his most familiar writings, well-loved by Unitarian Universalists.

Invite participants to join in reading aloud the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: RECALLING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to share with the group a brief, personal example of a time you used physical activity to distract yourself from emotional turmoil.

Description of Activity

Introduce the workshop strategy using these or similar words:

Today we will use theological insights from the life and work of William Ellery Channing to help us focus attention on how we use our Unitarian Universalist faith to handle our own private, internal, personal emotional conflicts and

struggles. Channing's theology was a rational celebration of our rational nature. We celebrate his legacy to us as part of our rational liberal faith tradition. But we do not often peer behind his rational faith to examine his theology of emotional struggle. Channing believed that internal emotional struggles strengthen moral character and help perfect the human soul's likeness to God. His own struggles here, however, destroyed his physical health. How might you use your own internal emotional struggles to strengthen your moral character without breaking your physical wellbeing? How can we develop a positive liberal faith for both the head and the heart?

Invite participants to recall a personal experience from their own lives in which they wrestled with emotional turmoil and used a distracting physical activity to try to get a handle on their feelings. The experience might be a minor mishap rather than a major emotional trauma. Ask participants to recall details of the experience: Did they eat, shop, drink, watch TV, exercise, surf the web, work on a project late into the night, see a movie, go to a party? Allow two minutes of silence to give participants time to find their story.

Invite participants to think of what, in retrospect, they might have done differently so that they could have gained strength and insight from their emotional distress by addressing the source of their discontents, rather than getting lost in physical distractions. Allow a minute of silence for reflection.

Invite participants to form three-person breakout groups and share their insights of what they, in retrospect, could have done differently. Explain that each person will have two minutes to speak without interruption, followed by five minutes for small group conversation about insights they have gained from the three stories. Explain that you will tell them when to change speakers and when to move into conversation.

Watch the time and give signals when needed. After 11 minutes, invite participants back into the larger group. Invite them to share any further thoughts about what they learned about analyzing a personal emotional struggle in order to discern an insight.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Introducing William Ellery Channing](#) (included in this document)
- Handout 2, [Likeness to God](#) (included in this document)

- Story, "[William Ellery Channing's Struggle with His Unwanted Emotions](#)" (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [William Ellery Channing Portrait](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Computer and projector
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Copy the handouts and the story for all participants.
- Review the story so you can present it effectively.
- Prepare to project Leader Resource 1 or make copies.

Description of Activity

Project or distribute copies of Leader Resource 1. Briefly introduce William Ellery Channing as the "founder of American Unitarianism" and author of the 1819 Baltimore Sermon "Unitarian Christianity." Read or convey contextual information, using the paragraphs below as a guide.

Channing's 1819 Sermon, "Unitarian Christianity," brought Unitarianism out of the closet and helped Unitarianism emerge as a new religious tradition. In the sermon, he publicly affirmed what liberal Christians had been saying privately: He rejected Trinitarian dogma that made Christ equal to God and Calvinist creeds that demeaned the inherent worth and dignity of human nature.

Channing set aside the Calvinist image of God as wrathful, angry, and punitive, and rejected the portrayal of humans as irrevocably fallen, broken, and sinful. Channing insisted that God takes pleasure in making human beings happy and finds joy in encouraging the infinite progression of human beings toward the moral perfection of their souls.

Thanks in no small part to Channing, the affirmation of the worth and dignity of human nature became foundational for Unitarian faith. Human nature was now viewed as essentially sacred, perfectible, and moral. His essays, sermons, and discourses during the 19th century sold more than 100,000 copies in Europe and America. He gave the middle class a religion that affirmed what they personally experienced: progress, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as a rational, sacred, and political right.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about Channing's life, and invite participants to read it at home. Call attention to the bolded text and invite participants to consider if and how the idea of human

perfectibility is present in today's Unitarian Universalism and in their own theology. Distribute Handout 2 and read aloud the words of Channing, inviting further comment and observations.

Distribute the story, "Channing's 'Crucifixion' of his Unwanted Emotions." Say:

Channing believed that people could and should participate in their own moral progress, striving toward perfection as a being created in the image of God. In this story, we learn of some of his struggles for moral perfection as a young man. How do we reconcile the extraordinary positive message we take from his celebration of human nature as divine with his own harsh pronouncements against unwanted emotions and his harsh treatment of his own body which made him an invalid for life? What can we learn from Channing's theology of emotional struggle that is positive and productive for our faith today?

Invite participants, while listening, to keep their attention focused on the way Channing tried to physically develop and strengthen his moral character through a strict physical regime to control his unwanted emotions.

Read the story aloud.

ACTIVITY 3: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Write on newsprint, and post:
 - Compare how Channing handled his unwanted physical emotions with the way you personally handle your own unwanted physical and emotional distress. How are they similar? How do they differ?
 - Respond to Channing's image and metaphor of a "crucifixion" of unwanted emotions.
 - What cultural notions regarding masculinity and sexuality are reflected in the emotional struggles Channing describes in his journal?

- How are the cultural notions the same in our own time, and how do they differ?
- Is emotional struggle always stifling? Have you ever experienced it or can you imagine experiencing it as a positive religious practice in your own life?
- When you are in the midst of emotional turmoil, what do or could you draw on to remember that your faith affirms your inherent worth and dignity? How do you know you have inherent worth and dignity?
- How is Channing's idea of making progress toward moral perfection reflected in this story? Is the notion of making moral progress reflected in your own Unitarian Universalist faith?
- Recall a time when you were in emotional turmoil and felt better after you attended a Sunday worship service. What happened?

Description of Activity

Remind participants that Channing believed internal conflict strengthened our ability to make moral choices. He said, "We are tried as by fire, that we may come forth purer from the furnace. Our virtues are in peril, that we may hold them with a firmer grasp." (*Memoir*, vol. II, p. 33)

Invite participants to consider one or more of the questions you have posted and to write or draw their reflections in their journal. After five minutes, invite them to move once again into groups of three and share their reflections. Explain that each person will have three minutes to speak without interruption. Then invite each participant to offer, in one minute apiece, further thoughts and reflections based on insights they gained from listening to the thoughts and feelings of the others. Finally, invite participants to engage together in small group discussion. Remind them to be careful to express personal feelings about their own thoughts and insights rather than critiquing the thoughts and feelings of others. Ask each group to appoint a timekeeper so they know when to change speakers and when, finally, to move into conversation.

ACTIVITY 4: CRITICAL REFLECTION, TESTING CHANNING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Microphone

Description of Activity

Using the questions listed below, lead a whole group discussion about the issues discussed in small groups. Pay attention to the emotions named and discussed by the participants and keep participants' attention focused on these emotions. Remind them that Channing made emotional struggle a theological topic and a religious

practice for Unitarian faith. Give participants time to reflect: Do not fill silences with verbiage. Allow participants to find their voice. As theologian Nelle Morton would say, "Hear them into speech." If you demonstrate comfort with the pauses and the silence as participants take time to find their feelings, thoughts, and thus their voice, participants will learn to do the same. In other words, model this practice as a Unitarian Universalist spiritual discipline of compassionate presence and deep listening. Remember, it takes longer to think and talk about emotion than it does to think and talk about ideas.

Tell participants that each person will be given an opportunity to speak before anyone can speak twice to the same point or question. And, remind participants they need only speak if they want to. Tell them that they are being invited to reflect on their own experiences, feelings, thoughts, and reactions. Whenever someone tries to enter into debate with another participant about a point, call the discussion back to first-person statements about one's own experiences. You are not moderating a debate; you are facilitating personal reflections as a small group ministry project. Ask:

- What new thoughts and insights do you have about how you can struggle with conflicting emotions as a positive and transformative spiritual practice informed by your Unitarian Universalist faith?
- What surprised you most about your discovery or about the discoveries of others in this workshop?
- Recent surveys have found that almost universally, we Unitarian Universalists tend to describe personal experience as foundational to our liberal faith. Based on our work today, do you think more attention should be paid to our emotional dispositions when we talk about the personal experiences that deepen our own Unitarian Universalist faith?

Allow time at the end for each person who wants to speak to say something about their experiences doing the workshop. Keep this invitation as open ended as possible so that participants have the space to express what they feel. Do not comment on or try to summarize what has been said. Simply say "thank you," in an authentically compassionate and caring way.

Conclude by encouraging participants to continue to pay attention to the way they wrestle with conflicting emotions. Encourage them to do this work as a way of reflecting theologically about how their faith is linked to their feelings.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family. Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer as a benediction Reading 592 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "The Free Mind," by William Ellery Channing. Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be sure to be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What were some of our favorite moments of the workshop? What emotions came to the fore in you and in the participants?
- What were some of our most challenging moments? What emotions came to the fore in you and in the participants?

- What did we handle well as leaders? What sources of emotional strength did we call upon to stay the course?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around? What kind of emotional preparation will help us be better prepared for this spiritual work?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of our own leadership style and skills?
- What can we learn from leaders who have a different style and set of leadership skills that we admire and want to incorporate into our own leadership strategies?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks? Who will lead us in our opening and closing chalice lightings and meditations for our next group session?

TAKING IT HOME

Nothing is so hard as to root out bad passions, to be upright, at whatever the cost, and to be benevolent and charitable under all provocations and difficulties. — William Ellery Channing (1780-1842)

This workshop may have resonated with deep emotions or life-changing moments or experiences too tender to share. Find some uninterrupted time to journal, meditate, or take a walk to explore those tender times in your own way. How have those moments informed your faith journey? How have they led you to, or become woven into, your Unitarian Universalist faith?

Share your thoughts and stories with a trusted friend, a family member, your minister, or your workshop or small group ministry program. Invite others to reflect on their own moments of emotional struggle and ways their Unitarian Universalist faith may have helped them find spiritual regeneration.

Faith in Action

Pay attention to the feelings of others in any interactions where issues of faith or conscience come up. Make notes in your journal about what you observe and what you learn from this Unitarian Universalist theological spiritual practice.

STORY: WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING'S STRUGGLE WITH HIS UNWANTED EMOTIONS

Adapted from multiple sources, primarily the *Memoir of William Ellery Channing with Extracts from His Correspondents and Manuscripts, in Three Volumes*, William Henry Channing, ed. (Boston: Wm. Crosby and H.P. Nichols, fifth edition, 1851).

William Ellery Channing was born in Newport, Rhode Island to well-connected, but not financially prosperous, parents. According to Channing, his father was distant and aloof. He was, as Channing puts it, "a strict disciplinarian at home, and according to the mistaken notions of that time, kept me at too great a distance from him." Channing's mother could be, as one Channing biographer noted, "chillingly severe." Not surprisingly for someone reared in such an environment, Channing was "for the most part a grave and reflective" boy. As noted in the memoir compiled by Channing's nephew, Channing "was fond of lonely rambles on the beach; liked to go apart into some beautiful scene, with no other playmate than his kite... and according to his own statement, owed the tone of his character more to the influences of solitary thought than of companionship." But his loneliness was set aside when Channing went off to Harvard at age 15. There he made lifelong friends and joined fraternal clubs and societies. His life was bountiful with friendship.

After college, at age 18 Channing went to Virginia for a year and a half as a private tutor for the children of a wealthy slaveowner. The work relieved Channing of being an economic burden to his family in Rhode Island. His father had died five years earlier and his mother was left without adequate financial resources to care for her children. Channing's work as tutor also allowed him time to read in preparation for his subsequent training at Harvard for the ministry. His study routine was rigorous. He usually worked at his desk until two or three o'clock in the morning. Frequently, the sun would rise before he went to bed. When he did go to sleep, he often used the bare floor as his bed. This was his way of trying to overcome what he described as his effeminacy and his unwanted sexual fantasies. Once on the floor, he would spring up at any hour and walk about in the cold in an attempt to toughen his heart. Channing also experimented with his diet and did not exercise. As a result of these routines, he broke down his immune system and was infirmed for the rest of his life.

HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCING WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

Information drawn from sources including:

Channing, William Henry, *Memoir of William Ellery Channing with Extracts His Correspondents and Manuscripts, In Three Volumes*, (Boston, 1851).

Wright, Conrad, [*Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing, Emerson, Parker*](#) (Boston: Skinner House, 1984).

Channing has been called the single most important figure in the history of American Unitarianism. His 1819 sermon, "Unitarian Christianity," gave "the liberal Christians of his day a party platform," [Wright, *Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing, Emerson, Parker*]. He publicly affirmed what liberal Christians had been saying privately: He rejected Trinitarian dogma that made Christ equal to God and Calvinist creeds that demeaned the inherent worth and dignity of human nature, effectively bringing Unitarianism out of the closet. Thanks in no small part to Channing, liberal Christians no longer hid their objections to an orthodox Christianity and Unitarianism emerged as a new religious tradition.

Channing preached, lectured, and wrote texts that insisted that God takes pleasure in making human beings happy and finds joy in encouraging the infinite progression of human beings toward the moral perfection of their souls. He set aside the Calvinist image of God as wrathful, angry, and punitive and rejected the portrayal of humans as irrevocably fallen, broken, and sinful.

William Ellery Channing was born into a family of the Newton, Rhode Island elite. His maternal grandfather was a signer of the U.S. Constitution and his father, who was the District Attorney for Rhode Island, entertained in his home such men as George Washington and John Jay, another signer of the Constitution.

Harvard-educated, Channing brought together in his theological projects the Enlightenment God of Reason, the Biblical God of Christian Scriptures, the God of Piety known through a spiritual change of heart, and the God of Providence who acted through business and government affairs to enhance human life on earth. In this way, Channing was the culmination of the American Enlightenment and at the same time the transition point to a liberal faith that would eventually remove belief in God, the Bible, Christianity, or Christ as a requirement for Unitarian faith.

Human improvement, for Channing, was a divine mandate. Thanks in no small part to Channing, the affirmation of the worth and dignity of human nature became foundational for Unitarian faith. Human nature was now viewed as essentially sacred, perfectible, and moral. Channing's essays, sermons, and discourses during the 19th century sold more than 100,000 copies in Europe and America. He gave the middle class a religion that affirmed what they personally experienced: progress, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as a rational, sacred, and political right.

According to Channing, "The true happiness of man has its seat in the mind which God has breathed into us, in the enlargement of its powers, in the elevation of its sentiments, in the firmness and purity of its principles, in its ascent to its native heaven." Moreover, Channing believed that the religion he preached could help bring about "a moral renovation of the world." And as the years wore on, he expected "less and less from revolutions, political changes, violent struggles... from any outward modification of society. Corrupt institutions," Channing insisted, "will be succeeded by others equally, if not more, corrupt, whilst the root principle lives in the heart of individuals and nations; and the only remedy is to be found in a moral change, to which Christianity, and the Divine power that accomplishes it, are alone adequate."

HANDOUT 2: LIKENESS TO GOD

From "Likeness to God," a Discourse at the Ordination of the Rev. F.A. Farley, Providence, Rhode Island, 1828, found in *William Ellery Channing: Selected Writings*, David Robinson, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

In proportion as we approach and resemble the mind of God, we are brought into harmony with the creation; for, in that proportion, we possess the principles from which the universe sprung; we carry without ourselves the perfections, of which is beauty, magnificence, order, benevolent adaptations, and boundless purposes, and the results and manifestations. God unfolds himself in his works to a kindred mind. It is possible, that the brevity of these hints may expose to the charge of mysticism, what seems to me the calmest and clearest truth. I think, however, that every reflecting man will feel, that likeness to God must be a principle of sympathy or accordance with his creation; for the creation is a birth and shining forth of the Divine Mind, a work through which his spirit breathes. In proportion as we receive this spirit, we possess within ourselves the explanation of what we see. We discern more and more of God in every thing, from the frail flower to the everlasting stars. Even in evil, that dark cloud which hangs over creation, we discern rays of light and hope, and gradually come to see, in suffering and temptation, proofs and instruments of the sublimest purposes of Wisdom and Love.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING PORTRAIT



LEADER RESOURCE 2: MEMOIR OF WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING — EXCERPTS

Selections from *Memoir of William Ellery Channing with Extracts from His Correspondence and Manuscripts*, In Three Volumes, William Henry Channing, ed. (Boston, 1851).

Here are three excerpts from Volume I of Channing's Memoir.

I.

My whole life has been a struggle with my feelings. Last winter I thought my self victorious. But earth-born Antaeus [giant from Greek mythology who drew strength from Gaia, the earth, his mother.] has risen stronger than ever. I repeat it, my whole life has been a struggle with my feelings. Ask those with whom I have lived, and they will tell you that I am a stoic. I almost thought so myself. But I only smothered a fire which will one day consume me. I sigh for tranquil happiness. I have long wished that my days might flow along like a gentle stream which fertilizes its banks and reflects in its clear surface the face of heaven. But I can *only wish* it. I still continue sanguine, ardent, and inconstant [sic]. I can still remember the days when I gloried in the moments of rapture, when I loved to shroud myself in the gloom of melancholy. You may remember them too. But I have grown wiser, as I have grown older. I now *wish* to do good in the world . . . I must throw away those ridiculous ecstasies, and form myself to habits of piety and benevolence. One of the reasons why I dislike the rapture and depression of spirit, which we used to encourage at college, is probably this, — I find none to share them with me.

"The other day, I handed to a lady a sonnet of Southey's, which had wrung tears from me. 'It is pretty,' said she, with a smile. 'Pretty!' echoed I, as I looked at her; 'Pretty!' I went home. As I grew composed, I could not help reflecting that the lady who had made this answer was universally esteemed for her benevolence. I knew that she was goodness itself. But still she wanted feeling. 'And what is feeling?' said I to myself. I blushed when I thought more on the subject. I found that the mind was just as passive in that state which I called 'feeling,' as when it received any impressions of sense. One consequence immediately struck me, that there was no *moral merit* in possessing feeling. Of course there can be no crime in wanting [lacking] it. 'Well,' continued I, 'I have just been treating with contempt a woman of *active* benevolence, for not possessing what I must own it is not crime to want [lack]. Is this just? I then went on to consider, whether there were not many persons who possessed this boasted feeling, but who were still deficient in *active* benevolence. A thousand

instances occurred to me. I found myself among the number, 'It is true,' said I, 'that I sit in my study and shed tears over human misery. I weep over a novel. I weep over a tale of human woe. But do I ever relieve the distressed? Have I ever lightened the load of affliction? My cheeks reddened at the question: a cloud of error burst from my mind. I found that virtue did not consist in feeling, but in *acting from a sense of duty*"

II.

The love of God which the Scriptures call us to cherish, and which we are formed to attain and enjoy, is not a blind, irrational sentiment. It is founded on the clearest views of the understanding, on the abundant evidence we possess, that there is an Infinite Being, in whom reside wisdom, and power, and goodness, without beginning, or end, or any limit; who sustains to us the near and tender relation of Creator, Father, Benefactor, and Lord; whose commands are equitable and kind; and who is willing to pardon our offences on the terms of repentance. It is the offering of the heart to this best of beings; it venerates his majesty, esteems and adores his excellence, is grateful for his goodness, rejoices in his felicity and in the felicity of his creation, implores his forgiveness, resigns itself to his providence, and desires to do his will; and is this an affection to be decried and renounced? In the love of God are united the most delightful affections we exercise towards fellow-beings, — filial love, thankfulness to benefactors, reverence for the great and good, sympathy with the happy, and universal goodwill. These pure affections all meet in the love of God; and are refined, exalted, and rendered sources of inconceivably high delight, in consequence of the infinite amiableness and superiority of the Being whom we love . . . True love of God illuminates the darkness of the present life, and is a foretaste of the felicity of heaven.

... "In considering the great happiness of possessing the Divine favor, I first observe, that they who love God must derive an inexpressible joy from the mere consciousness that they are beloved by such a Being, without regards to the benefits which flow from this favor . . .

My friends, did your hearts never beat with joy, when you have seen the eye of a beloved and revered friend and benefactor fixed on you with tenderness and approbation; and can you be wholly insensible to the pleasure of him who feels the presence of God wherever he goes, and is able to say, 'The infinite Parent of the universe is my approving friend'? Can anyone be so blind as not to see that here is a source of unfailing, or increasing happiness? ... You who know not from experience the pure and joyful sensations which are here described, can you form no conception of the happiness of that man who looks round with adoring humility on the immensity of creation, on the endless

variety of Divine blessings, and in the midst of his reverence and gratitude feels that the universal Parent, though encircled in his majesty, thinks of him continually, despises not his humble offering, is well pleased with his sacrifices of praise and love, and bears towards him an increasing, an unbounded affection? Are you so debased, as to prefer the sordid pleasures of sense, of the world, to a happiness so rational, so sublime? Can you consent to live without this delightful conviction, that the God who made you, the best of beings, delights in you as his children and servants?

III.

Have you not felt that you possess a nature far exalted above the brutes, souls infinitely superior to your bodies, souls which ally you to higher orders of being, —that you are capable of knowledge, of goodness, of virtuous friendship, of intercourse with heaven? and has not an inward voice admonished you that you were made for this felicity, and has not this felicity excited some thirst, some earnest desire? Have you never felt that this intellectual nature admits to endless improvement, — that whilst the body grows for a few years, and to a limited extent, the soul has no bounds, —that you may enlarge your being, leave your present selves behind, and take a new rank in creation? Have you never lifted an aspiring eye to the eminence which has thus invited you, and been pained and humbled by your sloth, your low, earthly views, your reluctance to become what you might be, what you were made to be? and have you not,

for a moment at least, spurned the bondage of your passions, and resolved to press forward to the excellence and liberty of children of God? Have not objects of a noble character, generous and useful pursuits, sometimes presented themselves to you, and brought with them the consciousness, that he alone is happy and excellent who gives himself up to them? and have you not blushed at the recollection of the narrow and trifling objects which have filed your minds and wasted your time? and have you not wished to live for something wider, for ends which embrace the best interests of others as well as your own? Has the thought of the great, good, and perfect God never come home to you with force? and have you never felt that he is the most worthy object of your hearts, that in forsaking him you are wretched and guilty, that there is no happiness to be compared with loving him, and enjoying his love and presence? and have you not felt some pain at your distance from him, some desire to return to your Father, some thirst after the knowledge and favor of this best of beings ... ? Have you never looked into your own hearts, and shed tears over the ruin which you there beheld, over your disordered passions, your prejudices, your errors, your ingratitude towards God, your injustice and insensibility towards men? and have you not thirsted after deliverance from sin, after a better state, after that perfection, the idea of which has not been obliterated by human apostasy, and the hope of which is one of the first and most powerful impulses towards the renovation of our nature?"

LEADER RESOURCE 3: CHANNING'S THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

This is a 30-minute activity.

Description

How does our congregation pay attention to our individual experiences of emotional struggle? Is the congregation a place where people can bring their whole selves, even when they are feeling less-than-perfect?

Reflect on your own experiences of emotional struggle, and consider the places where you found support. Sunday sermons? Pastoral counseling? Friendships? Small groups? Working on a service project? Consider the ways our congregation is effective in supporting people who are engaging an emotional struggle. What systems—both formal and informal—work well? What needs to be strengthened? What do we need to do more?

Consider how you could most effectively share your observations and suggestions with the congregation. It is recommended that you name the things that are going well and could be emulated and expanded, rather than list deficiencies the congregation should address. What people or group(s) within the congregation can best focus on the congregation's support for people at times of emotional struggle? the congregation's ability to embrace emotional struggle as part of each person's faith journey?

LEADER RESOURCE 4: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

This is a 25-minute activity.

Description

Consider these questions as you reflect on the place of Channing's theology in contemporary Unitarian Universalism:

- How do we help congregants acknowledge that each of us struggles with inner turmoil and unwanted emotions?
- Channing's study routine was surely not a way contemporary Unitarian Universalists would recommend to deal with unwanted emotions. Channing paid a dear price for the way he chose to battle those emotions. What ways do contemporary Unitarian Universalists try to deal with unwanted emotions that can be just as damaging as the method chosen by Channing?
- How do we encourage truth-telling in our congregations about emotional turmoil? In what ways can we support adults, young adults, youth, and children, in developmentally-appropriate ways, to learn and grow from their inner turmoil and to deepen their faith?

FIND OUT MORE

Channing, William Ellery, *William Ellery Channing: Selected Writings*, David Robinson, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985). With special attention to "Unitarian Christianity," "The Moral Argument Against Calvinism," "Likeness to God," and "Self-Culture."

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Mendelsohn, Jack, *Channing: The Reluctant Radical, A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1971), pp. 43-45.

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Thandeka, "New Words For Life," *A Language of Reverence* (Chicago: Meadville Lombard Press, 2004), pp. 99-103.

Wallace, Herbert Wallace, "The Intellectual Background of William Ellery Channing," *Church History*, Volume VII (1938), Published by The American Society of Church History.

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WORKSHOP 5: MARGARET FULLER

INTRODUCTION

What is done here at home in my heart is my religion. — Margaret Fuller (1810-1850)

This workshop introduces Margaret Fuller's Liberal Theology of the Human Heart. The workshop tests the relevance of her theological legacy for our religious lives as Unitarian Universalists today. Fuller, once called "America's first famous European revolutionist since Thomas Paine," taught America how to think, feel, and act with non-dogmatic, life-affirming spiritual integrity. She was an international advocate for human rights the first editor of *The Dial*, the Transcendentalist literary magazine; and author of five books and almost 350 articles, essays, and poems. Fuller was America's first major foreign correspondent, spending four years in Europe reporting on and supporting, among other things, Italy's attempted republican revolution and one of 19th-century America's most highly paid public lecturers. She showed Americans how the human heart transforms liberal faith into action. Can she help us today to find our religion of the human heart?

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read the [Margaret Fuller](#) entry on the [Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography](#) website for an overview of her life. As you read, keep in mind that this theological workshop treats her tract, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, as a human rights document for the liberation of men as well as women. Also keep in mind that Fuller's faith was liberal religion with neither creeds nor doctrinal claims.

Read the story, handouts, and Leader Resource 2, At Concord with the Emersons, and, reflect on some or all of the questions provided here to help you better understand Fuller. Look for connections among Fuller's beliefs about feelings, liberal faith, thought and action. You may wish to write your responses in your theology journal.

- Fuller says she and Emerson ("Waldo") interchanged facts "but no conversation." According to Fuller, what is the difference between talking about facts with someone and having a conversation?
- Fuller says that in silence, she and Emerson can "see things together." What does it mean to see

something together with someone else? Why does she consider this intimate?

- Fuller says that "the beauty [of nature] does not stimulate me to ask *why*." Why does she feel that her existence is "filled out" by nature? How does nature speak the "word that is in her heart"? What is the difference between a "god of love" and a "god of truth" for Fuller? Do you make this kind of distinction in your own faith? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Fuller claims that Ellery Channing, her brother-in-law, is "too ideal," and notes that "Ideal people (always) anticipate their lives, and they make themselves and everybody around them restless, by always being before hand with themselves." What does Fuller mean? Do you agree with her?
- Fuller notes that Emerson has little patience with "mere life." Why does she praise and celebrate "mere life"? Do you? Explain.
- Summarize the difference in attitude toward marriage between Emerson and Fuller. With whom do you more agree and why?
- Fuller says "Nothing makes me so anti-Christian, so anti-marriage as these talks with L[idian], [Emerson's wife]." How does Lidian provoke Fuller in this way?
- Fuller acknowledges her wish to live in the red room and have Emerson to read poems to her. Were you surprised by this wish? Explain.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build historical knowledge about an emotional link between religious experience and social action in our liberal faith tradition
- Engage participants in thinking theologically about feelings of hope in the human heart as a spiritual binding agent for social action.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain basic knowledge about the life and work of Margaret Fuller (1810-1850)
- Examine Fuller's theology for a model for exploring emotional integrity as a human right and a spiritual practice
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about the emotional foundations of their own faith.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Losing Heart and Finding It Again	10
Activity 2: Introducing Margaret Fuller	20
Activity 3: Small Group Reflection, Testing Fuller	40
Activity 4: Large Group Reflection	10
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read Leader Resource 2, At Concord with the Emersons. Use these questions to help you find connections between your own theology and Fuller's:

- Fuller says, "What is done here at home in my heart is my religion." What does she mean? Where do you locate your religion? In your head, your heart, both, or somewhere else?
 - Fuller declares "A path has been appointed me." Has a pathway been appointed you? How do you know this?
- Read the story "Margaret Fuller's Mystical Experience." Think about:
- What elements of her story resonate for you, challenge you, or trouble you?
 - Have you ever had what you might describe as a mystical experience?

You may wish to write your responses to in your theology journal.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you read aloud these words from Women of the Nineteenth Century by Margaret Fuller:

I stand in the sunny noon of life. Objects no longer glitter in the dews of morning, neither are yet softened by the shadows of evening. Every spot is seen, every chasm revealed. Climbing the dusty hill, some fair effigies that once stood for symbols of human destiny have been broken; those I still have with me show defects in this broad light. Yet enough is left, even by experience, to point distinctly to the glories of that destiny; faint, but not to be mistaken streaks of the future day ... Always the soul says to us all, Cherish your best hopes as a faith, and abide by them in action.

Invite participants to join in reading aloud the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: LOSING HEART AND FINDING IT AGAIN (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Prepare to relate an experience from your own life of when you tucked away your personal feelings in order to get by.

Description of Activity

Introduce the workshop strategy using these or similar words:

Today we will use personal insights from Margaret Fuller to help us focus attention on how we sometimes lose heart and how our religious faith helps us to regain what we have lost: a deeply private, personal sense of integrity and wholeness. Fuller had to hide what she felt. But she refused to "go mad," as she put it. Instead, she went back to the place where she had lost heart.

Invite participants to recall a personal experience from their own lives, an experience in which they were discouraged and tucked away their feelings in order to get by. Explain that it is appropriate to focus on a minor mishap, not necessarily a major emotional trauma. Invite participants to find their story in silence, and then to write briefly about their experience in their theology journal. Allow four minutes for writing.

Then, invite participants to consider what they did or continue to do that helps restore their emotional and spiritual wholeness. Allow another four minutes for writing or reflecting. Signal when time is up.

As the workshop unfolds, invite participants whether recalling their own experiences of losing heart and finding it again is helping them understand Fuller's story.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING MARGARET FULLER (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Introducing Margaret Fuller](#) (included in this document)
- Story, "[Margaret Fuller's Mystical Experience](#)" (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [Margaret Fuller Portrait](#) (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story so you can present it effectively.
- Copy Handout 1 and the story for all participants.
- Prepare to project or make copies of Leader Resource 1.
- Arrange for two volunteers to read the story, one serving as the narrator and the other reading the excerpts from Fuller's own writings. If possible, provide the story to volunteers before the workshop.

Description of Activity

Project or distribute copies of Leader Resource 1.

Introduce Margaret Fuller, using these or similar words:

Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) was a prolific and talented writer, a creative thinker, and one of the pre-eminent United States human rights advocates. She was the first editor of *The Dial*, the Transcendentalist's literary magazine. She was the first major American foreign correspondent and the first literary editor of a major U.S. metropolitan newspaper (*the New York Tribune*).

Margaret's upbringing sheds important light on her later work. Her father, Timothy Fuller, Jr., was also her tutor. He was a staunch, old line Unitarian rationalist and a public figure. He tyrannically ruled over every aspect of Margaret's life and endeavored to educate her as the boy he had wanted in his oldest child. Paternal love from this man was earned rather than freely given. Fuller conformed. Biographer Joel Myerson notes that by age fifteen, her scholarly routine, including reading literary and philosophical works in four languages, lasted from five in the morning until eleven at night. The result: extreme achievement.

Like father, like daughter. As she grew up, she was popularly stereotyped as "habitually sneering, scoffing, and arrogant."

Fuller was a person with a brilliant mind who struggled with cultural notions that women could not be intellectual. As she matured, her life experiences led her both to feel compassion for others and to understand the ways in which she needed to embrace both her emotional life and her intellectual gifts. She was keenly aware of the limits placed on women in the society in which she lived and in 1845 published the feminist classic, *Women in the Nineteenth Century*. As Fuller succeeded in joining head to heart through mystical experiences, she became an international advocate for human rights. She called for a new humanity for her colleagues and peers, the hyper-rational Boston Unitarian elite.

A critic of both traditional and transcendental Unitarian dogma, Fuller preached liberal religious freedom, saying "I have pledged myself to nothing. God and the soul and nature are all my creed, subdivisions are unimportant.... I act for myself, but prescribe for none other." Fuller had heartfelt hope, transformed into action. And so she said, "the soul says to us all: Cherish your best hopes as a faith, and abide by them in action. Such shall be the effectual fervent means to their fulfillment."

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about Fuller's life, and invite participants to read it at home.

Distribute the story and invite participants to listen as the two volunteers read it aloud. After the reading, ask participants to reflect in silence on the events of Fuller's life and her account of her mystical experience. Ask them to consider these questions in the silence of their own thoughts or to respond in their theology journals:

- Which parts of the narrative resonate for you?
- Which parts challenge or trouble you?
- Have you ever had what you would describe as a mystical experience?
- Have you ever experienced a moment that changed the direction of your life?

Allow five minutes for this reflection.

Now explain to participants that the stage had already been set for Fuller to look to her heart for her religion, using these or similar words:

By the time she recounted her earlier mystical experience, Fuller had already rejected the cold rationalism of the traditional Unitarian religious services as well as the ungrounded sentiments of her Transcendentalist friends who seem to have little sympathy with mere life and did not "seem to see the plants grow, merely [to] rejoice in their energy." She had also stripped away the theological overlays of the revivalist preachers and Baptist enthusiasts. What remained for Fuller was a profoundly personal sense that feelings were not criminal. She knew that thoughts and feelings are linked.

Her writings including *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, and the life experiences into which she threw herself reflected her new understanding. She brought both her intellectual gifts and her compassion to her writing and speaking, becoming a strong advocate for liberation and civil rights for all.

ACTIVITY 3: SMALL GROUP REFLECTION, TESTING FULLER (40 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Prepare and post newsprint with these questions:
 - Are there parallels between any aspect of Fuller's story and your own?
 - Were you able to recover the feelings in your heart you had lost or were forbidden to feel? How?
 - How did you feel after you had recovered you lost feelings?
 - How would you describe the recovery of your feelings as a moral and/or a spiritual practice?
 - Do your true feelings have anything to do with your personal sense of power?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to return to their groups of three and to share with one another the stories of losing heart and finding it again that they recorded in their journals at the beginning of the workshop. Explain, using these or similar words:

Each of you is invited to share your story of losing heart and finding it again while the other two listen and do not comment. Fuller believed that when we pay radical attention to our feelings and seek to understand what we feel, we can follow an internal path to the source of our sense of wellbeing: the divine spirit within each of us. After each story has been told, each of you is invited to offer personal insights only about your own story and personal insights gained by listening to the stories of others. You will have ten minutes.

Signal the group when time is up. Then, invite participants to use a similar process to share thoughts and feelings from their theology journal they wrote in response to Fuller's biography and the story of her mystical experience. Allow ten minutes.

Signal when time is up, and call attention to the newsprint you have posted. Invite participants to reflect on one or more of the questions—in silence or by writing or drawing in their theology journals. Allow five minutes.

Finally, invite participants to share with the other members of their group their thoughts and feelings based on all that has been said. What insights have they gained? On what do they now want to focus, in their own theological work, to more deeply understand the role of feelings in their religious lives? Remind participants to reflect deeply on their own thoughts and feelings and how they have been affected by listening to the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the other members of the group. Explain that this is an exercise in deep reflection and compassionate listening rather than an invitation to critique the feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences of others. Encourage participants to do this work as a spiritual practice of deep listening and deep reflection. Allow fifteen minutes.

ACTIVITY 4: LARGE GROUP REFLECTION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare and post newsprint with these questions:
 - What have you learned or now want to think more deeply about from exploring your ability to take heart when you have lost heart?
 - Would you call the power to renew your feelings a spiritual experience? Why?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to reflect on Margaret Fuller's liberal theology of the human heart by offering comments, observations and reflections in response to the questions you have posted on newsprint. Invite each person who wishes to speak to do so before any person speaks a second time.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook

- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family.

Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer as a benediction Reading 575 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "A New Manifestation" by Margaret Fuller. Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?

- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

What is done here at home in my heart is my religion. — Margaret Fuller (1810-1850)

Focus your intention to try and notice yourself or someone else struggling to keep their personal integrity intact—that is, struggling to take heart. What can you do as a practice of your faith to help yourself or someone else stay the course?

Decide, after doing the project, whether a faith in action theology of the human heart strategy should become part of your spiritual practice.

Faith in Action

Investigate ongoing social justice and service projects that engages a number of people in your congregational community, or a local interfaith project (food pantry, soup kitchen, advocacy for fair housing, and voter registration are some possibilities). Invite some who regularly give time to the project to come speak with the group. Ask them to describe the beginnings of their own involvement and share what sustains their involvement over time. Have they, like Fuller, embodied "hope" in their actions? Are there other emotions that call them to involvement in the project? As a group, volunteer time to help with the project.

STORY: MARGARET FULLER'S MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Based on multiple sources, particularly a letter from Margaret Fuller to Caroline Sturgis, October 22, 1840. The letter may be found at Houghton Library, Harvard University (call number MS Am 1221 (242)).

By the time Margaret Fuller was nine, she read literature in four languages, translated Virgil and Cicero, and wrote literary critiques of major European philosophic and literary texts. Each night, at the end of Margaret's grueling day of scholarship, when her father returned home from work he would enter her bedroom, awaken her by kissing her on the lips, then carry her to his study and make her recount what she had learned during the day. Reflecting on the years she endured this paternal, invasive abuse, Fuller said: "I did not go mad, as many would do, at being continually roused from my dreams. I had too much strength to be crushed, —and since I must put on the fetters, could not submit to let them impede my motions. My own world sank deep within, away from the surface of my life; in what I did and said I learned to have reference to other minds. But my true life was only the dearer that it was secluded and veiled over by a thick curtain of available intellect, and that coarse, but wearable stuff woven by the ages, — Common Sense."

Fuller's father made the nature and manner of his love for her very clear: It must be earned, as he repeatedly told her. He was tyrannical against his wife, Margaret Crane, for any infraction, and when away, threatened by letter, upon his return, to forcefully remind her of her place. Margaret read all of these letters and learned to conform to his absolute desires and expectations of her. When her younger sister died and her mother emotionally withdrew, Margaret became absolutely dependent upon her father for any show of affection. He was bitter, sarcastic, arrogant, snide and domineering. As an adult so, too, was she. But not all of her succumbed to her father, as she explained in a letter written in November 1832 to her friend James F. Clarke: "I have often told you I have two souls and they seem to roll over one another in the most incomprehensible way — All my tastes and wishes point one way and seem forced the other way."

After her father died of cholera in 1835, Fuller undertook the grueling work of uniting her two souls: her male-trained intellect and her inmost personal feelings and intuitions as a woman. She wanted to become an intelligent woman, rather than a woman with a man's mind. This union of mind and heart, body and intellect was hard won. To this end, she secluded herself away to mourn her father's death and at the same time to find her own life. She found the point of contact for her sundered soul. She said she had discovered the divine

within her. For her, it was at one and the same time a mystical experience and a transformation of herself into a human rights advocate. She described what happened in her October 22, 1840 letter to her dear friend Caroline Sturgis

... I can say very little now, scarce a word that is not absolutely drawn from me at the moment. I cannot plunge into myself enough. I cannot dedicate myself sufficiently. The life that flows in upon me from so many quarters is too beautiful to be checked. I would not check a single pulsation. It all ought to be; — if caused by any apparition of the Divine in me I could bless myself like the holy Mother. ... Oh Caroline, my soul swells with the future. The past, I know it not All the souls I ever loved are holy to me, their voices sound more and more sweet yet oh for an hour of absolute silence, dedicated, enshrined in the bosom of the One.

Yet the cross, the symbol you have chosen seems indeed the one. Daily, hourly it is laid upon me. Tremulously I feel that a wound is yet to be given. ... Oh the prophetic dread and hope and pain and joy. My Caroline, I am not yet purified. Let the lonely Vestal watch the fire till it draws her to itself and consumes this mortal part. Truly you say I have not been what I am now yet it is only transformation, not alteration. The leaf became a stem, a bud, is now in flower. Winds of heaven, dews of night, circles of time, already ye make haste to convert this flower into dead-seeming seed—yet Caroline far fairer shall it bloom again ...

[I]n my deep mysterious grottoes I feared no rebuff, I shrank from no publicity, I could not pause yet ever I sobbed and wailed over my endless motion and foamed angrily to meet the storm-winds which kept me pure ...

And then something absolutely amazing happened in the midst of Fuller's account of her mystical experience. A past recollection rose to her thoughts with what she called "charm unspeakable." Fuller then described this new thought: her experience a few years earlier, of a winter night she spent attending to a neighbor who had tuberculosis and was dying from the effects of a botched abortion. That experience had taken place shortly after her own father's death. She recounted being ...

in the sick chamber of a wretched girl in the last stage of a consumption. It was said she had profaned her maiden state, and that the means she took to evade the consequences of her stain had destroyed her health and placed her on this bed of death. The room was full of poverty, base thoughts, and fragments of destiny. As I raised her dying head it rested against my bosom like a clod that should never have been taken from the valley. On my soul brooded a sadness of

deepest calm ... I gazed into that abyss [termed guilt] lowest in humanity of crime for the sake of sensual pleasure[.] [M]y eye was steadfast, yet above me shone a star, pale, tearful, still it shone, it was mirrored from the very blackness of the yawning gulf. Through the shadows of that night ghost-like with step unlistened for, unheard assurance came to me. O, it has ever been thus, from the darkest comes my brightness, from Chaos depths my love. I returned with the morning star. No one was with me in the house. I unlocked the door [and] went into the silent room where but late before my human father dwelt. It was the first winter of my suffering health the musings and the vigils of the night had exhausted while exalting me. The cold rosy winter dawn and then the sun. I had forgotten to wind the clock the day marked itself. I lay there, I could not resolve to give myself food. The day was unintentionally a fast. Sacredest thoughts were upon it, and I comprehended the meaning of an ascetic life.

The Angel that meets the pious monk beside the bed of pestilence and low vice, that dwells with him in the ruined hut of his macerated body, hovered sweet though distant before me also. At times I read the Bible at times [poet William] Wordsworth[.] I dwelt in the thoughtful solitudes of his Excursion I wandered like his white doe The sunset of that day was the same which will shine on my last hour here below. — Winter is coming now. I rejoice in her bareness, her pure shroud, her judgment-announcing winds. These will help me to dedicate myself, all these Winter spirits will cradle my childhood with strange and mystic song. Oh Child who would'st deem thee mine canst thou read what I cannot write. No only one soul is there that can lead me up to womanhood and baptize me to gentlest May. Is it not ready? I have strength to wait as a smooth bare tree forever, but ask no more my friends for leaves and flowers or a bird haunted bower.

HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCING MARGARET FULLER

Margaret Fuller was:

- A pre-eminent United States human rights advocate
- The first major U.S. foreign correspondent, spending four years in Europe reporting on and supporting, among other things, Italy's failed socialist revolution
- The first literary editor of a major U.S. metropolitan newspaper (*The New-York Tribune*)
- One of 19th-century America's most highly paid public lecturers
- The first editor of *The Dial*, the Transcendentalists' literary magazine
- Author of five books and almost 350 articles, essays, and poems
- The first woman to step foot in and also to use Harvard University's library.

Sarah Margaret, as Fuller was known to her family, was born in 1810, the first child of Margarett Crane Fuller and Timothy Fuller, Jr. Margaret Fuller's father, Timothy Fuller, Jr., was also her tutor. He was a staunch, old-line Unitarian rationalist, a lawyer who served four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, ran but did not win election as Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor, and finally became a (failed) gentleman farmer.

Fuller's autobiographical account of her early years was not published by its author, but rather after her death by her friends. The account reveals a father who tyrannically ruled over every aspect of Margaret's life endeavoring to raise her as the boy he had wanted as his oldest child. Paternal love from this man was earned rather than freely given. Fuller conformed. The result: extreme achievement. "By age fifteen," as biographer and editor Joel Myerson notes, "her schedule included reading literary and philosophical works in four languages, during a day that lasted from five in the morning until eleven at night. The only break in this scholarly routine was the few hours reserved for walking, singing, and playing the piano."

Like father, like daughter. She was popularly stereotyped as "habitually sneering, scoffing, and arrogant." Her biographer Charles Capper notes that her friend and colleague Ralph Waldo Emerson dismissed these kinds of negative comments as "superficial judgment." What "some heard as an arrogant tone, [Emerson] quipped, 'was only the pastime necessity of her talent.' Nevertheless, he, too, was bothered by her egotism.

Fuller was a person with a brilliant mind who struggled with cultural notions that women could not be intellectual. Her life experiences led her both to feel compassion for others and to understand the ways in which she needed to embrace both her emotional life and her intellectual gifts. She was keenly aware of the limits placed on women in the society in which she lived and in 1845 published the feminist classic, *Women in the Nineteenth Century*. Fuller succeeded in joining head to heart through mystical experiences, she grew beyond the transcendentalist philosophy which had been so important to her and became an international advocate for human rights in America. She preached freedom for the enslaved African; economic rights for the poor; federal rights for Native Americans; and civil rights for all women. She called for a new humanity for her colleagues and peers, the hyper-rational Boston Unitarian elite. Fuller believed that these men did not sufficiently consider, as biographer Meg McGavran Murray succinctly put it, "the role of emotions in our lives." She became a critic of both traditional and transcendental Unitarian dogma, preaching liberal religious freedom, saying "I have pledged myself to nothing. God and the soul and nature are all my creed, subdivisions are unimportant . . . I act for myself, but prescribe for none other."

After a time in Italy first as a correspondent reporting on the Italian revolution, she married Giovanni Angelo, the Marchese d'Ossoli, one of the supporters of the revolution, and gave birth to a son. In 1850, on a return trip to the United States, the young family was drowned in a shipwreck off the coast of Long Island. Fuller friends and family members struggled afterward to make sense of her life, publishing her papers and biography.

Fuller had heartfelt hope, transformed into action. And so she said, "the soul says to us all: Cherish your best hopes as a faith, and abide by them in action. Such shall be the effectual fervent means to their fulfillment."

LEADER RESOURCE 1: MARGARET FULLER PORTRAIT



LEADER RESOURCE 2: AT CONCORD WITH THE EMERSONS

Excerpted and adapted from the article, "[Margaret Fuller's 1842 Journal: At Concord with the Emersons](#)" edited with an Introduction by Joel Myerson, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 21 (October 1979). The letter can be found at Houghton Library, Harvard University (call number bMS Am 1086, Box 1).

The relationship between Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson has always been a fascinating one to students of American Transcendentalism. They were the literary leaders of the "New School:" Emerson with *Nature* and his essays, Margaret Fuller with her critical reviews in the *New-York Tribune* and in *The Dial*, which both she and Emerson edited. Yet studies of their friendship were until recently hampered by the lack of available primary documents. The only trustworthy sources are the edition of Emerson's letters by Ralph L. Rusk, which also includes many of Margaret's letters in its notes, and the current edition of Emerson's journals.

Margaret Fuller had first been brought to Emerson's attention by Frederic Henry Hedge. Fuller had wanted to meet Emerson ever since Hedge had praised him to her in 1834, and in the next year she was pleased to find out that Emerson was also interested in seeing her. The death of her father delayed their meeting and they first saw each other in the summer of 1836, when she stayed with him at Concord for three weeks. At first Emerson had thought the visit would be a failure: "Her extreme plainness, — a trick of incessantly opening and shutting her eyelids, — the nasal tone of her voice, — all repelled; and I said to myself, we shall never get far." But the visit turned out to be a great success, and Emerson decided that she was "a very accomplished very intelligent person," though he was slightly bothered by her egotism.

Margaret became a regular attendant at the Transcendental Club meetings and in November 1839 was appointed editor of the proposed Transcendental periodical, *The Dial*. The next few months brought her into closer contact with Emerson as she planned the magazine's first number, and soon a distinct crisis arose. As she came to write and to see Emerson more, Margaret expected a letting-down of Emerson's usual defensive reserve; when Emerson retained his aloof posture, Margaret sought to force him out of it. This stage of their relationship reached a peak during the fall of 1840, after which Margaret accepted Emerson on his own terms and even praised him for being so faithful to his own beliefs.

The journal which follows is among Margaret Fuller's journal fragments at the Houghton Library of Harvard University. It is truly unique, being not only one of the

longest and most complete of her extant fragmentary journals, but also the finest non-family portrait of Emerson and his wife Lidian at home which survives from this period, [a mere few months after the death of their five-year old son from scarlet fever had devastated them both.] Besides presenting a vivid description of Margaret Fuller's own mind and feelings, this journal also provides a view of Emerson's philosophic beliefs and gives more detail about the behavior and thoughts of Ellery Channing, [husband of Margaret's sister Ellen and nephew of Dr. William Ellery Channing.]. Beginning with her arrival in Concord on 17 August 1842, the journal runs through Margaret's departure on 25 September.

Since Emerson's journals during this period are sketchy, and since less than a dozen of Emerson's letters written while Margaret was in Concord have been published, this journal should be of especial interest and value. ["Waldo" was the name used by Emerson's family and friends]:

[August] 17th. Arriving this evening quite late, all things looked sad to me. The Concord fog shrouded every object as I approached though the afternoon had been clear and of surpassing beauty. — I went to walk with Waldo. Near the river the misty moonlight was of fairy effect. We merely told our experiences these past months: it was an interchange of facts but no conversation, yet it was pleasant to be with him again.

Thursday [August 18].

... Waldo [and] I went to walk to Walden pond, as usual, [and] staid till near sunset on the water's brink beneath the pines. It was a very lovely afternoon, great happy clouds floating, a light breeze rippling the water to our feet: it was altogether sweet, and not out of memory, as is too often the case between us, but from the present moment [and] to be remembered. We go but very little way on our topics, just touch [and] taste and leave the cup not visibly shallower. Waldo said once his were short flights from bough to bough, [and] so it it [sic] is not up into the blue. I feel more at home with him constantly, but we do not act powerfully on one another. He is a much better companion than formerly, for once he would talk obstinately through the walk, but now we can be silent and see things together. We talked on the subject of his late letter, the threatenings of the time which come to so little, and of some individual cases where Sorrow is still the word, of those who began with such high resolve. Too high I said, [and] W. agreed. We spoke of the prayer of a friend Lord use me only for high purposes, no mean ones. — We must not dictate to the spirit.

This evening Ellery called me out to the /east/ clover slip, from which there is a wide view over the meadows. The moon was nearly at full. He told me a great deal about himself. He got excited, as in painting a picture. He said the changes of his life made figures to him of himself on his canvass just as of other people, that it was endless change, urged on by a fate, that he disappointed every one, and most me, and there was no hope of its ever being otherwise.

Friday [August 19].

... In the evening I took a walk with W. Looking at the moon in the river he said the same thing as in his letter, how each twinkling light breaking there summons to demand the whole secret, and how "promising, promising nature never fulfils what she thus gives us a right to expect[.]" I said I never could meet him here, the beauty does not stimulate me to ask why?, and press to the centre, I was satisfied for the moment, full as if my existence was filled out, for nature had said the very word that was lying in my heart. Then we had an excellent talk: We agreed that my god was love, his truth. W. said that these statements alternate, of course, in every mind, the only difference was in which you were most at home, that he liked the pure mathematics of the thing

Sunday [August 28].

A heavy rain. I must stay at home. I feel sad. — ... All these evenings it has rained and we could not go out. Ellery has come into my room, but it has not been pleasant. The indoor darkness seemed to cloud his mind: he was entirely different from what he is beneath the open sky. The first night he began by railing at me as artificial. "It dont strike me when you are alone with me, he says, but it does when others are present. You dont follow out the fancy of the moment, you converse, you have treasured thoughts to tell, you are disciplined, artificial." I pleaded guilty, and observed that I supposed it must be so, with one of my continuity of thought or earnestness of character. — As to that, says he, I shall not like you the better for your excellence. I dont know what is the matter, I feel strongly attracted towards you, but there is a drawback in my mind, I dont know exactly what. You will always be wanting to grow forward, now I like to grow backward too. You are too ideal. Ideal people (always) anticipate their lives, and they make themselves and every body around them restless, by always being beforehand with themselves, [and] so on in the very tone of William's [William Henry Channing, Dr. Channing's nephew] damning letter. I listened attentively, for what he said was excellent, following up the humor of the moment

he arrests admirable thoughts on the wing. But I cannot but see, that what they say of my or other obscure lives is true of every prophetic, of every tragic character, — And then I like to have them make me look [on] that side, and reverence the lovely forms of nature, the shifting moods, and the clinging instincts. But I must not let them disturb me. There is /one/ only guide, the voice in the heart that asks — Was thy wish sincere? If so thou canst not stray from nature, nor be so perverted but she will make thee true again. I must take my own path, and learn from them all, without being paralyzed for today. We need great energy, and self-reliance to endure to day. My age may not be the best, my position may be bad, my character ill formed, but thou, Oh Spirit, hast no regard to aught but the seeking heart, and if I try to walk upright will [thou] guide me? What despair must he feel who after a whole life passed in trying to build up himself, resolves that it would have been far better, if he had kept still as the clod of the valley, or yielded easily as the leaf to every breeze. A path has been appointed me. I have walked in it as steadily as I could. "I am what I am." That which I am not, teach me in the others. I will bear the pain of imperfection, but not of doubt. Waldo must not shake me in my worldliness, nor William [William Henry Channing] in the fine motion that that [sic] has given me what I have of life, nor this child of genius, make me lay aside the armour without which I had lain bleeding on the field long since, but if they can keep closer to Nature, and learn to interpret her as souls, also, — let me learn from them what I have not.

The spirit ascends through every form of nature into man, and no doubt here should make the complete animal instinctive man before unfolding his higher nature. But it was no accident that the serpent entered Eden, that the regular order of things was destroyed, that a painful throe accompanies every precious truth. When the soul has mastered it all, when it has learnt the secret in all its series, then there shall be no more breaks, no sluggishness, no premature fruit, but every thought be unfolded in its due order. Till then let us stand where our feet are placed and learn bit by bit, secure that it must be the destiny of each man to fill the whole circle.

Ellery said when we found a snake in the path that it was the criticism in the universe. It was not ugly, not loathsome; no, handsome and adroit in its motions, but it made you cold.

Monday [August 29]. All the rain is over: it is a day of broad sunshine, spirited but warm breezes, great floating clouds. I made a holy-day of it out in the woods. Much did I long

"divinely to intend" the mind on subjects all-important to it, but I could not. I could get no steady light, only sighs for it were in a purer spirit than formerly. I am not in that state of clear vision I was two years ago, nor in that state of sweet feeling I was last summer, but Heaven be praised the clouds are rising that have lain low upon my soul all this fair summer. ...
[manuscript breaks off]

Sept [1]

This golden afternoon I walked with Waldo to the hemlocks. There we sat down and staid till near sunset. He read me verses. — Dichtung und Wahrheit [Poetry and Truth] is certainly the name for his life, for he does not care for facts, except so far as the immortal essence can be distilled from them. He has little sympathy with mere life: does not seem to see the plants grow, merely that he may rejoice in their energy. We got to talking, as we almost always do, on Man and Woman, and Marriage. — W. took his usual ground. Love is only phenomenal, a contrivance of nature, in her circular motion. Man, in proportion as he is completely unfolded is man and woman by turns. The soul knows nothing of marriage, in the sense of a permanent union between two personal existences. The soul is married to each new thought as it enters into it. If this thought puts on the form of man or woman [,] if it last you seventy years, what then? There is but one love, that for the Soul of all Souls, let it put on what cunning disguises it will, still at last you find yourself lonely, — the Soul.

There seems to be no end to these conversations: they always leave us both where they found us, but we enjoy them, for we often get a good expression. Waldo said "Ask any woman whether her aim in this union is to further the genius of her husband; and she will say yes, but her conduct will always be to claim a devotion day by day that will be injurious to him, if he yields. ["] "Those who hold their heads highest," quoth he, with a satirical side glance, "would do no better, if they were tried." I made no reply, for it is not worthwhile to, in such cases, by words.

[September] 2d It is a most brilliant day, [and] I stole the morning from my writing to take Lidian [Mrs. Emerson] and then Mamma to ride. L. has had a slow fever which has confined her to her chamber almost ever since I came, [and] I have not been attentive to her as I should have been, if I had thought she cared about it. I did not go into her room at all for a day or two, simply because I was engaged all the time and kept expecting to see her down stairs. When I did go in, she burst into tears, at sight of me, but laid the blame on her nerves, having taken opium,

etc. I felt embarrassed, [and] did not know whether I ought to stay or go. Presently she said something which made me suppose she thought W. passed the evenings in talking with me, a painful feeling flashed across me, such as I have not had, all has seemed so perfectly understood between us. I said that I was with Ellery or H[enry]. T[horeau]. both of the evenings that W. was writing in the study. I thought it all over a little, whether I was considerate enough. As to W. I never keep him from any such duties, any more than a book would. — He lives in his own way, [and] he dont soothe the illness, or morbid feelings of a friend, because he would not wish any one to do it for him. It is useless to expect it; what does it signify whether he is with me or at his writing. L. knows perfectly well, that he has no regard for me or any one that would make him wish to be with me, a minute longer than I could fill up the time with thoughts. As to my being more his companion that cannot be helped, his life is /in/ the intellect not the affections. He has affection for me, but it is because I quicken his intellect. — I dismissed it all, as a mere sick moment of L's.

Yesterday she said to me, at dinner, I have not yet been out, will you be my guide for a little walk this afternoon. I said ["]I am engaged to walk with Mr E. but["] — (I was going to say, I will walk with you first,) when L. burst into tears. The family were all present, they looked at their plates. Waldo looked on the ground, but soft [and] serene as ever. I said "My dear Lidian, certainly I will go with you." "No! ["] she said ["]I do not want you to make any sacrifice, but I do feel perfectly desolate, and forlorn, and I thought if I once got out, the fresh air would do me good, and that with you, I should have courage, but go with Mr E. I will not go[.]"

I hardly knew what to say, but I insisted on going with her, [and] then she insisted on going so that I might return in time for my other walk. Waldo said not a word: he retained his sweetness of look, but never offered to do the least thing. I can never admire him enough at such times; he is so true to himself. In our walk and during our ride this morning L. talked so fully that I felt reassured except that I think she will always have these pains, because she has always a lurking hope that Waldo's character will alter, and that he will be capable of an intimate union; now I feel convinced that it will never be more perfect between them two. I do not believe it will be less: for he is sorely troubled by imperfections in the tie, because he dont believe in any thing better. — /And where he loved her first, he loves her always./ Then the influence of any one with him would be just in proportion to

independence of him, combined with pure love of him for his own sake. Yet in reply to all L. said, I would not but own that though I thought it was the only way, to take him for what he is, as he wishes to be taken, and though my experience of him has been, for that very reason, so precious to me, I dont know that I could have fortitude for it in a more intimate relation. Yet nothing could be nobler, nor more consoling than to be his wife, if one's mind were only thoroughly made up to the truth. — As for myself, if I have not done as much as I ought for L. it is that her magnanimity has led her to deceive me. I have really thought that she was happy to have me in the house solely for Waldo's sake, and my own, and she is, I know, in the long account, but there are pains of every day which I am apt to neglect for others as for myself. — But Truth, spotless Truth, and Prayer and Love shall yield a talisman to teach me how to steer.

I suppose the whole amount of the feeling is that women can't bear to be left out of the question. And they don't see the whole truth about one like me, if they did they would understand why the brow of Muse or Priestess must wear a shade of sadness. On my side I don't remember them enough. They have so much that I have not, I can't conceive of their wishing for what I have, (enjoying is not the word: these I know are too generous for that) But when Waldo's wife, the mother of that child that is gone thinks me the most privileged of women, that E[lizabeth] H[oar] was happy because her love was snatched away for a life long separation [Note: Hoar's fiance, Charles Emerson, Waldo's brother, had died], thus she can know none but ideal love: it does seem a little too insulting at first blush. — And yet they are not altogether wrong.

Friday [September 2]

Ellery has seemed in a real pet with me for two or three days. I don't know what I did[,] some trifling thing. On Monday E [and] I went to walk, it was a calm bright afternoon. I felt full of music, and at first I did not enjoy being with E. for he was full of whimsies, [and] I felt as if I should rather have followed out my own course of feeling. At Walden we sat down among the bushes, and there E. was amusing me with his fancies of possible life upon the lake, [and] had just built his cottage, where he wrote verses from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon, summoning his attendant who hovered during the day on the edge of the wood by notes graduated on a key bugle to express his wants, — when Waldo dashed through the trees, and came down close to us. He made the same lovely apparition, as when he came down

the bank where I was sitting with Hawthorne the other day, cleaving the shade like a sunbeam, the same lovely light in his eye and happy smile on his lips — I see written in his journal, "And now before the flush quite fades from my cheek, let me write, etc.["] and this sweet girlishness is expressive of these brief visitations of loveliest youth to his face, where generally is seen only the purist, the critic, or the cold idealist. The other day he asked me to ride to Cambridge with him. I did not wish to go, but when I saw him setting off without me, I could not be willing, said, Oh I ought to have gone: it will be so desolate here all day without you[.] He blushed like a silly little child [and] said "That it go up stairs and it will find a battledore and shuttlecock to console it." I laughed thought we should certainly never cease to be young. We may wear out a body: it may get worn and hard, but the look of the infant will pierce through the old disguise, and so on ad infinitum. Today he said "What, are you here. I knocked at your door for you to go with me, and as you did not answer I thought you were asleep". I made some answer on the impulse of the moment that I was sorry I was not with him, perhaps this displeased E. or something that I said next day, but he seemed unwilling even to look at me for two or three days and at last I wrote him a note which he answered in these verses.[no verses are copied into the journal at this point].

Friday [September 9]

Aft[ernoon]. Waldo came into my room to read me what he has written in his journal about marriage, [and] we had a long talk. He listens with a soft wistful look to what I say, but is nowise convinced. It was late in a dark afternoon, the fine light in that red room always so rich, cast a beautiful light upon him, as he read and talked. Since I have found in his journal two sentences that represent the two sides of his thought.

In time, "Marriage should be a covenant to secure to either party the sweetness and the handsomeness of being a calm continuing inevitable benefactor to the other."

In eternity, "Is it not enough that souls should meet in a law, in a thought, obey the same love, demonstrate the same idea. These alone are the nuptials of minds[.] I marry you for better, not for worse, I marry impersonally."

I shall write to him about it

This day [September 17]

H[enry]. Hedge passed with us, and in the afternoon I went with him to Cambridge ... H. emphasizes the Church and the Race as William [Channing] does. I see that side, but care more for the other. What is done here at home in my heart is my religion. I said to H. I

see not one step before me, and my only act is to live to day, and not hasten to conclusions. Let others choose their way, I feel that mine is to keep my equipoise as steadfastly as I may, to see, to think, a faithful sceptic, to reject nothing but accept nothing till it is affirmed in the due order of mine own nature. I belong nowhere. I have pledged myself to nothing. God and the soul and nature are all my creed, subdivisions are unimportant. — As to your Church, I do not deny the church, who can that holds communion on themes of permanent interest as I do with several minds. I have my church where I am by turns priest [and] lay man. I take these simpler modes, if the world prefers more complex, let it. I act for myself, but prescribe for none other Next morning [September 18] wrote a letter to Mother and saw the boys then H. came for me. An eagle had perched on the vane of Mr Newell's church, and we found the whole town At Brookline I listened with curiosity to H's sermons. In fact it is not more wonderful for a disciple of Hegel to preach, than for a (believer) Buddhist to feel gratitude. They were written with high finish: their mechanism excellent. The doctrine was good; the one, to encourage the good in oneself, rather than make a fuss about the evil, the other I must tread the winepress alone, true, but touched so slightly on what I know and feel. At Waltham were good talk. The inspiration of the individual need not be sacrificed in favor of that of the race. We can just as well have both. Oh I am tired of this journal: it is a silly piece of work. I will never keep another such. Write thoughts, the sum of all this life, or turn it into poetic form: this meagre outline of fact has no value in any way: (Monday) I gave the aftn and eveing to Lidian[:] she read to me of little Waldo and talked well. She said the Angels look on what you do, perhaps with as much disdain as you and Waldo would on Mrs. Hemans. Whatever has spoken to /us of/ one human heart has a right to exist. I confess, I replied, but ever, ever we are striving to the more excellent. Forgive if we are narrow and cold on the way. Yet should we mend. When we found snakes the other day, Ellery said they were the criticism of the universe, handsome, easy in motion, cold and odious. This hangs well together with L's idea. When she read me W's answer to my questions, and said when he would not answer so as to meet her wants, she thought Christ would if he were there. I told her yet just so did Christ answer his disciples again and again Feed my lambs and nothing more, no explanations, no going out of himself to meet their wants. Both she and Mamma were struck by this, but L. will not remember it.

Nothing makes me so anti-Christian, and so anti-marriage as these talks with L. She lays such undue stress on the office of Jesus, and the demands of the heart. Waldo had got through with his tedious (Wednesday) prose, and to day he got into the mood to finish his poem. Just at night he came into the red room to read the passage he had inserted. This is to me the loveliest way to live that we have. I wish it would be so always that I could live in the red room, and Waldo be stimulated /by the fine days/ to write poems and come the rainy days to read them to me. My time to go to him is late in the evening. Then I go knock at the library door, and we have (yo) our long word walk through the growths of things with glimmers of light from the causes of things. Afterward, W. goes out and walks beneath the stars to compose himself for his pillow, and I open the window, and sit in the great red chair to watch them. The only thing I hate is our dining together. It is never pleasant and some days I dislike it so that I go out just before dinner stay till night in the woods, just to break the routine. I do not think a person of more complete character would feel or make the dinner bell such a vulgarity as W. does, but with him these feelings are inevitable[.] ...

Sunday [September 25]. All this morning I spent in reading W's journals for the last year, or rather in finishing them, for I have had them by me for weeks. This afternoon I meant to have gone into the woods and finished Ellery's book, but I went into the library after dinner and staid till night: it was our last talk and my best. We talked over many things in the journal, especially a good lead was given by "Sickness is generally the coat in which genius is drest," an unusual remark for W. — We talked too of Bulwer and the people of talent, — W grows more merciful day by day. I ought to go away now these last days I have been fairly intoxicated with his mind. I am not in full possession of my own. I feel faint in in [sic] the presence of too strong a fragrance. I think, too, he will be glad to get rid of me. Elizth asked if he would not be sad when I was gone[.] I told her, no, relieved rather, — for all the things he says in his Essays on these subjects are true of himself. I took tea with Ellen and Ellery and then went in to see E[lizabeth]. H[oar]. Waldo came for me, but Ellery came down to my room afterward, E.H. rose betimes next morning and came down to breakfast with us. Mamma and Lidian went to Boston with me. Farewell, dearest friend, there has been dissonance between us, and may be again, for we do not fully meet, and to me you are too much and too little by turns, yet thanks be to the Parent of Souls, that gave us to be born into the same age and the same country and to meet with so much of nobleness

and sweetness as we do, and I think constantly
with more and more.
Going down I had a thorough talk with Lidian. I
shall never trouble myself any more: it is not just

to her. But I will do more in attending to her, for I
see I could be of real use. She says she feels I
am always just to her, but I might be more.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: FULLER'S THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

This is a 30-minute activity.

Materials

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [At Concord with the Emersons](#) (included in this document)

Preparation

- Locate the journal entries from September 1 and September 17 in the leader resource and prepare to read them aloud.

Description

Participants reflect on Fuller's lifelong struggle to integrate her intellect and her feelings.

Read aloud from Leader Resource 2 Fuller's journal entries from September 1 and from September 17, 1842. Then, engage participants to discuss the role of feelings and of intellect in their own lives and in the life of your congregation. Use these questions as a guide:

- How are feelings and intellect reflected in communal worship in our congregation? Do you experience worship as a "feeling" experience, a "thinking" experience, or some combination of the two?
- In what ways does our congregation offer opportunities for people to recover lost emotions or recover from times when they have lost heart? Have you experienced a time when your Unitarian Universalist congregation helped you to recover after you had lost heart? Would you describe your experience as spiritual?
- How are we inclusive of both feelings and intellect in our congregation's programs for children? youth? families? adults of all ages and life stages?

LEADER RESOURCE 4: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

This is a 30-minute activity.

Participants discuss the roles of feelings and of intellect in the life of their congregation(s). Use these questions as a guide:

- How are feelings and intellect reflected in communal worship in the congregation your serve? Do you perceive worship as a "feeling" experience, a "thinking" experience, or some combination of the two? When planning for worship to include all ages, do you plan for a "feeling" experience or a "thinking" experience?
- In what ways, other than appropriate pastoral care, does our congregation offer opportunities for people to recover lost emotions or recover from times when they have lost heart?
- What are the challenges in helping people in your congregation integrate emotions and intellect in their personal theologies and spiritual practices?
- How are we inclusive of both feelings and intellect in our congregation's programs for children, youth, adults, and families?

FIND OUT MORE

- Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller An American Romantic Life: The Public Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- Margaret Fuller, [Woman in the Nineteenth Century](#), tract originally published in *The Dial*, 1843 and 1844.
- Joan W. Goodwin, [Margaret Fuller](#) entry on the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography website.
- Meg McGavran Murray, *Margaret Fuller: Wandering Pilgrim* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008).
- John Matteson, *The Lives of Margaret Fuller* (New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 2012).
- Joel Myerson, "Introduction," *Margaret Fuller: Essays on American Life and Letters*, ed. Joel Myerson, (New Haven: College University Press, 1978).

WORKSHOP 6: SOPHIA LYON FAHS

INTRODUCTION

The emotional impulses that urge [human]kind to be religious are a part of human nature everywhere and apparently always. We truly need to be religious. — Sophia Lyon Fahs

This workshop introduces Sophia Lyon Fahs' Theology of Religious Naturalism. For more than 80 years, Fahs developed and used her Theology of Religious Naturalism to show religious educators how to discover and nurture the emotional foundations of liberal faith.

For most of her professional life as a religious educator, professor, writer, editor, and public lecturer, Fahs developed and used her theological system to track basic human emotions and show how they become religious emotions. To this end, her Theology of Religious Naturalism, which she called her "natural humanism," explored five basic emotional urges and needs she believed were foundational to the religious experiences of liberal faith. She believed the task of religious educators in particular and religious professionals (clergy and laity) in general was not only to recognize these core, ever-present, human emotional states, but also to develop programs that could transform these basic feelings into religious experiences of joy and wonder and more: personal religious experiences, as she put it, of God's presence in the natural world.

As a Union Theological Seminary professor; as founding editor of *The New Beacon Series in Religious Education* for the American Unitarian Association; as creator of new experientially-based, progressive models for religious education; and finally as an ordained minister, Fahs revolutionized liberal, systematic theological reflections on the links among human emotion, faith, and science. By so doing, she helped to create the 1930s renaissance era of American Unitarianism. She worked tirelessly throughout her life to create a liberal theology that recognized human emotions and human experience as foundational building blocks for an enlightened, scientifically informed, liberal faith. Are these building blocks Fahs established foundational for our own Unitarian Universalist faith experiences today? This workshop tests the relevancy of Fahs' theological legacy for our lives as Unitarian Universalists today.

Please note that Fahs uses the term "man" inclusively to mean all human beings. You may choose to make her language gender inclusive whenever this change will enhance participants' understanding of Fahs' basic concerns and claims about all persons.

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read one or more of the following for background information:

- Handout 1, Introducing Sophia Lyon Fahs
- Handout 2, "[Learning by Heart -- Sophia Lyon Fahs](#)," by Polly Peterson, a story from the Tapestry of Faith children's program, Faithful Journeys.
- "[Sophia Lyon Fahs: Revolutionary educator](#)," by Christopher L. Walton in *UU World* (March/April 2003).

Read Leader Resource 2, Why Teach Religion in an Age of Science? by Sophia L. Fahs. Fahs' basic answer to her title question can be summarized as follows:

Emotional needs and impulses create and sustain scientific explorations and moral concerns. Religious educators pay attention to such needs and impulses in order to help transform them into moral and religious values that create and sustain ethical behavior. The task of religious educators is to show children (and adults) how to kindle and sustain their own basic emotions for the sake of ethical action and universal empathy toward others. While physical and social science perspectives and insights must inform theological and moral thinking, the search for meaning is not a scientific task; it is a religious task.

Here are some guides to help you reflect upon Fahs' theological rationale and strategy as elucidated in Leader Resource 2. You may wish to write your reflections in your theology journal:

Fahs' definition of "religion in general" and her use of the term "God."

Fahs reminds her readers that she is *not* asking the question: "Why teach the Christian religion in an age of science?" She intends to study "religion" shorn of doctrine and tradition, putting aside the different doctrines that distinguish various religious traditions from one another, in order to discover what unites them today as religion in a scientific age: (1) basic human emotions (e.g. wonderment) and (2) human thoughts and expression regarding those emotional experiences.

Fahs rejects traditional biblically based doctrinal notions because they are often scientifically counterfactual. For Fahs, however, the ongoing use of the term *God* is not

scientifically counterfactual because the reference for this term is flexible. (See Leader Resource 3.)

Basic human needs, impulses, and emotions.

Fahs distinguishes basic human needs and impulses from the religious emotions she believes emerge from them. Fahs characterizes each of five basic human needs and impulses that religion addresses at a basic emotional level: (1) an *instinctive urge* to keep alive and avoid death; (2) *wonderment*; (3) *love* and the *dread* of being alone; (4) the *emotional need to resolve conflicting emotional impulses in an ordered way*; and (5) the basic emotional *need for idealized selves* as heroes and/or divinity.

For reflection: Choose one of these five emotional needs (or a feeling within you that seems akin to it). Next, think of an emotional experience you would describe as a religious experience (e.g., awe, wonder, reverence). Can you think of an emotional experience that you would *not* describe as a religious experience? What is the difference? Compare and contrast the two personal emotional experiences. Why would you (or would you not) call one of the two emotional experiences a religious experience and, more precisely, a Unitarian Universalist religious experience?

Fahs makes a distinction between the two sets of experiences, believing that the role of the religious educator is to create the opportunity for a religious experience by helping a person think about and experience the same "general" emotion (e.g., wonderment) as a "religious" emotion. Based on your reflection on your own experience, does Fahs' distinction make sense to you? On what basis do you decide whether an emotional experience is a religious (or spiritual) emotional experience? Do you believe the basic distinction Fahs' makes between 'ordinary' emotions and 'religious' emotions is sound?

Religion is at risk of losing its relevance.

Fahs argues, "[Y]et if religion is to survive in a day of advancing scientific discoveries, it must find a way to be on the one hand intellectually sound, and on the other hand emotionally satisfying." She calls for a reformation of traditional religious beliefs about human nature, the universe, and the natural world and the discarding of antiquated doctrines, ideas, and dogma. According to Fahs, there is thrill, awe and mystery when our bodies and the rest of the universe are viewed at a subatomic level. The God of humanity, the God of gravitation, the God of hydrogen atoms, and the God of higher sentient beings is one and the same God.

For reflection: Have you ever had an experience you would call "mystical"? Do you agree with Fahs' assessment of mystical experience and her attempt to broaden the definition of mystical experience beyond the strictures of traditional religious doctrine?

Development of emotional empathy using personal experience.

Fahs believes that if we pay careful attention to a fundamental emotional feeling intently enough, with an open, reflective mind, we will move into a religious emotional state of empathy towards ourselves and towards others. She writes, "The development of moral and spiritual values today involves not so much the courage to fight for the right against the wrong, as the patience to understand the wrong, its causes and its meanings. It involves also learning the arts of negotiation and empathy."

For reflection: Consider an example from your own life in which you used the arts of negotiation and empathy to assess a moral issue. How did you develop this skill? What can help you strengthen it?

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build historical knowledge about educational theorist, theologian, and ordained Unitarian minister Sophia Lyon Fahs
- Explore five emotional foundations of our liberal faith and their link to scientific insights, as understood and formulated by Fahs
- Engage participants in tracing how their own "ordinary" emotions are transformed into Unitarian Universalist "religious" emotions
- Introduce participants to a variety of ways the term "God" is used as an expression of liberal religious Unitarian Universalist reverence in a scientific age.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain personal knowledge of their own emotional needs that must be in some degree satisfied, according to Sophia Lyon Fahs (1876-1978), in order to have access to a personally fulfilling and regenerative religious life
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about the emotional foundations of their own Unitarian Universalist faith.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Recalling Emotional and Religious Experiences	15
Activity 2: Introducing Sophia Lyon Fahs	25

Activity 3: Testing Fahs	25
Activity 4: Religious Experience and Unitarian Universalist Experience	15
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read Leader Resource 3, Thoughts on the Word God. Use these questions to help you find connections between your own theology and Fahs'. You may wish to write your answers in your theology journal:

- What does the term *God* mean to you? To what does the term refer for you? Do you find it a useful term when reflecting on your own experiences of creativity and creative engagement? Compare and contrast your understanding of the term *God* with Fahs' understanding of the term.
- According to Fahs, human beings were originally impelled "to be religious because [they] needed something [they] had not yet found." Have you felt impelled to want to be religious? If you have not felt so impelled, reflect upon the circumstances that led you to become a Unitarian Universalist. Then find the emotions linked to these circumstances (e.g., feeling emotionally confused, feeling at risk, feeling alone, feeling free). Fahs believes that this emotional component of your experience led to the transformation of your feelings into religious sentiments. Do you agree?
- Are you a Unitarian Universalist because you needed something and found it in this faith tradition? Are you seeking something you have not yet found? Do Fahs' claims here make sense to you based on your own experience?

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you read aloud Reading 439 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "We gather in reverence," by Sophia Lyon Fahs. Invite participants to join in reading aloud the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: RECALLING EMOTIONAL AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Leader Resource 1, [Sophia Lyon Fahs Portrait](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Computer and digital projector

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Prepare to project Leader Resource 1 or make copies.

Description of Activity

Project or distribute copies of Leader Resource 1.

Introduce the workshop using these or similar words:

Sophia Lyon Fahs described the origins of her own theology, her religious philosophy of life as she put it, as an earnest attempt to learn how to lead worship services and religious education programs for children. She wanted these services to be based on the children's own experiences of life rather than on doctrinaire creedal claims and other religious dogma children did not understand but were nevertheless expected to learn, believe, mime, and espouse. She wanted children to have experiences that would lead them into the realm of religion. With this in mind, she called upon religious educators to "strive for a deeper understanding of the motives and emotional biases that the children bring with them into their religious study." To help children find the emotional foundations of religious faith, Fahs insisted that she and fellow educators must first find these feelings within themselves. Only then, Fahs concluded, will religious educators have the experiences and skills required to not only ask but also to help children recall "some of their own personal unforgettable experiences, which they may not have labeled as religious although they engendered deeper or more expansive feelings, emotions, and thoughts than usual." For more than 80 years, Fahs developed and used her Theology of Religious Naturalism to show religious educators how to discover and nurture the emotional foundations of their own liberal faith. Fahs called upon all of us to explore personal, unforgettable emotional experiences with "the questioning mind." She urged all of us to observe our own emotional feelings and track how our emotions become religious emotions.

Invite participants to think of an emotional experience they would describe as a religious experience (e.g., awe and wonder). Now ask if they can think of an emotional experience they would not describe as a religious experience. How do they differ? Invite participants to write or draw their reflections in their theology journal. Allow five minutes for this exercise.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING SOPHIA LYON FAHS (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, [Introducing Sophia Lyon Fahs](#) (included in this document)
- Handout 2, [Learning by Heart — Sophia Lyon Fahs](#) (included in this document)

- Story, "[Fahs' Religious Education Experiences](#)" (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story so you can present it effectively.
- Copy the handouts and the story for all participants.
- Arrange for two volunteers to read the story aloud—one to read Fahs' two anecdotes and the other to read the two analyses. If possible, provide the story to volunteers before the workshop.
- List these five items on newsprint, and post:
 - Impulse to keep alive and to avoid death
 - Impulse to know the unknown, to delve into the mysteries of existence
 - Need for friendly companionship, or the yearning to love and to be loved, need to escape isolation
 - Need for emotional order and organization to control over conflicting impulses and provide an over-all theological picture of one's destiny within the ongoing drama of life.)
 - Need for an internalized super-ego who incarnates, at least in a measure, the desired better self
- Prepare, but do not post, newsprint with these questions:
 - In Fahs' first story, what emotion(s) might have been present in the children? Do any of these fit into one (or more) of the five categories Fahs identifies as emotionally foundational for religious experience? If not, identify another category into which the feeling fits, one you deem to be a basic emotional state for human beings.
 - Identify any emotions (from Fahs' list of five) that might have come to the fore for Wendell and Jimmie. How are these emotions transformed into what Fahs calls religious emotions?

Description of Activity

Introduce Sophia Lyon Fahs as a 20th-century progressive religious educator and one of the creators of

modern American theological liberalism. Read or convey this biographical information:

Born in 1876 to Presbyterian missionary parents in China, Fahs embraced progressive educational principles when she was a graduate student at Columbia University's Teachers College, then as a divinity student at Union Theological School in New York. Following graduation, she joined Union's faculty in 1927. Fahs came of age as a major new force in liberal religious education as young liberal parents and disenchanted orthodox parents increasingly sought out new models of religious education for their children. She actively created and shaped the progressive Sunday School at Riverside Church in New York. For more than 80 years as a professional educator, practical theologian and author, Fahs strove to create a theology that restored human emotions and human experience to their rightful place as foundational building blocks for an enlightened liberal faith. She devoted her life to the big questions rather than to the big answers. Fahs was Children's Editor for the Unitarian "The New Beacon Series" from 1937, at age 61, until her retirement fourteen years later in 1951. As editor, author, or co-author of more than a dozen books, she "addressed children directly using vivid stories from around the world." She said: "We wish children to come to know God directly through original approaches of their own to the universe." Fahs devoted her life to discovering the questions that led to answers that included God-talk. She joined a Unitarian Church in 1945, and was ordained as a Unitarian minister in 1959, at age 82, in what is now the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church in Bethesda, Maryland.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about her life, and Handout 2, which is a story about her life written for fourth and fifth grade children, for participants to take home

Distribute the story, Fahs' Religious Education Experiences. Invite volunteers to read Fahs' anecdotes and her observations and conclusions. Explain that Fahs' goal in her work was to bring the whole of Nature into the area of ethical concern and religious appreciation. Fahs used this religious naturalism—or "natural humanism," as she also called this method of theological reflection—in order to address what she characterized as five basic emotional needs. Indicate the prepared newsprint as you describe them.

Explain to participants Fahs' conclusion that when these needs are attended to and encouraged, we become aware of a personal feeling of the greatness within ourselves that creates an ongoing questioning attitude of mind and leads us and our children to talk about God. According to Fahs, the word *God* includes two concepts:

"A Creative Power entering from outside, and a Creative Power that has always been inherent and within." She believed that "Some word or group of words is needed to express this Creativity." The term *God*, for Fahs as a humanist, thus refers to the personal, emotional experience of an external and internal Creative Power.

Post the questions you have prepared. Invite participants to consider Fahs' stories with the questions as a guide, writing or drawing their responses in their theology journal.

Allow ten minutes for this exercise.

ACTIVITY 3: TESTING FAHS (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Newsprint from Activity 2 with Fahs' list of five basic impulses, needs, and emotions
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare and post newsprint with these questions:
 - Which of the five basic human needs, impulses, and emotions were addressed by the experience you identified in your journal as a religious experience?
 - Did the emotional experience you described as "not religious" arise from any of Fahs' basic emotions?
 - What would be necessary to transform the emotion you described as "not religious" to one you might describe as "religious?"
 - Does Fahs' idea that our basic emotions give rise to and are transformed into religious emotions make sense to you?
 - Do you use the term God in the way Fahs suggests as "the ineffable, unutterable reality, both beyond and within all?"

Description of Activity

Invite participants to move into groups of three and share their reflections about the two stories from Activity 2 with their small group members. Allow ten minutes.

Tell them when time is up.

Then, ask participants to consider once again the experiences about which they journaled in Activity 1. Invite them to use the questions posted on newsprint to

reflect on their experiences. Ask them to respond first in their theology journals and then to share their reflections, feelings, and thoughts in their small groups. Allow 20 minutes. Remind participants to refrain from commenting upon or critiquing each other's *personal* reflections and encourage them to simply share their own personal reflections and listen deeply to one another from a place of heartfelt engagement. Remind them that after everyone has spoken, if there is time they might share in a final round their thoughts, feelings, and insights based on this small group exercise.

Signal when time is up, and re-gather the large group.

ACTIVITY 4: RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST EXPERIENCE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Write on newsprint and post:
 - Do you call the ways in which your basic emotional needs are attended to within your faith community a *Unitarian Universalist* religious experience or simply a *religious* experience? Why does calling the experience Unitarian Universalist have (or not have) meaning for you?
 - Fahs believed that religious emotions in us and in our children emerge from ordinary emotions that have been transformed into religious ones. Do you agree?
 - Is the distinction Fahs makes between religious emotions and general emotions helpful when thinking about the emotional foundations of your own religious experiences as a Unitarian Universalist? Explain.

Description of Activity

Remind participants that Fahs moved beyond her conservative Presbyterian roots. She did not, however, become a member of a group called "religion in general," but instead became a Unitarian, a member of a particular religious tradition. Invite participants to take five minutes to reflect in their theology journals on the ways in which Fahs' theology speaks to contemporary Unitarian Universalists. Indicate the questions you have

posted on newsprint, inviting them to respond to one or more of the questions in their reflection.

When time is up, ask them to compose a one-sentence statement to share with the large group, based on their reflections about Fahs' relevance to contemporary Unitarian Universalists. Allow two minutes for participants to compose the sentences. Then, explain that each person will have an opportunity to read their sentence to the large group—without elaboration. Invite volunteers to read theirs. To conclude, ask for final insights and reflections.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family.

Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer as a benediction Reading 616 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, For So the Children Come, a beloved reading of Fahs, often read in Unitarian Universalist congregations at Christmas time. Note that *Singing the Journey Hymn* 1061 offers a musical setting of this poem. Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?
- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

The emotional impulses that urge [human]kind to be religious are a part of human nature everywhere and apparently always. We truly need to be religious. — Sophia Lyon Fahs

What core emotional needs of yours are foundational to your personal Unitarian Universalist faith? Reflect on how these needs might be better nurtured in your immediate faith community. Might this be a topic for small group ministry work or another kind of spiritual group work?

Are children part of your life, or do you know some children in your congregation? Pay attention to the way they engage with the world. Engage them in conversation, inviting their questions, thoughts, and feelings about the wonders of life.

Faith in Action

Reflect on what Fahs said about the dissolution of traditional human categories and dualities:

The ethical questions we must face almost never present merely two clear cut possibilities—the right and the wrong... The development of moral and spiritual values today involves not so much the courage to fight for the right against the wrong, as the patience to

understand the wrong, its causes and its meanings. It involves also learning the arts of negotiation and empathy... The unique historical memories in our special religious cultures call today for less loyalty and more understanding, less praise and more honest self-criticism. Our direction needs to be forward.

Join an interfaith project in your community where you can explore and express with people of other faiths what you have in common. In their calling to the work you share together, do you observe some of the impulses and needs that Fahs described? Are these the same impulses and needs that drew you to commit to your Unitarian Universalist faith community?

STORY: FAHS' RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXPERIENCES

Excerpted from *Worshipping Together with Questioning Minds*, by Sophia Lyon Fahs. Copyright (C) 1965 by Sophia Lyon Fahs. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.

Two first-person anecdotes from Fahs' experiences as a religious educator, each followed by her analysis.

First anecdote

As long as I live I do not expect to forget that morning during one of our Junior Department services of worship when I had vivid evidence that some of the boys and girls, at least, felt an exhilaration in their realization of being linked with the ages. We had been discussing how old we were and when we really began. We traveled in imagination step by step back from our own birthdays to the time of our conception, then on to our parents' birthdays, and to our grandparents', and our great grandparents' and so on, and on. We decided finally that something now within our bodies must have been living hundreds, thousands, millions of years ago. We could never get back to our own beginnings. We must then all be very, very old; or at least something within us must be billions of years old.

Fahs' reflections

The experience was a thrilling one for me, but I had not expected to find it had been even more thrilling to some of the children. I learned later that, after the service was over, a group of boys in one class ran down the stairs to their classroom in order to greet their teacher when she arrived later, with the gleeful declaration "Hurrah! We are as old as you are! We are as old as you are!"

Such experiences may not come often, yet they are beyond price when they are experienced. Nor are they usually generated in children's groups through some generalized talk about the universe. Such experiences arise more often when some simple concrete meditation in questioning one thing or one event is elicited.

In some of our church schools it has become almost a habit for the leader of the services of worship to have some natural object, or objects, on an altar or table in the chancel or on the platform where it may become the center of attention and awaken curiosity. Perhaps the object is a branch of autumn leaves, a rose or lily, a flowering plant, an unusual stone, or a bowl of apples or oranges . . .

Sermonizing through object lessons for children is no newly-discovered art. It has long been known that an object that can be seen is highly successful as a device to awaken children's interests; and that from the visible, one can direct attention to the invisible.

If, however, we truly believe in a religion nurtured in [such] realistic natural experiences rather than in visions of supernatural events, we have a different reason for starting by asking questions of things that boys and girls can see and handle. Rather than using things in order to find spiritual lessons from them, we consider things in order to discover more of their own nature. In the terminology of today's philosophers, we would say, in order to know them "existentially."

Second anecdote

Wendell and Jimmie in our sixth-grade class could have helped me lead a service of worship, had I been sensitive enough at the time to see the possibilities. For one day in class Wendell had said, "Some one says that if you boiled all the chemicals in your body down and sold them, they'd be worth only seven cents. It's the way you're put together that's the hard part." And Jimmie had added: "just chemicals can't have children."

Fahs' reflections

We might have filled a table with containers holding samples of the different chemical elements in one human body. What dynamic questions might have been awakened! How reverently we would have felt as together we stood before the Great Mystery of Life!

We need not labor to reach up into another realm to feel the touch of Infinity. Although it is far off, yet it is also nearer than hands or feet. We can never know anything, even the most microscopic bit of matter or protoplasm, without facing what eludes our understanding and even our imagination. As Rufus Jones once said, "There is a more yet in our very being." There is a "more yet" in every being, in every thing. It is really not strange that what mankind has believed is in a "supernatural" realm can already be here in the natural.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow . . . , said Jesus. "Consider the flower in the crannied wall," said Tennyson.

"Consider anything you please," says the Zen Buddhist, "but just consider it not as a symbol of eternity, as God in miniature, as a moral lesson. But just consider it."

By way of summary, let us rethink the four needed revisions in our personal attitudes and philosophies that have been suggested if, in our generation, we can hope to keep our minds and hearts working in harmony together. First is the greater emphasis we need to put on understanding inner feelings, especially motivations and unconscious assumptions. Second is the significance of learning to face life's issues realistically and understandingly. Third is the need not only for a *natural humanism*, but also for a *religious naturalism* that brings the whole of Nature into the area of ethical concern and religious appreciation. And finally the need to question concrete bits of Reality until we feel the nearness of the

Universal. Other equally important changes may have been omitted. These here considered, however, are worthy of much meditation and will require persistent learning in actual experiencing.

We are left with a feeling of the greatness of our unknowing, and with the need for a continuing questioning attitude of mind.

HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCING SOPHIA LYON FAHS

One of the creators of modern American theological liberalism, Sophia Lyon Fahs was also the progenitor of American Unitarian religious education as a modern theological science of human emotions.

Born in 1876 to Presbyterian missionary parents in China, she embraced progressive educational principles when she was a graduate student at Columbia University's Teachers College, and later, as a divinity student at Union Theological School in New York. Following graduation, she joined Union's faculty in 1927. Fahs came of age as a major new force in liberal religious education at a time when young, liberal parents and disenchanted orthodox parents increasingly sought out new models of religious education for their children. Fahs preached and stoked emotional enthusiasm. She was, in this way, deeply influenced by John Dewey and his interpreters at Columbia University and Teachers College. She also actively created and shaped the progressive Sunday School at Riverside Church in New York. She had learned from John Dewey that teaching, as he put it, "is an art [and that] the teacher's own claim to rank as an artist is measured by [the teacher's] ability to foster the attitude of the artist in those who study with him [or her], whether they be youth or little children." Teachers, Dewey insisted, must "succeed in arousing enthusiasm, in communicating large ideas, in evoking energy ... the final test [of the teaching being] whether the stimulus thus given to wide aims succeeds in transforming itself into power, that is to say, into the attention to detail that ensures mastery over means of execution. If not, the zeal flags, the interest dies out, the ideal becomes a clouded memory."

For more than 80 years as a professional educator, practical theologian, and author, Fahs strove to create a theology that restored human emotions and human experience to their rightful place as foundational building blocks for an enlightened liberal faith.

Biographer Edith Hunter notes that by the time she was 90, in 1966, Fahs' life had "touched four distinct theological generations of American Protestantism:" (1) the period from 1880 to 1905 of missionary enthusiasm with its goal of "the evangelization of the world in [the present] generation;" (2) the Social Gospel Movement period from 1905 to 1930 which "sought to transform an unjust social order into a just one through the application of the ethics of the historical Jesus;" (3) the rise of a new theological orthodoxy between 1930 and 1955 spearheaded by liberal theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich whose idealism, sundered by the Great Depression and World War II, turned into a new realism that espoused social justice ethics linked to a traditional, conservative assessment of the fallen state of human nature through sin; and finally (4) the rise of the Radical theologians, the New Atheists, and the Death-of-God theologians who rejected the notion of a personal God who benevolently intervenes in human affairs. Fahs was "a product, an observer, a participant, and to some extent a creator" (or more precisely a co-creator with other stellar figures) of this modern history of American Protestantism.

Fahs devoted her life to the big questions rather than to the big answers. As she put it:

In the great religions, especially those of the Western world, the accent has been upon beliefs and convictions, rather than upon questioning. In fact the distinguishing marks between the different religious sects have been, for the most part, the differences in their beliefs. Although beliefs are important we need to remind ourselves that they are the fruits of experience, and that in the natural world each new life begins with its own seed. As parents of children and as educators, we need to practice looking beneath the convictions to find the earlier experiences that awakened the questions which in turn called forth the answers given as convictions.

Fahs was Children's Editor for the Unitarian New Beacon Series from 1937, at age 61, until her retirement 14 years later in 1951. As editor, author, or co-author of more than a dozen books, she "addressed children directly using vivid stories from around the world." As one of her biographers observes, Fahs drew on "anthropological and psychological research... dedicated to one goal." Fahs summarized this goal: "We wish children to come to know God directly through original approaches of their own to the universe."

Although contemporary examination of Fahs' stories reveals that she oversimplified complex histories and peoples too readily in order to make them into children's fables and sometimes reduced complex lives to racial caricature, her work was ground-breaking in its time. Fahs' motto as a theologian, philosopher, and educator was: Emotional experience first. As she wrote in *Worshipping Together with Questioning Minds*:

Neither our classrooms nor our services of worship can profitably be turned in to debating societies. Neither will a silent evasion of all the issues encourage serious original thoughtfulness. The varied ideas that have been gathered up in to this three-letter word God are too pivotal in our study of religious history to be evaded. Thoughts of God are still too dominant in our Western society and too intimately [influential of] our common emotional life to be disregarded.

In what spirit then and by what techniques can we initiate and guide discussion of God among us?

Fahs devoted her life to discovering the questions that led to answers that included God-talk.

Fahs joined a Unitarian Church in 1945, and was ordained in 1959, at age 82, in what is now the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church in Bethesda, Maryland, as a Unitarian minister.

HANDOUT 2: LEARNING BY HEART — SOPHIA LYON FAHS

This story, written by Polly Peterson, is included in the fourth and fifth grade Tapestry of Faith curriculum, [Faithful Journeys](#).

"Mama, Mama, why do we just keep going and going and not going anywhere?" asked little Sophie. Her family was crossing the wide Pacific Ocean on a big ship bound for America. Sophie Lyon was an American girl, three and a half years old, making her first trip to America. She and her older brothers and sisters had all been born in China where their father was an evangelical Christian minister and their mother had started a school for Chinese girls.

When they made that the long trip to America in 1880, Sophie's parents thought their family would go back to China after one year. But the plans changed, and Sophie never returned to China. As she grew up, her memories of China grew dim. But she hoped when she grew up she could go to other countries as a Christian teacher, like her parents.

In college, Sophie joined a club for young people who also wanted to become Christian teachers. She met another devoted volunteer named Harvey Fahs. They began writing letters to each other, and made plans to travel and teach together. Six years later, they were married. But instead of traveling to another country, Sophie and Harvey moved to New York City. Harvey had a job, and Sophia Lyon Fahs taught Sunday school and continued her studies, excited about the new ideas she was learning.

Sophia and Harvey's first child was born in 1904. In those days, many women gave up their outside work after they became mothers. But Sophia was determined to keep learning and to keep teaching Sunday school, and she did. As it turned out, being a mother also helped Sophia learn! She learned about children from being with her own children and listening to their ideas and questions. (You may want to pause here and solicit children's comments on ways children can teach adults.)

When her children asked questions, Sophia tried her best to answer them. Her children had very interesting questions, like "Where does snow come from?" and "Where are we before we are born?" As she tried to answer her children's questions, Sophia learned how much she did not know! You might think not having all the answers took away Sophia's faith, but it was the opposite. She started to believe that to have a strong faith, finding questions you really care about is just as important as finding answers.

One time when Sophia taught a religious education class, she told a lively story about a real person who had

been a Christian teacher in another country. The children were eager to hear the story and eager to talk about it. Like her own children at home, the children asked questions — the interesting kind of questions that let Sophia know they were thinking and learning.

Sophia's ideas about religion changed over time. As a young person, she had thought Christianity was the one true religion and people all over the world should learn Bible stories. She grew to realize the Bible was not the only book with truth in it. She collected stories from all over the world, filled with truth and beauty to help children's spirits stretch and grow. She published the stories in a book called *From Long Ago and Many Lands*.

In those days, when most adults thought children's minds were like empty jars to fill with learning, Sophia thought differently. She thought children were more like gardens, already planted with seeds of possibility for learning and growing. She thought a teacher's job was to provide the good soil and water and sunlight a garden needs to grow. In religious school, a teacher could help children grow in their spirit and faith.

(Ask: What do you think would help a child grow in spirit? What should church school teachers like us give you, to help you grow?

Affirm or suggest: Teachers can give children a safe place to learn; tools, such as books and art supplies and music. We can show you how adults worship, sing, and celebrate together in faith. We can help you know when your actions are faithful ones, for goodness and justice. We can take you on field trips and tell you stories. But no one can give a child wisdom or faith or spiritual growth. These things can only grow from within. People learn by experiencing the world for themselves — by feeling their own feelings, and by seeing and touching and doing. That is what Sophia Fahs believed.)

When Sophia Fahs wrote about her beliefs, the president of the American Unitarian Association was impressed. He asked her to talk to Unitarian religious educators — people such as (insert your own name(s) and/or the name of your director of religious education). Unitarian Sunday school teachers liked her ideas very much. And that is why, when you come here, we encourage you to see, and touch, and do ... and to ask lots of questions.

When she was 82 years old, Sophia became a Unitarian minister. Her own life was a great example of her belief that every person in a congregation should continue to learn and grow, from the smallest child to the oldest adult. Sophia Fahs lived a long, long time — 102 years — and she never stopped learning new things.

If she were alive today and came to visit us, Sophia Fahs would want to know about our experiences, like

the ones we have posted on our Faithful Journeys Path, and how they have helped us learn and grow. She would want to know what stories we have read and how they have helped to awaken our spirits. She would want

to know how we ask questions, seek answers, and learn from each other. Imagine how happy she would be to see us watering one another's seeds of spiritual growth in Faithful Journeys today.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: SOPHIA LYON FAHS PORTRAIT



LEADER RESOURCE 2: WHY TEACH RELIGION IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE?

This was Sophia Lyon Fahs' 1960 Rufus Jones lecture, published by the Committee on Religious Education, Friends General Conference, Philadelphia, PA, 1960. Used by permission.

We are gathered this evening to honor Rufus Jones—writer, philosopher, mystic, and, to those privileged to know him, a "radiant personality." His life was in itself a memorable symbol of the importance of teaching religion in an age of science. For forty years, to ten generations of students at Haverford College, he taught religion. Perhaps some here this evening were among his students and you may feel like saying as one student did, "Rufus Jones lighted my candle." To his colleagues in the philosophy of religion, he was the most noted scholarly interpreter of religious mysticism in his time. Through his courage and creative initiative, he was largely responsible for the organization and promotion of the early work of the Friends Service Committee in Europe. The effectiveness of his spiritual leadership is shown by the 12,000,000 [dollars] given by Quakers, in response to his call for food for the starving children of Germany. Rufus Jones' religion was of the mind and heart and hand; it was "an open religion" — open to what, in his poetic way, he called "the life-giving environment of the soul."

A goodly number of years ago, after I had given one of my first talks to an audience of Friends in Philadelphia, one of George Fox's very forthright and honest disciples shook my hand vigorously, and said: "I don't believe a word thee said this evening, but I believe in thee." This was one of the most memorable and appreciated compliments I ever received. In that short moment I discovered in an unforgettable way what it means to be a true Quaker. Since that evening I have never been afraid to speak my mind to an audience of Friends. I mention this memory because some of you this evening may find yourselves in a position not wholly unlike that of this unforgotten Friend. You may find yourselves much dissatisfied with the ideas I shall express. I am far from being satisfied with them myself. All I desire of you is that you turn them over in your minds with sympathy, trusting my primary intent, and that you will, if you feel the need, discard them with full candor.

THE IMPORT OF OUR QUESTION

The question "Why teach religion in an age of science?" we may regard merely as an opening to lead us into other questions. You will note that we have not asked "Why teach the Christian religion in an age of science?" This might have been a very worthwhile subject. Other groups, with equal pertinence, might ask: Why teach the Buddhist religion? Or why teach Judaism? Or the

Moslem religion? We have, however, used the general term "religion" because from our point of view the educational process in an age of science should no longer be regarded as the transmission of one faith in order to seek commitment to it. We are assuming an open-ended education in religious thinking and living which makes room for intelligent change, in response to new knowledge and new insights. We are really asking: Do we need to educate in the general field of religion in the same spirit that we use in other areas of knowledge? Shall we nurture religious living through free, open and direct observation, experimentation, and imagination?

You realize, no doubt, that this is not the usual way of teaching religion. Even in our own country, where we have established what we call "freedom of religion," each separate religious sect or church, for the most part, regards its educational responsibility to be to teach its particular form of religion. The Jews teach Judaism. Christians teach Christianity. To educate children, or even adults, in religion, without pointing the process definitely toward the acceptance of one religion, would seem to most people to be unthinkable. It is my purpose, however, this evening to show why a non-sectarian intent is needed in an age of science if man is to preserve the values "religion" has for his evolving life.

WHAT THEN CAN WE MEAN BY THE GENERAL WORD "RELIGION?"

If then we do not limit our goal to the achieving of adherence to a specific religion, to discipleship to one teacher, to the acceptance of one Savior, to loyalty to one recorded heritage, or to obedience to one God, how shall we define *religion*?

If a general concept of even some simple, tangible thing, such as a chair, for instance, is to be gained, it is needful to see at least several objects like it and yet a little different from it. But the significance of the differences between the objects cannot be adequately assessed unless one finds out what the thing is for and why it was made.

So in considering what we mean by the general term "religion," we should examine different religions to find out their likenesses and their differences. Yet we cannot discover the *significance* of these until we find some answer to the more basic question. What emotional and practical desires and needs did these different religions try to meet? What were these religions for?

When a given object or movement has a long history, it is usually most profitable to examine first of all the reason for its origin. What functions did it perform during the earliest stages of its development? Such a question is especially important when we are dealing with so subtle and complicated a human activity as "religion." So we must ask: *Why did human beings ever start being religious?* Was early man impelled to try out certain

religious beliefs and practices because of his very nature, and the actual problems he faced in his efforts to exist in this natural world? Or did the first man and woman become religious because they were told to do so, because they were able to see God walking in the garden of Eden beside them and he explained to them what was right and what was wrong? Putting the question in another way: did the first humans create their own religious beliefs and practices naturally because *they* needed them, or have mankind's religions been given him by divine and supernatural revelations, since God knew man needed religion?

With this audience I shall assume that we share the point of view, taken by all (or almost all) present-day anthropologists, archaeologists and historians, namely that the religions of the world grew out of man's "existential predicament," as Dr. Paul Tillich would say. Man was impelled to be religious because he felt he needed something he had not yet found. He needed to try out ways of doing things he had not yet tried. I am, therefore, making bold to name five of these most basic needs or impulses. Others might well be added had we more time to discuss them. These five, however, I believe are crucial and so may give us some clue to an answer to the question "Why teach religion in an. age of science?"

FIVE BASIC NEEDS IMPELLING MANKIND TO BE RELIGIOUS

The first, and possibly the most urgent need that impelled early man to become religious was his *instinctive urge to keep alive and avoid death*. His earliest painted prayers, so far discovered, preserved for us from fifteen to twenty thousand years on the rocky walls of caves and cliffs, were the serious experimental efforts of our early ancestors to increase their food supply, and to protect themselves from the hostile assaults of the animals about them, and from the destructive powers in the large elemental forces of nature.

This basic human impulse to save one's life in the presence of danger has been shared by all other living species; yet insects, birds, fish and other mammals do not pray so far as we know. Why not? Because, as it is now quite generally believed, *Homo Sapiens* had inherited a much more capable mind than any other species; and in the process of his evolution he had kept his powers of adaptation more flexible. Man was more able to change, than were the other species, to meet his needs and he used his better and larger brain imaginatively. He did not merely run from fire. He learned how to make his own fires. Death must have frightened him, but he did not frantically surrender to his fears. He began wondering what it was like to be dead. Where had his woman gone, now that her body was stiff and cold? In his dreams he heard her talk to him. He could not see her. She may have scolded him, or blamed him for her dying. So perhaps, half out of love

for her, and half out of fear, some man in that long ago time was the first to put some kind of gifts beside her body before he covered it over.

Even thus in those most primitive days, man began sensing a Mystery in Life—in himself, in his comrades and even in the animals he slew for food. He began wondering. Did the animals also keep alive after death? Were they angry at him for killing them? But what could man do? He had to hunt to survive, and yet even in those earliest times, he began feeling guilty about it. The interpretation given by modern scholars is that the wonderful animal paintings and sculptured forms found in these ancient caves in France and Spain are man's painted prayers to the animals for their forgiveness. If this be so, it is then evident that man's earliest forms of religion grew out of his deepest and most instinctive impulse to survive, in spite of the threats to his life that he had to face.

In the second place, early man seems to have had an impulse to *know more than he was born knowing*. Like Kipling's Elephant's Child, he had a "satisfable curiosity." His first *why's* and *how's* and *what for's* probably began even before he could put his questions into words. Wise Old Nature seems to have hidden her secrets everywhere, as if to lure living minds to wonder and explore. Like a mystery story billions of years long it has held the minds of men in dramatic suspense. Always, from the beginning until now, it has been the *unsolved* problem, the *unknown* factors, the *invisible, intangible* elements that have kept man's wondering and questioning alive. His basic impulse to know more and yet more has been at the root of the development of religion.

A third basic human need that has impelled man to form religions for himself (put negatively) has been the *dread of being isolated and alone* and the frantic fear and sense of helplessness associated with it. Put positively, is the deep and unending need to be *loved by someone else and to be able to give love in return*. Again this seems to be an instinctive craving that dates its simple beginnings in lower animals, in an urge for some kind of togetherness. Even one-celled animalcules have been found to thrive better and to live longer when nurtured in groups than when each is kept in isolation. The human baby's need for sincere and loving contacts has often been confirmed by modern scientific research. It has become an axiom among pediatricians that "tender loving care" (t.l.c.) is even more important to a young child's healthy growth than is the proper milk. The tragedy of feeling isolated because of neglect, rejection, or hate, is clearly evidenced in our mental hospitals and in our prisons. Sometimes one human friend alone who can be depended upon is able to change the whole course of life for a delinquent youth. In rare instances, belief in a divine lover has partially satisfied the longing when human lovers were not to be found. But when no human friend can be found, it seems to be very difficult for anyone to believe in a loving God.

The most ancient images of human deities as yet found, are images of pregnant mother goddesses. Images and orgiastic temple ceremonies and dances have been created primarily to arouse and to satisfy physical love. On a higher level of character development, the great moments that many of the saints have described as mystical have been rapturous with love. George Fox described one of his unforgettable mystical experiences in this way:

I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but I saw that there was an infinite Ocean of light and life and love that flows' over the ocean of darkness.

To George Fox this was a vision. Described in the psychological terminology of today, we might say that George Fox had delved so deeply into the darkness of his unconscious that he felt that not only he himself but all things were embraced by a Love that was of cosmic proportions. There is much evidence to show that the religions of mankind, from the most primitive to the noblest and most spiritual, have arisen out of a universal yearning or desperate need for something that is covered in the general word *Love*.

A fourth basic need that led mankind to become religious was the need to *organize and integrate his life*. On the one hand there was the personal need to build some kind of hierarchy of values so that conflicting emotional impulses might be harmonized and actions controlled. This need led man to formulate his ethics into codes of law, and to find, if possible, some higher authority than the individual conscience, or even higher than the conscience of humanity itself, in order to maintain this controlled order.

This need for organization also led mankind to formulate some kind of cosmology, or theology, that would give him a unified picture of himself within his world. For Christians, the *Old Story of Salvation* did this. Believers could see themselves as real actors in a cosmic drama. To strengthen themselves, they could rehearse the scenes in ritual and dance. They could relive the great crises in the long centuries of struggle, and they could learn to expect a final frightening destiny or the glory of everlasting salvation. Many even in our generation still find this old cosmic drama emotionally compelling.

This need for organization is another primary need, so ageless and universal that it has been found even in the lowest forms of life. The biologist has found organization in the simplest single cell; the psychological scientists have found organization essential to the health of the psyche or spirit. The sick mental patient is the one whose impulses are disorganized, or whose impulses are organized around a hostile or mischosen center. Life necessitates some organization, and in mankind's religions he has endeavored to help himself, or to find help beyond himself, to gain this end. It is therefore not strange that students of history have found that the gods

that men have imagined were from early days ethical guides, law givers and rulers.

A fifth basic emotional need which has deeply influenced man's religious development is *the personal need of every man for some kind of super-ego, or internalized ideal*. Most of humanity, if not all, need to have this ideal or super-ego incarnated in some actual person who can be admired or loved. A historical person may serve as the symbol, if no relative or friend or contemporary hero is available, and provided the historical character can be resurrected in the imagination to live again in the present. The influence of this basic emotional need is dearly apparent in the great and long-lasting religions of the world. For this reason men have instinctively clung to the memories of their great innovators and heroes, and many times, have transformed these ideal personalities into gods.

These then are at least five of the basic human impulses or needs that have constrained humans to form their religions. First, the fundamental impulse simply to keep alive and to avoid death; second, an impulse to know the unknown, to peer through the seen into the unseen—to delve into the mysteries of existence; third (stated positively), the need for friendly companionship, or the yearning to love and to be loved, and (stated negatively) the need to escape isolation and the frantic despair it brings; fourth, the basic need for some degree of organization of life in order to establish some central control over conflicting impulses, both for the sake of the individual's own mental health and for the sake of community harmony. This need for organization also led man to seek some kind of over-all theological picture of his longer destiny within the ongoing drama of life. Finally, the fifth need is for an internalized super-ego, imaginatively created through contact with some one other than the self, who incarnates, at least in a measure, the desired better self.

THE DYNAMIC KINSHIP OF ALL RELIGIONS

If then we accept these findings of historical study and assume that the urge to be religious is the fruit of man's basic impulses and needs in the natural world, then we have a dynamic set of criteria by which to examine and gather up into one large concept the different religions.

Even though religions have been monotheist, and polytheist and humanist, some with supernatural implications and some without, when we look at them from a long time perspective we can see them as a series of bold and creative experiments—all initiated from the same basic natural needs and fulfilling the same purposes. Man has been experimenting with his religions just as truly as he has been experimenting with his scientific assumptions. It should be expected that these experiments will be changed as man's understanding of his own needs and his understanding of the nature of the universe change. The important issue is not whether or not our present religion will change. The significant questions to ask are: by what

processes may they be most advantageously changed? And how shall they be changed? And how fast?

IS THE FAITH OF OUR PRE-SCIENTIFIC FATHERS ADEQUATE IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE?

These five fundamental human needs are still impelling man to want to be religious, but the old religions of the world, worked out in pre-scientific days, no longer fully satisfy those who are today imbued with the spirit of science or who realize how drastically the findings of science have changed man's picture of the universe. There is a great deal of outmoded science mingled with the religious teachings of our Judeo-Christian Bible. Up until about one hundred years ago, probably most Christian people really believed that God had completed His creation in six days, possibly extending each of these days to a thousand years. They really believed that floods, droughts, plagues and infertility were signs of God's anger and forms of His punishment. Our generation, however, relies more on building dam and reservoirs and irrigation canals than on prayers for protection against floods, and we have more faith in the doctor's prescriptions and in serum shots against infectious diseases than in prayers for healing. A generation ago the best book on love, called *The Greatest Thing in the World*, was written by Henry Drummond, a minister. The greatest book on love to be written in our decade is *The Art of Loving*, by Erich Fromm, a psychiatrist. The ancient Psalmist cried out in prayer:

Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.
(Psalm 139:23, 24)

Modern psychotherapists, in contrast, are trying to help persons who want to know themselves, to learn how to do more of the searching into the depths of their being for themselves. They are teaching us how to listen to our own inner voices that speak to us in our dreams, in our fantasies and in our unexpected compulsive kinds of behavior. More and more people of our time who feel themselves lost in mental turmoil and want help, are going to these scientists of the psyche, and they are often finding more release and healing than their ministers know how to give.

Will then the physical, psychological and social sciences soon be taking the place of religion?

"Is Science Enough?" Rufus Jones made this question the title of a chapter in his book *Pathways to God*. His answer was a firm "NO." He regarded as tragic what he called the "shrinkage of religion on the part of both professors and students in institutions of higher learning."

"This shrinkage," he added, "is due in about equal measure to the immense expansion of science, and to the feebleness and failure of the interpreters of

Christianity to square their message of faith with the known and proven facts of the universe as they have been discovered."

Albert Einstein stated his position on this matter in an especially arresting sentence. "Science without religion," he said, "is lame, and religion without science is blind."

This vivid statement reminds me of an old story from Uganda, about a blind man and a lame man. Everyone else in the village was occupied in fighting off an attack from an enemy tribe. As a result these two handicapped men were forgotten; yet if they did not get out of the village quickly, they would both probably be killed. Finally the blind man offered to carry the lame man on his shoulders, provided the lame man would guide him to the next village. So the lame man became eyes for the blind man, and the blind man became legs for the lame man, and the two together found their way to safety.

So it may be with science and religion. Each is incomplete in itself, representing but a part of our human potential. Science and religion need one another as partners. They need to learn how to talk frankly together, to exchange their values, and to give their criticisms without causing offense. When two estranged partners wish to renew their intimacy, changes of attitude on the part of each one are usually needed.

A RELIGIOUS REFORMATION HAS BEGUN

I agree with Rufus Jones that the "shrinkage of religion" among the intelligentsia of our time is tragic. The emotional impulses that urge mankind to be religious are a part of human nature everywhere and apparently always. We truly need to be religious. Yet if religion is to survive in a day of advancing scientific discoveries, it must find a way to be on the one hand intellectually sound, and on the other hand emotionally satisfying.

As a supposedly educated generation, we are appallingly naive and primitive in many of our religious beliefs and practices. Yet our youth are being educated in the sciences to a degree and with an efficiency never before known in history. This is a dangerous situation. If we need creative and well-qualified teachers and professors of the philosophy of science to help us develop our science, we also need equally well-qualified teachers and theologians to help us develop a religion that can be a worthy partner of science.

The reformation is now only in its beginning. It cannot be accomplished hurriedly. In fact, if man ceases to reform his religions in the light of his advancing knowledge, they will become sterile. Not only do we as adults need to enlist in this reformation, but we need to prepare our children to carry on after us.

So we have now reached the complex and most difficult problem toward which our original question has been leading us. *How educate for a changing religion in a*

changing universe? Although our time this evening is now almost exhausted, I shall gather up a few of my concerns into four small bundles so that you may perhaps want to carry them away with you for further thinking. Some, as stated, may sound to you like affirmations; I ask you, however, to take them as questions.

HOW EDUCATE FOR A CHANGING RELIGION IN A CHANGING UNIVERSE?

1. *Let us keep continually in the foreground* of our study of religion *the basic emotional needs* that any acceptable religion must satisfy in some degree. If in our reformation we merely change the outward forms, the words, ceremonies and methods of persuasion, we will but camouflage the significant issues. The changes needed involve attitudes and depths of understanding. Taking the five basic impulsive needs already mentioned one by one, we can begin to forecast some of the questions we must be asking. (1) When is life worth preserving? How may a scientifically minded, religious person face this universal dread of death? What does death really mean to us today? (2) How may we keep alive in ourselves and in our children the urge to be curious, to want to know the unknown, to keep on asking questions? Can we find a kind of openness of mind that will add to our zest and our efficiency in living? At how early an age and how often shall we share our uncertainties with growing children? (3) How can we better fulfill for more people the basic need for love? What evidences have we; if any, of a cosmic love, and what might this mean? (4) How are traditional theologies and cosmologies and thoughts of God hindering or helping the processes of organization and integration of personal impulses? (5) Have we made the symbols of our ideals too perfect? Have we built our super-egos too exclusively from one image? When we delve deeply and consider richly these basic emotional needs, we find ourselves asking the kinds of questions that really matter.

2. The second thought I venture to propose is this. *Let us no longer be timid about turning to the physical scientists for help in the process of changing our cosmology*, and let us exchange even our theological thinking frankly with them. Let us encourage our children to look for evidences of *divinity within this natural universe*. Let us bring science study into our schools of religion. Although these scientists may not care for the title, I am beginning to think that some among them are today our greatest mystics and our greatest cosmic philosophers.

Dr. Henry Morganau, Professor at Harvard University both of physics and of natural philosophy, has said that an electron is as elusive as one of Thomas Aquinas' angels, and as intangible as love. Yet electrons are everywhere in every animate and inanimate thing.

Dr. Donald Andrews, Professor of Chemistry at Johns Hopkins University, writes that electrons are more like

musical vibration than like pieces of matter or small mechanisms, but the music being played is in octaves outside the limited range of our human hearing. Dr. Andrews is not intentionally being poetical when he writes of the music of the electrons. He is describing physical reality as clearly as he knows how to do.

Dr. Andrews asks: "Where do you think you are?" Sitting relatively still, right here now? But where is here? And when is now? You are really moving through space at unthinkable speeds in at least five different directions at once. Your common sense is deceptive. Your body in itself is an organized universe of revolving, vibrating atoms, some whirling in and out of you all the time. He even suggests that "your force of gravitation also reaches to the moon, to the sun, and every other atom in the universe." Where are you?

Dr. Richard Feynman, Professor of Biology in the California Institute of Technology, writes that the radioactive atoms of phosphorus in our brains are continually being replaced by new atoms, so that these atoms are completely renewed every few weeks. "So what is this mind?" he asks. "What are these atoms with consciousness? Last week's potatoes! That is what I now can remember was going on in my mind a year ago—a mind which has long since been replaced."

"The same thrill, the same sense of awe and mystery," he continues, "comes again and again when we look at any problem deeply enough. It is true that few unscientific people have this particular experience... Is nobody inspired by our present picture of the universe? The value of science remains unsung by singers."

What are we? The sum of the trillions of atoms that our bodies are made of? Or are we something that *transcends* all of the atoms of our bodies—something that cannot be measured with the instruments of space and time? Scientists today are looking for more adequate answers than have as yet been given. I believe that the rest of us have much to learn from them if we would but listen and talk with them. I believe the scientists might broaden the scope of our mystic experiences or deepen our moments of insight. It is not merely with other human beings that some of these scientists are finding communion. They are feeling a sense of kinship with many forms of living things, and some can even feel a kinship with dust and rocks and stars. They are reaching for a cosmic perspective in their mysticism. Dr. Harlow Shapley, dean of American astronomers, has asked theologians to "take seriously our insistence that the God of humanity is the God of gravitation and the God of hydrogen atoms as well as the God of the higher sentient beings that have evolved elsewhere among the myriads of galaxies."

3. Third, *let us give the psychological and social scientists as well new opportunities to contribute to our religious and ethical insights*. If we felt more flexible in our habits, and were more ready to change our old paternal patterns of "character education" and

preaching, and if the psychiatrists and sociologists in turn were less fearful of giving offense by entering the sacred precincts of theology and would talk with us frankly and humanly about religion, I foresee great things happening. These psychological scientists have been dealing with the "inner life" of the spirit and with the perplexing problems of ethical relationships, fields which until a century ago were regarded as the exclusive responsibility of religionists. Their new insights suggest deep changes. They are challenging much in our old moralities; and even more they are challenging our ways of motivating ethical behavior. For them hostilities, hates and unrealistic fears are symptoms of sickness calling for the healing medicines of understanding and loving respect, rather than being occasions for condemnation and punishment. I see profound reforms being called for, far more drastic than those made in the days of Martin Luther. Unless our religious societies learn how to inject therapeutic understanding for the old judgmental and moralistic ways of religious training, I foresee young people rejecting religion in increasing numbers. And unless we secure more help from the psychotherapists and the specialists in the study of child life, I foresee the moral foundations of our society crumbling.

4. *Fourth, let us no longer be satisfied with a religiously divided world.* No longer can one religion appropriately proclaim its supremacy over all others. Loyalty to inherited religions of the past, no matter how wonderful they have been, must become secondary to loyalty to new and growing truths from whatever sources they may come. It would be deadly if the whole world conformed to one religious pattern. It will be almost equally destructive, I believe, if we insist that the old religious groupings must be maintained, based either upon the continuance of ceremonial patterns or upon conformity

in beliefs. It is tragic that so many persons today feel isolated from their fellows, and regard themselves as irreligious, simply because they can no longer give assent to the religion they inherited.

The world we now know is one. The universe is one. Mankind is one brotherhood. We even belong in the family of atoms and stars. Reality can no longer be divided into clear-cut contraries, the material and spiritual, the animate and the inanimate, the temporal and eternal, the body and mind, good and evil, today and tomorrow, Jew and Gentile, Christian and Pagan, the secular and religious, even the Creator and the created. The dividing walls are down. All things are blended and interdependent. Truth, goodness, love, freedom—all are relative and mixed up with falsehood, evil, hate and slavery. The ethical questions we must face almost never present merely two clear cut possibilities: the right and the wrong. These varied choices call for weighing the partly good over against another partial good. The development of moral and spiritual values today involves not so much the courage to fight for the right against the wrong, as the patience to understand the wrong, its causes and its meanings. It involves also learning the arts of negotiation and empathy.

Let us then walk forward rather than backward. The unique historical memories in our special religious cultures call today for less loyalty and more understanding, less praise and more honest self-criticism. Our direction needs to be forward. It is not our ancestors who will be changed by what we do. It is our contemporaries, and our descendants for generations to come, for whom we should be feeling responsibilities. "For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday."

LEADER RESOURCE 3: THOUGHTS ON THE WORD GOD

Excerpted from *Worshipping Together with Questioning Minds* by Sophia Lyon Fahs. Copyright (C) 1965 by Sophia Lyon Fahs. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.

No matter how much of a humanist one may be, it would seem impossible (at least to me) for a thoughtful and sincere person who is trying to be a citizen of the world, who knows sympathetically something of man's religious history, to feel it necessary to discard completely all the ideas or concepts that have at one time or another been a part of the generalized thought symbolized by the word *God*. [One] may call the old God dead who favored Abraham and destroyed the idol-worshipping Babylonians. [One] may call that God dead who sent the plagues upon the Egyptians and saved the Hebrews. [One] may call God dead who died on a cross to save mankind. [One] may call that God dead who prospers the righteous and keeps the wicked poor, who changes the laws of Nature in order to show his power or to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. [One] may believe that the universe is neutral to human needs or even unjust. [One] may refuse to try to imagine God as belonging in a supernatural world. Nevertheless, after all such denials, there remain still other thoughts for which the word *God* has stood, and that deserve serious consideration and respect.

Or perhaps there are new meanings that now need to be embodied in the word *God*.

Anthropologist Loren Eiseley writes of that "delicate, elusive *mysterious principle known as organization* which leaves all other mysteries concerned with life stale and insignificant by comparison... Like some dark and passing shadow within matter, it cups out the eyes' small windows or spaces the notes of a meadow lark's song in the interior of a mottled egg. That principle—I am beginning to suspect—was there before the living in the deeps of water."

A modern Psalmist, "having pressed his hands against the confining walls of scientific method," sings his own reverent poetic song to the ineffable, unutterable reality, both beyond and within all. To call this by the word *God* is in no deep sense an answer. The word merely suggests that there must be an answer even though we may never know fully what it is.

To be agnostic simply to save ourselves the mental trouble of further delving or because we have grown weary of trying to think hard, or because we are afraid to run the risk of finding that life is not after all what we want it to be, may well dull our alertness in general. *The kind of agnosticism worthy of an intelligent and courageous person is the kind that is ceaselessly trying to decrease the range of its unknowing.* It is not the freedom to live in a world of [one's] own dreaming that the person of integrity claims. It is rather a hardy freedom to insist on the liberty to dare to risk trying to live in truth.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: FAHS' THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

This is a 30-minute activity.

Materials

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation

- List these five items on newsprint, and post:
 - Impulse to keep alive and to avoid death
 - Impulse to delve into the mysteries of existence
 - Need for friendly companionship, or the yearning to love and to be loved
 - Need for emotional order and organization
 - Need for an internalized super-ego who incarnates the desired better self

Description

Indicate the posted list of basic human emotional needs that Sophia Lyon Fahs identified. How does the congregation strive to meet these basic emotional needs, for people of all ages? In which ways does your congregational life reflect Fahs' theology and her understanding that people are impelled to be religious?

Invite participants to form groups of four. Ask the groups to identify ways Fahs' theology and educational philosophy are reflected in congregational life. Suggest they consider your congregation's worship life, educational ministries, and social justice ministries. Do the insights that Fahs' theology offers point to aspects of congregational life that can be strengthened and improved?

Give small groups ten minutes to work, then invite the larger group to come back together. Invite each small group to share a summary of its reflections. Are there common observations among the small groups? Are there items participants would like to bring to the attention of the congregation for follow-up?

As a large group, consider the Fahs definition of God: "the ineffable, unutterable reality, both beyond and within all." According to Fahs, the word *God* includes two concepts: "A Creative Power entering from outside, and a Creative Power that has always been inherent and within." Is the use of the word "God" a subject of conversation or discussion in their congregation? If so, would articulating the Fahs definition enhance the conversation?

LEADER RESOURCE 5: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

This is a 30-minute activity.

Materials

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation

- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these questions:
 - In what ways do you agree with Fahs? In what ways do you differ?
 - Is “God-talk” an issue in your congregation?
 - How do you as a professional work with a variety of opinions and perspectives in regard to the word “God”?
 - Is the language you use to name “the ineffable, unutterable reality, both beyond and within all” in an interfaith context (such as an interfaith worship service or social justice project) different from the language you use in a Unitarian Universalist context?

Description

Share this quote from Fahs' *Worshipping Together with Questioning Minds*:

A modern Psalmist, “having pressed his hands against the confining walls of scientific method,” sings his own reverent poetic song to the ineffable, unutterable reality, both beyond and within all. To call this by the word God is in no deep sense an answer. The word merely suggests that there must be an answer even though we may never know fully what it is.

To be agnostic simply to save ourselves the mental trouble of further delving or because we have grown weary of trying to think hard, or because we are afraid to run the risk of finding that life is not after all what we want it to be, may well dull our alertness in general. The kind of agnosticism worthy of an intelligent and courageous person is the kind that is ceaselessly trying to decrease the range of its unknowing. It is not the freedom to live in a world of [one’s] own dreaming that the person of integrity claims. It is rather a hardy freedom to insist on the liberty to dare to risk trying to live in truth.

Invite participants to form groups of three or four and reflect on Fahs’ ideas, using the posted questions as a guide.

After 20 minutes, signal that time is up and invite participants back into the large group. Lead a discussion, using these questions as a guide:

- What interesting insights arose from the small group conversations?
- Are you considering doing anything differently going forward as a result of this workshop?

FIND OUT MORE

- Sophia Lyon Fahs, *Today's Children and Yesterday's Heritage* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952).
- Sophia Lyon Fahs, *Worshipping Together With Questioning Minds* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965).
- Edith F. Hunter, *Sophia Lyon Fahs: A Biography* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966)
- Christopher L. Walton, "[Sophia Lyon Fahs: Revolutionary educator](#)," *UU World* (March/April 2003).

WORKSHOP 7: JAMES LUTHER ADAMS

INTRODUCTION

We live by our devotions. — James Luther Adams

This workshop formally introduces the Pragmatic Theory of Religious Beliefs, a theory many Unitarian Universalists already affirm though they may not know it by this name. Developed by Unitarian Universalist minister, theologian, and social ethicist James Luther Adams, the theory, simply stated, is this: Belief is revealed in deeds, not creeds. This workshop uses as a focal point the conversion experience that lies at the devotional heart of Adams' pragmatic theory.

Adams created his Pragmatic Theory of Religious Belief in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a graduate student at Harvard. As he distanced himself from Christian fundamentalist roots and became a Unitarian minister, he developed a conceptual framework to describe his emerging liberal faith. After he witnessed, first-hand, the rise of fascism in post-World War I Germany, this new conceptual work assumed "crucial significance" for him because of what he called a "kind of conversion" experience. He moved from what he described as an "enfeebled" faith, gaining new devotional strength and conviction. His stronger faith "plunged" him into social justice religious work when he returned to the United States.

As a consequence of his conversion experience, Adams bound theory and practice tightly together, working diligently for the next half century on race relations, civil liberties, and housing problems at a time when practical political action on behalf of social justice was unusual for a Unitarian minister or any liberal Protestant clergyperson. He was a founding member of the Independent Voters of Illinois. In that role, he traveled frequently to Washington D.C. to consult with Congressmen and, "participated in precinct organization, becoming a doorbell ringer and also consulting with party leaders in the back rooms." By the end of his life, Adams was recognized as one of the leading liberal theologians and social ethicists of the 20th century.

We are fond of saying that we are a liberal religious people known not by our creeds but by our deeds. Thanks in no small part to Adams' life and work, Unitarian Universalists today understand that our religious beliefs are revealed in our behavior. Using the life and work of Adams as a lens, this workshop examines how behavior reveals beliefs today and invites participants to decide, individually and collectively,

whether Adams' theology can help deepen personal and community devotional work and faith-in-action practices.

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read one or both of the following for background information on James Luther Adams:

- The [James Luther Adams](#) entry in the online Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography
- Handout 1, Introducing James Luther Adams

Read the story "The Conversion Experience of James Luther Adams," and Leader Resource 2, James Luther Adams' Theology. As time allows, read the two Adams essays, "The Use of Symbols," and "The Love of God," included as Leader Resources 3 and 4.

Use some or all of the following exercises and questions to help you understand the reading and reflect on Adams' Pragmatic Theory of Religious Beliefs. You are encouraged to write your responses in your theology journal:

- Outline a liberal religious belief structure parallel to the conservative religious belief structure delineated by Adams in the essay "Use of Symbols," Leader Resource 3 (refer to bold text in the essay). Then, write a one-sentence definition of Adams' Pragmatic Theory of Religious Beliefs using your own words. Remember, Adams claims that quite often the meaning of an ethical generality can be determined by observing what its proponents wish to change in society or to preserve unchanged.
- Adams reports that members of the Underground Church (anti-Nazis) said that a thousand of them working together might have stopped Hitler from rising to power and constructing his fascist political institutions. How might this effort, had it happened, have galvanized and thus given "crucial significance" to Adams' pragmatic theory? How does the fact that it did not happen expose what Adams and his cohort of Unitarian ministers called the "thinness" of liberal theology?
- In the essay "Use of Symbols," Leader Resource 3, Adams argues that a religious belief serves as a kind of coordinating or unifying principle between our interior lives and our public behavior—the psychological and institutional spheres of our lives (refer to bold

text in the essay). He says that our beliefs link our inner and outer lives, our personal and public life. Adams argues that there are certain tensions between the two spheres we must negotiate. For example, our personal need for privacy can conflict with our need to take action in the public sphere. Our inner sense of personal freedom is in tension with our recognition that there must be external order and rule. Justice and mercy, participation and privacy, freedom and equality draw on opposing, subjective and objective "virtues," The tension between these two spheres—the inner and outer—makes it impossible "to deduce precise pragmatic judgments from a given creedal position [i.e., belief]." Moreover, Adams argues, the attempt to ignore the tension and reduce the interests of the two spheres to one and the same "is likely to be overzealous in intention and to reveal ideological taint—the desire to protect special privilege." And so, Adams concludes, "the divisions and tensions [must] remain." Do you agree? Explain in detail.

- In the essay "The Love of God," Leader Resource 4, Adams tries to establish love as a foundational emotional reference of the word God. Lay out his argument in your own words by listing and numbering the basic claims he makes to support his argument. Once you have completed this list, evaluate each claim (or premise) and determine for yourself whether Adams has put together an argument that makes sense to you for "love" as a fundamental emotion of religious devotion.
- Adams places "voluntary associations" in the meaning-making sphere of human experience, the place that links our internal and public life. Why does Adams believe that voluntary associations operate in this sphere between our inner psychological world and our public social world? Why does he believe that these voluntary groups have the power to change social institutions?
- As Adams notes at the end of his essay, "The Evolution of My Social Concern," the power of voluntary associations today is severely compromised by private, professional, and business interests. What foundation is there for hope today?

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build historical knowledge about the Pragmatic Theory of Religious Beliefs developed by Unitarian Universalist minister, theologian, and social ethicist James Luther Adams

- Engage participants to discover the foundational "devotional" feelings linked to their own Unitarian Universalist behavior toward others
- Develop participants' understanding about the ways in which their involvement in "voluntary associations," both in civic life and in the congregation, is a Unitarian Universalist spiritual and devotional practice which reflects their Unitarian Universalist faith.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain personal knowledge about their own understanding of religious devotion, the affectional foundation of which, according to James Luther Adams (1901-1994), is love
- Grow in their self-knowledge about their own conversion experiences and the emotional foundations of their own Unitarian Universalist faith and its links to their religious behavior toward others
- Understand a theological grounding of the Unitarian Universalist notion that what is important are "deeds, not creeds"
- Develop awareness of how their own participation in "voluntary associations," in their congregation and beyond it can, by reflecting their religious beliefs, deepen their private spiritual lives while helping them extend their hands, through social justice work, to others.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Linking Behavior, Beliefs, and Emotions	10
Activity 2: Introducing James Luther Adams	20
Activity 3: Redefining God, Faith, and Religion	10
Activity 4: Testing Adams	40
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read the story, "The Conversion Experience of James Luther Adams." Use this exercise and questions to help you reflect on Adams' conversion experience and find connections between Adams' theology and your own:

- Recall a personal experience you might describe as a conversion experience, in which something occurred that prompted you to

change your behavior. Perhaps you no longer acted the same way toward someone or something, or you began a new series of activities or you formed new allegiances. Follow these steps:

- Identify the feeling that prompted the change in your behavior or that accompanied it.
 - Then, identify the belief (i.e., thought, concept, or idea) linked to this new change in your behavior.
 - How does your new behavior indicate you would like to change, or leave unchanged,
- the protocol of a social, political, or economic institution in your life? An institution, for example, might be your family, your congregation, government, the market economy, a political organization, or a public or private education system.
- Discern whether the belief linked to your changed behavior helped you interpret and explain your internal feelings to yourself and others about your changed behavior; your way of acting towards others (your ethical behavior); and your way of evaluating and explaining (approvingly or disapprovingly) the behavior of an institution towards others.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you share Reading 436 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "We come to this time and this place," by David C. Pohl or share these words from James Luther Adams' essay, "A Faith for the Free":

... the achievement of freedom in community requires the power of organization and the organization of power. The free person will be unfree, will be a victim of tyranny from within or from without, if his or her faith does not assume form, in both word and deed. The commanding, transforming power is a shaping power; it shapes one's beliefs about that reality and when it works through persons it shapes the community of love and justice.

The free church is that community which is committed to determining what is rightly of ultimate concern to persons of free faith. It is a community of faithful and a community of sinners... It is the community in which the life-spirit of faith tries to create and mold life-giving, life-transforming beliefs, the community in which persons open themselves to God and each other and to commanding, sustaining, transforming experiences from the past, appropriating, criticizing, and transforming tradition and giving that tradition as well as newborn faith the occasion to become relevant to the needs of a time.

Invite participants to join in reading the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: LINKING BEHAVIOR, BELIEFS, AND EMOTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Write on newsprint, and post:
 - Recall an experience where something happened that caused you to decide to change your behavior.
 - Identify the emotion that prompted or accompanied the change in behavior. What did your new behavior mean?
 - Identify the belief (thought or idea) linked to this change in behavior. What belief did the behavior change express?

Description of Activity

Introduce the workshop using these or similar words:

Can James Luther Adams help us broaden and deepen the meaning of our own beliefs as Unitarian Universalists today? The task of this workshop is to help us answer this question. To this end, we will take account of (1) the Pragmatic Theory of Religious Beliefs created by Adams, (2) his conversion experience linked to this theory, and (3) his plunge into new ways of acting in the world prompted by his conversion experience.

Invite participants to recall an experience in which something happened such that they decided to change their behavior. Indicate the reflection prompts you have posted on newsprint. Invite them to describe each of these three elements of the experience (i.e., their behavior, emotion, and belief) in their theology journal. Allow five minutes for writing.

Signal when time is up. Then, explain that James Luther Adams highlights three elements of his Pragmatic Theory of Religious Beliefs: (1) the *changed behavior*, (2) the *feeling* that prompted or accompanied the changed behavior and (3) the *belief* that informed both

the changed behavior and its accompanying display of feeling. Explain his theory: If we want to understand someone's belief, we have to observe the person's behavior and feeling (displayed as tone of voice, facial expressions, mood and disposition, attitude, etc.). Moreover, Adams argued, in order to understand someone's belief, we also have to study the way in which the person's belief is displayed in the behavior of a social, political, or economic institution (a family, government, or market system, for example) that the belief sanctions or wants to change.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING JAMES LUTHER ADAMS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, [Introducing James Luther Adams](#) (included in this document)
- Story, "[The Conversion Experience of James Luther Adams](#)" (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [James Luther Adams Photo](#) (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Computer and digital projector

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to project or make copies of Leader Resource 1.
- Review the story so you can present it effectively.
- Copy the handout and story for all participants.
- Arrange for a volunteer to read the story. If possible, give the volunteer the story ahead of time.

Description of Activity

Project or distribute copies of Leader Resource 1. Introduce James Luther Adams as a 20th-century Unitarian theologian and social ethicist. Read or convey brief biographical information, using the paragraphs below as a guide.

James Luther Adams was one of the preeminent Christian social ethicists and theologians of the 20th century. In his work, he emphasized personal and institutional behavior as the locus of meaning in religious belief. He was a Unitarian parish minister; labor activist and civil rights advocate; journal editor; distinguished scholar, translator and editor of major German theologians; and a divinity school professor for more than 40 years at Meadville Lombard

Theological School, the Federated Theological Faculties at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Harvard Divinity School, and Andover-Newton School of Theology.

In his early life as a member of a fundamentalist community, Adams gained a profound sense of the importance of groups, or "voluntary associations" of people who came together freely to work and worship together. But he quickly shed his religious community's creeds, doctrines, and theological ideas. When he entered the University of Minnesota, he formed a study group with six friends who were also reared in fundamentalism. Their critique was not of religion, he later explained, but of fundamentalism because it "could not properly be taken seriously." Adams, while a student, also worked eight hours a night on the railroad as secretary to the superintendent of the Northern Pacific, which, according to Adams, netted him a reality test to measure what he was learning during his full load of university courses during the day. Throughout his life, Adams insisted that the real meaning of beliefs is determined by human behavior. Meanwhile, at the university, as Adams gradually became more and more theologically liberal, one of his professors, noting Adams inordinate interest in religion, encouraged him to become a Unitarian minister. Off to Harvard Divinity School Adams went, graduating in 1927.

Adams went to Germany in 1927 and again in 1935 and 1936. His experiences there brought about, as he puts it, "a kind of conversion" experience to social justice work.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about Adams' life, and invite participants to read it at home.

Distribute the story. Invite the volunteer participant to read Adams' account of his conversion.

After the story, explain Adams' notion of "voluntary associations" using these or your own words:

Adams' conviction that the church had a decisive role to play in political, social, and economic affairs was galvanized by the confessions of the members of the anti-Nazi Underground Church in Germany who said that if they had acted together (in a voluntary organization) in the 1920s, they could have prevented Hitler from rising to power. He said he gained the conviction that a decisive institution was needed to ensure a viable democratic society. Adams called this decisive institution the voluntary association. He called it voluntary because members are free to join or to sever their membership. This kind of voluntary association, Adams argued, was designed to "engender or affect public opinion as a social

force, and thus to resist or promote social change."

For Adams, the church was a special kind of voluntary association because its own self understanding is that the work it does in the world is from a sense of being oriented to God and called by God to act prophetically in the world. He believed that the church, as a voluntary association, defines and nurtures our inner lives as well as our public lives as an agent for collective action in the world. The role of the church, Adams said, is to deal with the meaning of human existence.

Invite participants to spend a few minutes reflecting on Adams' story and beliefs in their theology journals. Invite them, as they draw or write, to note which of Adams observations and/or statements in this account of his conversion, and his change of behavior as a result, stand out for them, and why.

ACTIVITY 3: REDEFINING GOD, FAITH, AND RELIGION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Adams' Definitions](#) (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements

Preparation for Activity

- Copy the handout for all participants.
- Arrange for three volunteers to read the definitions in the handout. If possible, give the handout to the volunteers ahead of time.

Description of Activity

Explain to participants that Adams redefined three traditional religious words to make his theological points evident: *religion*, *faith*, and *God*. Distribute Handout 2 and invite three volunteers to read the three definitions. Invite participants to use their notebooks to respond to Adams' definitions. What about the definitions do they find helpful? Useful? Challenging? Allow five minutes.

ACTIVITY 4: TESTING ADAMS (40 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Write on newsprint and post:
 - Does it make sense to you to identify your religious beliefs not by what you say, but rather by what you do and the emotions displayed by this behavior?
 - What personal behavior and what collective behavior, from this perspective, identify members of this group individually and collectively as Unitarian Universalists?
- Write on newsprint but do not post:
 - Adams believed that love is the transformative emotion, the source of redemption in human life, and the operative feeling for devotion in one's religious life. Recall a time in a worship service when a particular emotion came to the fore within you and you felt transformed, regenerated, or renewed. Identify the emotion and compare it to the way in which Adams focuses on love as the creative and redemptive power that links the behavior of human beings to one another and to a transformative power. Did the emotion you experienced make you feel as if you were linked to a transformative and regenerative power? Explain.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to form small groups of three. Invite participants to use the first posted question to expand on their Activity 1 reflections about a conversion experience and take five minutes to write in their theology journals.

After five minutes, invite participants to draw on these written reflections and share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with the other members of the group. Allow 15 minutes, inviting each group to appoint a timekeeper or share timekeeping responsibilities to ensure that each participant has five minutes for sharing insights, experiences, and reflections.

Signal when time is up. Post the second piece of newsprint and invite participants to share their answers to the question, which is based on their reflections in Activity 3. Explain the process using these or similar words:

Your group will have ten minutes to respond to the second question. Appoint a timekeeper or share timekeeping responsibilities to assure that all have a chance to speak. First, allow each member, in turn, two minutes for sharing. After all have shared, your group will have four additional minutes for each person, in turn, to share personal insights, thoughts, and feelings based on the work done in this small group session.

Signal when time is up, and re-gather the large group. Give participants a moment to compose one-sentence, personal reflection about the usefulness of the legacy of James Luther Adams as a lens for thinking about how feeling, belief, and behavior are linked in their own religious lives. Invite volunteers to read their one-sentence reflections aloud.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family. Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer a benediction from James Luther Adams, Reading 591 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future

workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?
- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

We live by our devotions. — James Luther Adams (1901-1994)

Identify a way in which your personal religious behavior displays your religious beliefs. Then, identify a way your congregation's beliefs are displayed in congregational structure, practices, and action. Reflect in your theology journal how the behaviors display beliefs. Consider how you, or your congregation, could more systematically display your Unitarian Universalist faith.

Faith in Action

Five out of seven persons who visit our Unitarian Universalist congregations do not return. Assume for the sake of this faith in action exercise that you can change your behavior toward visitors in a way that might create a connection with the visitors and would in this way encourage them to return. What change in behavior could you (and/or other members of the congregation) initiate that might make a connection with the visitor and express the meaning of your Unitarian Universalist beliefs in a way that would make the visitor want to visit the congregation again?

STORY: THE CONVERSION EXPERIENCE OF JAMES LUTHER ADAMS

James Luther Adams, from "[The Evolution of My Social Concern](#)." Used with permission, Herbert F. Vetter, Harvard Square Library. The text is also found in *Voluntary Associations: Socio-cultural Analyses and Theological Interpretation* by James Luther Adams (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1986).

In the summer of 1927, six years after Hitler became head of the movement and six years before the Party came into power, I visited Nuremberg just at the time when thousands of people, young and old, were in the city for the annual Nazi festival. On the day of the great parade in the streets of Nuremberg, history as it was being made at that juncture gave me personally a traumatic jolt. Standing in the jostling crowd and watching the thousands of singing Nazis with their innumerable brass bands as they passed along the street, I inadvertently got into a conversation with some people who turned out to be Nazi sympathizers. Out of curiosity as to what they would say, I asked a bystander the meaning of the swastika that was everywhere evident. Within a few minutes I found myself in a heated conversation with more and more people joining in, particularly when the discussion turned to the Jewish question. As I bore down in the argument against these defenders of Nazism, asking more and more insistent questions, I was suddenly seized by the elbows from behind, and pulled vehemently out of the crowd. No one made an effort to help me. I immediately thought I was being taken into custody. I could not see who it was who, after extricating me from the crowd, marched me vigorously down a side street and then turned up into an alley. On reaching the dead end of the alley, my host, a young German workingman in his thirties, wheeled me around and shouted at me, "Don't you know that when you watch a parade in Germany today you either keep your mouth shut or get your head bashed in?"

My palpitation mounted even higher at this moment, and I was all the more puzzled when my captor smiled and said, "Don't be frightened. I have saved you."

"Saved me from what?"

"From being sandbagged. In about five minutes more of that argument on the curb, they would have knocked you out, flat on the pavement."

This man was an unemployed worker and an anti-Nazi. He immediately invited me to take dinner with him at his home. I accepted gladly

The experiences in Germany during that summer became crucial for me, but they did not assume full significance in my consciousness until in the middle Thirties I spent some months in the so-called

"underground" movement of the Confessing Church in Germany. Meanwhile, I had resumed graduate studies at Harvard. These were years in which my acquired religious liberalism came under scrutiny that we associate with that period in American Protestantism [i.e., the "thinness of its theology" regarding the major social issues of the day—the Depression, the problems of unemployment, the labor movement, the devastation wrought by World War I].

Some of us Unitarian ministers initiated a study group just before I went to Germany in 1927. The group undertook a vigorous year-round discipline of reading, discussion, and the writing of papers. We collectively studied major literature of the time in the fields of theology, Bible, historical theology, social philosophy, art, liturgy, prayer, ever seeking consensus and seeking common disciplines whereby we could implement consensus in the church and the community . . . I speak of this group discipline here, because in my conviction the concern for group participation and group responsibility became increasingly crucial in [my] quest for identity.

These multiple concerns were brought together to a convergence by my second, more prolonged visit to Europe, a year of study of theology, of prayer and liturgy, of fascism and its persecution of the churches . . . I cannot here narrate the melodramatic experiences of the underground [of the Confessing Churches against Nazism] . . . In view of my connections with leaders in the Confessing Church, [theologian] Rudolf Otto saw to it that I should get acquainted with German Christians, Nazis among the clergy whom he deemed to be insane.

It is extremely difficult to pass over a description of the maelstrom of this whole experience in Germany, an experience that brought fearful encounter with the police and even a frightening encounter two years later with the Gestapo. The ostensible charge made by the Gestapo was that I was violating the law by walking on the street with a deposed Jewish teacher and by visiting a synagogue. The word existential came alive in those hours of bludgeoned questioning and of high palpitation. It is difficult, I say, to suppress giving an account of incidents in connection with the Nazis, the anti-Nazis, and the hidden underlings. It is even more difficult to determine how to compress into brief statement what all this did for the evolution of my "social concern"

Let me repeat reticence so far as to say that the experience of Nazism induced a kind of conversion. I recall a conversation with [the German psychiatrist and philosopher] Karl Jaspers at his home one day in Heidelberg in 1936. I asked him what at he deemed to be the contemporary significance of liberal Christianity. He replied with unwonted vehemence, "Religious liberalism has no significance. It has Zwang—no costing commitment" . . . I pressed upon myself the question, "If

Fascism should arise in the States, what in your past performance would constitute a pattern or framework of resistance?" I could give only a feeble answer to the question. My principal political activities had been the reading of the newspaper and voting. I had preached sermons on the depression or in defense of strikers. Occasionally, I uttered protest against censorship in Boston, but I had no adequate conception of citizenship participation."

.... The persecuted Confessional Seminary I attended in Elberfeld occupied an abandoned Masonic building. The order was forbidden to hold meetings. Repeatedly I heard anti-Nazis say, *If only 1,000 of us in the late twenties had combined in heroic resistance, we could have stopped Hitler.* I noticed the stubborn resistance of the Jehovah's Witness. I observed also the lack of religious pluralism in a country that had no significant Nonconformist movement in the churches. *Gradually I*

came to the conviction that a decisive institution of the viable democratic society is the voluntary association as a medium for the assumption of civic responsibility [emphasis added].

[The result:] I plunged into voluntary associational activity, concerning myself with race relations, civil liberties, housing problems. I joined with newly formed acquaintances in the founding of the Independent Voters of Illinois, and I began to learn first hand about Moral Man and Immoral Society. I traveled to Washington fairly often to consult with men like Adlai Stevenson, Jonathan Daniels, and Harold Ickes regarding Chicago politics. At the same time I participated in precinct organization, becoming a doorbell ringer and also consulting with party leaders in the back rooms. There is nothing intrinsically unusual about all of this. It was only unusual for the Protestant churchman or clergyman.

HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCING JAMES LUTHER ADAMS

Drawn from Adams' essays and his autobiography, Not Without Dust and Heat.

By the time of his death in 1994 at age 92, James Luther Adams was recognized as one of the preeminent Christian social ethicists and theologians of the 20th century. In his work, he emphasized personal and institutional behavior as the locus of meaning in religious belief. He was a Unitarian parish minister; labor activist and civil rights advocate; journal editor; distinguished scholar, translator, and editor of major German theologians including Paul Tillich and Ernst Troeltsch; divinity school professor for more than 40 years at Meadville Lombard Theological School, the Federated Theological Faculties at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Harvard Divinity School, and Andover-Newton School of Theology. He also was a founding member of three major Unitarian Universalists study groups—the Greenfield Group, Brothers of the Way, and the Prairie Group, which were designed to help our clergy and scholars gain theological clarity, devotional strength, and spiritual solidarity and stamina for personal and institutional ethical action in the world.

Born in 1901, James Luther Adams was the first of three children in a fundamentalist family headed by a severely authoritarian Christian minister who believed the Second Coming of Christ was imminent and the rising up to heaven of the elect was soon expected, and, thus, all talk about worldly affairs was useless. Theological talk in this household in Washington State meant talk about the nature of Christ.

Adams gained a profound sense of the importance of social solidarity based, as he put it, on the importance of a shared participation in religious community's life. The importance of groups, or "voluntary associations" of people who came together freely to work and worship together, took hold in him in his early life as a member of a fundamentalist community. But he quickly shed his religious community's creeds, doctrines, and theological ideas. When he entered the University of Minnesota, he formed a study group with six friends who were also reared in fundamentalism. Their critique was not of religion, he later explained, but of fundamentalism because it "could not properly be taken seriously." Adams, while a student, also worked eight hours a night on the railroad as secretary to the superintendent of Northern Pacific, which, according to Adams, netted him a reality test to measure what he was learning during his full load of university courses during the day. Throughout his life, Adams insisted that the real meaning of beliefs is determined by human behavior. Meanwhile, at the university, as Adams gradually became more and more theologically liberal, one of his professors, noting Adams inordinate interest in religion, encouraged him to become a Unitarian minister. Off to Harvard Divinity School Adams went, graduating in 1927.

For Adams, a religious belief was not simply a private, personal attitude, idea or a personal guide for behavior. A religious belief, according to Adams, was also a guide for the behavior of institutions. He called the different kinds of social programs created by institutions their "institutional behavior." And this behavior, he insisted, revealed the real content of a belief. This is why religious beliefs like those of Lutherans, Quakers, and Unitarian Universalists, Adams insisted, create different types of social institutions. The real meaning of their beliefs shows up as institutional behavior: the way people's lives get organized and governed by their various social institutions.

HANDOUT 2: ADAMS' DEFINITIONS

Religion

Adams claims that religion is a universal experience. To be human, Adams argues, is to be religious because the purpose of religion is to identify *what gives fundamental meaning and fulfillment to human life*. Religion, he says, is "concerned with the inescapable issues regarding the meaning and fulfillment of life." This means that for Adams, "there is no such thing as a completely irreligious person."

Faith

There is one kind of faith, Adams insists, that no one can live without: *confidence*. According to Adams, "We do not need to use the word "faith" to refer to it. The word 'confidence' will serve just as well. No one and no culture can long maintain a dynamic and creative attitude toward life without the confidence that human life has some important meaning either actual or potential, and that this meaning may in some tolerable fashion be maintained or achieved, in other words, that resources are available for the fulfillment of meaning. This concern with the meaning of life and with the resources available for the fulfillment of this meaning is not merely optional luxury. It is a universal concern. It is the essential concern of religion."

God

The term "God," for Adams, refers to that which a person not only cherishes above all else, but also gives oneself to, and identifies with as a "sovereign object of devotion." According to Adams, this object of devotion is sparked by love. And so he says, "When the temperature of a person's mind or spirit rises to defend something to the very last ditch, then generally that person's sacred devotion is at stake. The test is as revealing when applied to the believer in God as when applied to the unbeliever. It may show that the God avowed by the believer is not really sacred to him or her. It can show also that a serious rejection of belief in God may be a form of the love of God in the sense that it is a giving of oneself to, an identification with, something cherished above all else." And so Adams concludes: "Whether people call themselves theists or atheists, the issue comes down to this: What is sacred? What is truly sovereign? What is ultimately reliable? These are the questions that are involved in every discussion of the love of God. And even if we do not like to use the words 'the love of God,' we will nevertheless deal with these questions in any discussion of the meaning of human existence."

LEADER RESOURCE 1: JAMES LUTHER ADAMS PHOTO



LEADER RESOURCE 2: JAMES LUTHER ADAMS THEOLOGY

Three major elements in the Pragmatic Theory of Religious Beliefs

James Luther Adams highlights three major elements of his *Pragmatic Theory of Religious Beliefs*: (1) *behavior*, (2) a *feeling* that prompts, accompanies, or stands in tension to the behavior, (3) a *belief*, the meaning of which is revealed in the behavior and the feeling linked to it. His theory argues that to understand the *meaning* of your belief, one has to observe (1) how you act (the belief's external expression) and (2) how you feel (the internal belief's expression displayed, perhaps through your tone of voice, facial expressions, or mood and attitude). Moreover, he argues that one must also study the way in which your belief is expressed in the behavior of a social, political, and/or economic institution (for example, a family, government, or market system) that you would like to change or leave unchanged. Behavior thus encompasses personal as well as institutional behavior. In sum, Adams urges us to think about human behavior as *both* a personal and an institutional activity that reveals the actual meaning of a religious belief.

Further Exploration of the Pragmatic Theology of Religious Belief

In his memoir, *Not Without Dust and Ashes*, Adams discusses ideas he developed at Harvard that subsequently gained "crucial significance" for him because of his experiences in Nazi Germany:

1. Christian ethics pertains to social justice work. At Harvard Divinity School, Adams took courses from the Unitarian minister Francis Greenwood Peabody. Here, Adams learned that "the Gospel, the message of Jesus, was not to be interpreted solely in terms of vicarious atonement and resurrection in another life . . . , but rather seen as a form of social criticism directed toward the institutions and false piety of its time." This way of viewing the Gospel and Jesus was called the Social Gospel Movement, which emphasized work on earth in social justice initiatives in order to make God's reign on earth a socio-economic and politically liberating fact in the lives of the downtrodden and dispossessed.

2. Christian theology pertains to social justice work. Adams, reading the work of German theologian Rudolf Otto, learned that the Kingdom of God was emerging in history now. For Adams, this meant that as a theologian he must pay attention to what was going on in the world now, not just in the past and future. This perspective went against his own upbringing in fundamentalism which defined the meaning of theology as attention riveted to the expected return of Christ. Adams now felt liberated from this fundamentalist view of theology and

felt that the call to make life better on earth (ethics) now was part of his religious work as a Christian Unitarian minister and theologian.

3. Pragmatism becomes a method for studying the links within Christian Ethics and Christian Theology to social justice work in the world. Adams believed the study of religion and theology must include study of the ways religion and theology are linked to economic, political, and social issues. And so he went on search for a method, a way to study the fields of religion and theology such that their institutional relations to social justice issues were revealed. To this end, he adopted and then adapted a key insight from "pragmatism"—the new American school of philosophy founded by Charles Sanders Peirce (pronounced *purse*) at Harvard in the late 19th century. Adams summarized this new school of thought: "... the meaning of a belief or thought is observed in its effects on action, on habits [of action]." In other words, pragmatism, Adams argued, claims that human behavior displays the real meaning of a belief.

Adams now added to this new philosophic school an element its founders had left out: the institutional consequences of beliefs. For Adams, a belief was not simply a private, personal attitude, idea or a personal guide for behavior. A belief, according to Adams, was also a guide for the behavior of institutions. Moreover, he called the different kinds of social programs created by institutions their "institutional behavior." And this behavior, he insisted, revealed the practical content of a belief. This is why religious beliefs like those of Lutherans, Quakers, and Unitarian Universalists create different types of social institutions, Adams insisted. Their beliefs show up as institutional behavior, the way people get organized and treated. He insisted that when we talk about beliefs—religious or otherwise—we must pay pointed attention to the institutional structures, strictures, behavior, and emotional profiles prompted by these beliefs. Otherwise, Adams insisted, our talk about belief is empty of meaning and import.

Voluntary Associations

During his so-named conversion experience in Germany, Adams said he gained the conviction that a decisive institution of the viable democratic society is the voluntary association. Adams characterized his experiences in Nazi Germany as inducing a kind of "conversion" in him that brought about his "plunge" into a host of civic-minded voluntary associational activities when he returned to the States. He claimed that such associations are "a medium for the assumption of civic responsibility."

The church, Adams further argued, is a voluntary association that attends to the psychological well-being of its members as well as to the organization and direction of their collective behavior for promoting social,

political, and economic change in the wider world. Voluntary associations, for Adams, are organizations to which we freely have chosen to belong (rather than those into which we have been born such as our birth family, community, and political state). In voluntary associations, Adams insisted, we gain the power to negotiate our own internal feelings with others and also to gain power as a group to negotiate changes in the non-voluntary associations that rule our lives.

This is why, Adams concludes, "Christian [and, more broadly, religious] vocation extends beyond the job to the church and the community." Religious voluntary associations work in both the private psychological sphere of the individual and also work with the individual as an utterly associational being, someone who is known by his or her group affiliations. This is why Adams says: "By their groups shall ye know them." We learn how to negotiate the tensions between our inner lives and our external behavior together, Adams concludes, in voluntary associations. Adams believes "the responsibility of the Christian is to participate in the associations that define and re-define the actual situation, in the associations that give utterance and body to prophetic protest, and to social change or to social stability in associations that provide the occasion for the Christian and the non-Christian to enter into dialogue and even to achieve a working consensus—in short, in the associations that contribute to the shaping of history.

Moreover, he called for the formation of small groups within the larger congregational community (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*). Here he affirmed the autonomy of such groups within the church as a means of implement the priesthood of all believers into the overall work of the church, work that must go on within its members, among its members, and beyond the doors of the church in associational work with others. For Adams, the church is a special kind of voluntary association because its own self-understanding is that the work it does in the world is from a sense of being oriented to God and called by God to act prophetically in the world. Adams thus gave the church a singular place in this "medium" of human affairs.

Love—the Religious Center of Voluntary Associations

Adams believed that a major role of religious institutions is to operate in the inmost dimension of human experience. Religious institutions, he insisted, teach us

how to achieve emotional order, openness, and creative integrity. They deal with our affections, our feelings, our emotions. And their model for this entire enterprise, Adams believed, is the creative, redemptive power of love itself, which he called "God." Or more precisely, "The Love of God." For Adams, love (of God) was thus something dynamic within the self that transcends all associations because it is "the power that holds the world together and that, when we are tearing it apart, persuades us to come to ourselves and start on new beginnings . . . [It] is a self-giving to a process of transformation." Moreover, it "is a love that we cannot give unless we have first received it." Nevertheless, this love is known only through associations (family, primary groups of friendship and neighborhood, political groups, the church, and more).

Adams redefined the traditional meaning of the term "God" in order to explain divine love as the devotional foundation of liberal faith for both theists and atheists. Love, Adams argued, can be found in each of the three dimensions to the realm of human privacy:

1. First, it pertains to our relationship in our inmost self with a creative redemptive power.
2. Second, it pertains to how we feel about ourselves.
3. Third, it pertains to how we feel when we are with others. The model for truly knowing all three dimensions of our psychological life, Adams concluded, is our experience with the creative, redemptive power of love. Moreover, the model-maker for this depth domain of human experience is the religious institution as a voluntary association. More precisely, Adams believed that if the private dimensions of our lives are "to achieve order and openness and creative integrity, it requires the disciplines of the inner life which may be defined and nurtured by associations that exist for this purpose." Adams called the church the major association designed for this work. From the subsoil of human privacy, Adams concluded, the other institutions in our lives "receive much of their vitalizing, integrating energy." The church plows this field and thus brings forth the produce: vitalizing, integrating energy for social justice work.

In order to make these links between voluntary associations, the church, divine love, and revitalized and integrated human energy, Adams had to redefine the traditional Christian meaning of the terms "religion," "faith," and "God." The definitions he used are found in Handout 2, Adams' Definitions.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: USE OF SYMBOLS

James Luther Adams, published in *On Being Human Religiously* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1976). Used with permission.

Note: Bold text did not appear in the original. It is added here to highlight passages mentioned in "Preparing to lead this workshop" in the workshop's Introduction.

"It was in the earliest seventies," Charles Sanders Peirce tells us, "that a knot of us young men in Old Cambridge, calling ourselves, half-ironically, half-defiantly, 'The Metaphysical Club'—for agnosticism was then riding its high horse, and was frowning superbly upon all metaphysics—used to meet, sometimes in my study, sometimes in that of William James. It may be that some of our old-time confederates would today not care to have such wild-oats-sowings made public, though there was nothing but boiled oats, milk, and sugar in the mess."

One of the residues of these wild-oats-sowings is what is called the pragmatic theory of meaning. We learn from Peirce that the theory was initially stimulated by the British psychologist Alexander Bain's definition of belief, as "that upon which" a person "is prepared to act." Peirce goes on to say that "from this definition, pragmatism is scarce more than a corollary." He gave his own formulation to this theory of meaning in two articles for the *Popular Science Monthly* entitled "The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." Here he sets forth the view that the essence of a belief is a habit or disposition to act, that different beliefs are distinguished by the different habits of action they involve, and that the rule for clarifying the conceptual elements in beliefs is to refer them to "the habits of action." In extension of these ideas he says, "Thus, we come down to what is tangible and practical, as the root of every real distinction of thought, no matter how subtle it may be; and there is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice." He wants to leave no uncertainty about this. He continues, "Our idea of anything is our idea of its sensible effects; and if we fancy that we have any other, we deceive ourselves." The rule for attaining clarity of apprehension of meaning is this: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."

Obviously, such a definition of the meaning of belief is a definition of only one kind of meaning. Peirce was fully aware of this limitation of the pragmatic theory of meaning. He made many attempts to express the pragmatic principle in a form that really satisfied him, in a form that would exclude nonsense without at the same

time being a "barrier to inquiry." We need not here rehearse what Peirce considered the nonsense that should be excluded. We recall, however, that A.O. Lovejoy in his essay on "The Thirteen Pragmatisms" (1908) demonstrated that the pragmatists failed "to attach some single and stable meaning to the term 'pragmatism'." In face of this assertion James was actually enthusiastic. This was fine, he thought, for it proved how "open" pragmatism is—an attitude very different from Peirce's scruples and soul-searchings. It must be emphasized that Peirce's pragmatic theory is not a theory of truth but a theory of meaning, one possible theory of meaning. William James carried the theory beyond this view when he asserted that it would enable us to come into better working touch with reality, and that the true idea is the idea it is best for us to have, best in the long run. Here truth becomes a subspecies of goodness. James at one time even made beauty a subspecies of goodness, for he wrote that an evening at a symphony concert has been wasted on a young man if on returning home he is not kinder to his grandmother.

More strictly within the province of the pragmatist theory of meaning is the question emphasized by the pragmatists. They asked regarding our beliefs, what difference to our practice and to our expectations it will make to believe this rather than that. William James was initially interested in the pragmatic theory of meaning as a "method of settling metaphysical disputes which might otherwise be endless"; and he held that if we examine many metaphysical hypotheses as we should examine scientific hypotheses—by considering what difference it would make to particular occurrences if the hypothesis were true—we find absolutely no difference among them. The basic intention of the pragmatic theory of meaning is to observe the relations between thought and action, or, speaking more precisely with Peirce, the relations between symbols and action. The life of man is viewed as essentially a life of action, action in the formation of symbols and action in bringing about practical consequences in terms of the symbols.

An extension of the pragmatic theory of meaning has been devised by the Oxford linguistic philosophers, under the influence of Wittgenstein. The Oxford philosophers define meaning in terms of linguistic use. The definition of meaning is put forward as a practical methodological rule. Thus, to ask how X is used, or in what context X is used significantly, is a device or "idiom," as Ryle calls it, to remind us first of the fact that words *mean* in different ways, and that the meaning of any word is always relative to the context in which it is used.

Now, it is not to my purpose, nor is it within my competence, to review even briefly the stages by which the Oxford philosophers have discriminated different meanings of meaning, descriptive and otherwise. Nor do

we need to consider the utilitarianism that infects the thought of some of these linguistic philosophers. The important thing to note is that considerable emphasis has been placed on the idea that the meaning of a term is to be observed in the use or uses to which it is put, and also that expressions have meaning only in context. Thus, Nowell-Smith says that, instead of the question, "What does the word 'X' mean?" we should always ask the two questions, "For what job is the word 'X' used?" and "Under what conditions is it proper to use the word for that job?" Here, too, meaning is understood partly in terms of context. We shall return presently to this sort of question.

At this juncture I would like to refer to R.B. Braithwaite, who has formulated the pragmatic theory of meaning in a special way.

As a positivist empiricist he rejects theological statements at their face value, for example, theological statements in the Apostles' Creed; but he does not deny that they have pragmatic meaning. This meaning is to be observed in their implications for ethical behavior. Christianity, he concludes, aims to promote "an agapeistic way of life." Consequently, Braithwaite not long ago joined the Church of England, in the high-church branch. It is said that he sent out engraved invitations to his friends in Cambridge when his child was to be christened, and that following the service one of his agnostic colleagues asked him in puzzlement, "You say that you do not believe the Apostles' Creed as a theological affirmation. How, then, can you repeat it in church?" To which Braithwaite gave the ready answer, "That is simple enough. All I have to do is to omit the first two words." This response reminds one of the limitations Peirce placed upon the pragmatic theory.

Now, the central idea contained in the pragmatic theory, namely, that the meaning of a symbol is to be observed in its effect on action, on habits, is the principal, or at least the initial, text of my discussion of one approach to method in the study of Christian ethics. But I want to extend the application of the theory. We may say that the pragmatic theory of meaning is already implied in the New Testament saying, "By their fruits shall you know them." Ordinarily, however, this New Testament axiom is interpreted in terms of personal or interpersonal behavior and not in terms of institutional behavior.

Probably this interpretation is wrong, for the admonition in the New Testament runs, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul." In any event, the early pragmatists appear to have restricted the application of the theory. They did not use it in such a way as to include an examination of the institutional consequences of belief. William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, for example, shows extremely little interest in the institutional consequences of religious experience and belief. He confines attention to consequences for individual behavior. This is true also of Braithwaite's interpretation of what he calls "the agapeistic ways of life." It is true also of many a

systematic theology. Sometimes the only place where one is shown the social-organizational consequences of religious symbols may be in the section on the doctrine of the church. Otherwise, one is not shown what difference the belief or the theology makes for institutional behavior.

Here a distinction made by Ernst Troeltsch becomes pertinent. In his critique of Kohler's work on *Ideas and Persons* in Christian history he says that Kohler entertains the illusion that one can understand the history of the faith without studying the role of institutions. In his *Problems der Ethik* Troeltsch explicates what he calls the distinction between subjective and objective virtues. Subjective virtues appear in the immediate relations between the individual and God, the individual and the neighbor, and the individual and the self (in interior dialogue). Objective virtues, on the other hand, appear in those relationships that require institutional incarnation, though of course objective virtues presuppose subjective ones. From this perspective a person is not only good as such, but that person is also a good parent, a good administrator, a good citizen.

Roger Mehl of Strasbourg in his essay for the Geneva conference on Christian Ethics in a Changing World, comments tellingly on this differentiation:

For a long time it was thought that social life was no more than the sum of relationships between individuals and that in consequence, social ethics was no different from personal ethics... It is undoubtedly to the credit of the different socialist movements and ideologies that they have brought out (even at the price of indifference to the individual ethic and the virtues of the private citizen) the original character of social ethics.... Socialism discovered that the chief problems of social ethics are problems of structures. These are objective realities, which evolve in accordance with their own laws. (John C. Bennett, ed., *Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World*. New York: Association Press, 1966, pp. 44-45).

This statement, which points to the concern of Social Ethics with social structures, gives me occasion to present some basic presuppositions that must be borne in mind if one is to employ the pragmatic approach to the study of religious ethics. These are broad-gauged presuppositions that require more extensive consideration than is possible here. Yet, they must be mentioned at least briefly.

I. The perspectives of religious ethics depend upon theological perspectives, and these theological perspectives are the *sui generis*. They possess their own intrinsic character, and when best understood they

exhibit an inner coherence and consistency. To be sure, considerable variety obtains with respect to the formulation of the basic perspectives, a wide spectrum that includes different types of piety. A main task of theology and of theological ethics is to achieve clarity and consistency regarding the perspective and the formulation chosen, a clarity that reflects awareness of alternative possibilities. We have already indicated that the intrinsic quality of these perspectives is not the concern of the pragmatic theory of meaning.

Now, if theological perspectives are recognized as *sui generis*, then two false conceptions must be rejected. First, the view that the controlling perspectives may be explained as merely the consequences of psychological or social conditioning. And, second, the view that theology may be collapsed into ethical demands. This reduction is illustrated by Braithwaite's conception of the meaning of Christianity as an agapeistic way of life. An analogous reduction is to be observed in the Marxist attempt to transform metaphysics into social criticism. In this view, metaphysics is only a hidden social theory; more precisely stated, it is only ideology. Even though these views must be rejected insofar as they claim to be adequate, we should add, however, that the theology that does not examine the social consequences of belief is in this respect meaningless from the point of view of the sociological pragmatic theory of meaning.

II. In the study of religious ethics a major purpose is to discern the "ordering" or the type of ordering that reflects the impact of its characteristic symbolism. This symbolism may exercise a positive influence upon the general cultural ethos, upon the structure of personality, and upon the institutional sphere. Or it may reveal the influence of these factors. Actually, the social-ethical as well as the personal-ethical content of the religious symbolism may in large measure be taken over from the immediate social milieu. In the institutional sphere, for example, both of these processes can be discerned. The symbols in the long run may exercise a clearly positive influence, even to the extent of changing the power structure; on the other hand, the power structures within which the symbols function may determine or deflect the interpretation of the symbols. The use made of a symbol may vary according to the social status or frustration or demands of particular social groups: the use made of a symbol by a ruling group will be different from the use made by a deprived group. In this whole area of analysis both substructure and superstructure must be taken into account.

Both can affect the perception of the situation. These differentiations also appear in the study of the history of Christian ethics, so much so that the history must again and again be reconceived in order to take into account new perceptions. Consider, for example, the marked changes that have taken place in the past century with respect to the definition of the Renaissance. Once the Renaissance was defined in the contours proposed by Jacob Burckhardt, the study of the symbolism and its

influence was markedly affected. But when Konrad Burdach redefined the Renaissance in terms of renewal movements of the Middle Ages, the study of the symbolism and its influences changed considerably. During the past generation or two analogous differentiations have appeared with respect to the definition and influence of the Protestant ethic. Max Weber constructed his conception of it in a special way. By concentrating attention on the economic sphere and by excluding the political sphere from attention he arrived at an ideal type of Protestant ethic quite different from the type that emerges if one takes seriously into account the theocratic, political motifs in Calvinism and Puritanism. Indeed, his construction is extremely lopsided. He ignores precisely those elements in Puritanism that presented a much broader conception of vocation than the puritanism he constructs. This broader conception of vocation, which included a political, reformist activism, not only supplemented but also brought under radical criticism the narrower conception that Weber stresses.

These problems of analysis are perennial, and thus the study of influences is bound to be tentative and even ambiguous in outcome. Nevertheless, one can say that symbolism when effective provides some sort of ordering of experience and its sanctions. Indeed, if one is to find out the meaning of religious symbolism past or present, the pragmatic theory suggests that one must ask the believer what he in the name of the symbolism wishes change or not changed; and one should ask also what aspects of existence are a matter of indifference. If the religious symbol does not call for change or interpretation of social structures, then to this extent is meaningless (from the pragmatic perspective).

III. As the Oxford linguists remind us, a variety of meanings may be attached to or be latent in a particular word or symbol or in a particular complex of symbols. This variety of meaning becomes evident when one examines the contexts within which the symbol appears. The pragmatic meaning of a belief may be interpreted in differing ways in different times and places, partly because of the great diversity of nonreligious as well as of religious conditions (or contexts) at various stages of the social process. Besides this consideration one must take into account what Schelling called "the infinity of the idea," the fact that any fundamental symbol is pregnant with, latent with, a variety of implications or connotations. This variety almost inevitably appears in time, for symbols belong to history, that is to the temporal sphere. This aspect of symbols is a mystery. Why; for example, should one have to wait until the twelfth century for a Joachim di Fiore to use the doctrine of the Trinity to devise a periodization of history according to which society was moving out of the current period, the period of the Son, to a third period, the period of the Spirit, a period of new freedom in which there would be a transfer of power from the secular to the religious clergy? That question is simply

unanswerable. Nevertheless, one can say that the Joachites and their descendants exemplify the changing meaning of symbols as understood in relation to context. Presently we shall consider some other examples of change of pragmatic meaning in terms of change of context or in terms of change in purpose.

IV. This consideration leads to a fourth observation. Certain symbols lend themselves more readily to application in the area of subjective virtues, others to application in the area of objective virtues. Metanoia, for example, has generally been symbolically powerful in the realm of subjective virtues, although in primitive Christianity this change of heart-mind-soul resulted in membership in a new community and thus brought about some change in the realm of objective virtues. It is worth noting here that the conservative Lutheran jurist Friedrich Julius Stahl in the nineteenth century held that the concept of conversion (as well as of redemption) must apply to society and social institutions as well as to persons. A similar duality appears in the concept of the demonic. In the New Testament the concept refers not only to a psychic phenomenon of possession but also to a social-cultural force in the world, that is, to the corruption of the culture and its institutions which is to be overcome by the Kingship of Christ. It can no longer be said that Augustine was the first to relate the concept of the demonic to both the psychological realm and the sphere of culture and institutions. This scope of reference appeared earlier in the New Testament.

The symbol, the kingdom of God, is likewise the type of symbol that readily lends itself to pragmatic meaningfulness in both the psychological and the institutional sphere. It is a metaphor drawn from the area of politics, and just as it is drawn from this area so it repeatedly finds application in the social-institutional sphere. In this respect it is like the concept of the covenant, a major integrating conception in the Bible and one of the most powerful in the Reformed tradition for the shaping of both ecclesiological and political theory. In the Old Testament the political symbols king and covenant point to the societal demands of Jahwe. Men are responsible for the total character of the society. "God hath a controversy with his people." On the other hand, an interpretation popular in the past century held that "the kingdom of heaven is within you." This is a false translation and a lamentable reduction. Joel Cadbury has suggested that the saying should be translated, "the kingdom of heaven is available to you (among you)." This translation at least can avoid the reductionist interpretation that stresses only the interiorization of the kingdom which itself, to be sure, is an integral aspect of the symbol.

The broader scope and application of the concept of the kingdom is strikingly formulated by Talcott Parsons in his recent extensive article on "Christianity," in the new *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*:

... the Christian movement crystallized a new pattern of value!! not only for the salvation of

human souls but also for the nature of the societies in which men should live on earth. This pattern, the conception of a "kingdom" or, in Augustine's term, a "city" of men living according to the divine mandate on earth, became increasingly institutionalized through a series of stages, which this article will attempt to sketch. Later it became the appropriate framework of societal values for the modern type of society.

The symbolic powerfulness and societal relevance of these political symbols have been made markedly evident in Paul Lehmann's *Ethics in a Christian Context* and in Martin Buber's *The Kingship of God*. Another political symbol should be mentioned here in passing, the concept of the warrior, which figures largely in certain sections of the Old Testament and which came to the fore again in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance and in some measure also in Puritanism.

There is another symbol that possesses as great a variety of connotation as any of the symbols already mentioned. This is the domestic type of symbol which of course lends itself to elaborate conjugation, the concept of the family, of God and his children, of bride and groom, of brothers and sisters. The domestic symbol can point to more intimate interpersonal cathexis than the political symbol (as, for example, in Hosea's use). At the same time it can replace or serve as a surrogate for the political metaphor, to be observed especially in patriarchal theories of societal order. It is fascinating to observe the use of domestic symbolism by Friedrich Julius Stahl, a principal shaper of the Throne-and-Altar tradition in Germany in the nineteenth century. Stahl connects the patriarchal symbol with the doctrine of justification by faith: God's relation to man is personal, it is that of the father. Then by analogy he infers that the Christian state is an authoritarian one in which the emperor as father directly concerns himself quite personally for the sake of his people. The basic principle then becomes "authority, not majority." This combination of ideas he calls "the Protestant principle."

The Roman Catholic political theorist Carl Schmitt in his work a generation ago on *Politische Theologie* attempted to show the ways in which domestic symbols of a patriarchal character have figured in religious interpretations of the political order. Here he contrasts patriarchal authority that is majestically above the law and the trivial democratic leveling that issues from the rule of law. Perhaps it was the influence of his own application of the pragmatic theory of meaning that led him to support Nazism. In any event, for him the crucial struggle in the modern period is the struggle between the conception of law and the conception of the transcendent person of God and of the ruler. Here he approaches the position of Stahl with his "Protestant principle." He overlooks, however, the ways in which individualistic philanthropic liberalism has used domestic symbolism—the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man—to articulate a religious conception of

democracy. It is a striking thing that when the promoters of the Social Gospel wished to give a broader scope to religious and social responsibility under a sovereign God they placed a new interpretation upon a political (rather than a domestic) symbol, the Kingdom of God. This symbol was no longer to be interpreted as pointing only to the kingdom that is within (ct. Rauschenbusch's corollary, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil-a societal, institutional conception).

At this point we should observe in passing that the biological or organic symbol, the body, must rank as one of the most powerful and persistent metaphors in history. It appears recurrently in both the Orient and the Occident. It figures as a psycho-political symbol, for example, in Plato, determining a hierarchical form of social organization. In this way it functions as one of the major symbols of conservatism in the history of political theory (comparable in this respect to the conception of "the chain of being"). The jurisdiction of the organic metaphor reaches from Plato and St. Paul through the Reformation and Romanticism to Vatican Council II, a span that suggests the wide range of possibilities. A similar variety of interpretation obtains with respect to the symbol of the covenant.

This variety of interpretation, obviously, is a major characteristic of the basic symbols, political, domestic, and organic, that have been used to indicate the societal consequences of respective interpretations of the divine mandate for man not only in secular society but also in ecclesiastical polity. Accordingly, one can find most of the spectrum of social theories under the rubric of each of these types of symbol, the spectrum from spiritual anarchism to monolithic authoritarianism.

The symbol that has exhibited a greater consistency of interpretation is the psychological symbol, the Holy Spirit. We have already referred to Joachim di Fiore's conception of the Third Era, the period of the new freedom under the aegis of the Holy Spirit. In general, the sanction of the Holy Spirit has been appealed to in order to break through rigid bureaucracy and to promote individual freedom. We think here of the outpourings of the Spirit in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Radical Reformation, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revivalism, and in contemporary charismatic leadership and in glossalalia. Radicalizing Rudolf Sohm's conception of charisma in opposition to law, Max Weber constructed his typology of authority, making charismatic authority the innovating power that repeatedly in history breaks through traditional and legal structures. The societal impact of conceptions of the Spirit is thus shown to be a fundamental and recurrent factor in the history of social organization.

The crucial roles that societal images play gives us reason to assert that in employing the method suggested by the pragmatic theory of meaning our typologies of religious perspectives are quite inadequate if we do not take into account the implications of these

various perspectives for the spheres of both the subjective and the objective virtues. It is unfortunate that such a fruitful typology as that of H. Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture*, with its articulation of the different types of piety—Christ above Culture, Christ in Culture, Christ Transforming Culture, etc.—does not examine the different kinds of social organization promoted by these different types of piety. Similar types of social theory appear under the different rubrics of Niebuhr's general typology. Insofar as this is true, we may suspect that a full application of the pragmatic theory of meaning cannot be effected in terms of the types as Niebuhr defines them. But no one knew this better than Niebuhr himself. Indeed, if one wishes to find an exemplification of the pragmatic theory of meaning in the sociological sphere, one finds it ready to hand in his volume, *The Kingdom of God in America*, where he gives explicit attention to what he calls "institutionalizing the kingdom." But the point I am stressing is that typologies should include the spectrum of social-organizational, that is, of institutional consequences of the various types of piety as they find expression in integrating images. In large degree these consequences, as we have seen, are related to metaphorical images.

Whitehead, in speaking of metaphors, asserts that the fundamental choice for the metaphysician is the selection of a ruling metaphor to express his conception of reality, and he makes a strong case for the claim. He calls this procedure the method of imaginative rationality, the devising of hypotheses whereby pervasive elements and structures may be discerned. He shows, for example, how metaphors drawn from mathematics have dominated in one period and from biology in another. His own metaphysics is based upon metaphors drawn from the spheres of psychology and biology, metaphors that he explicates in his panpsychic organicism. Insofar as these central symbols play a role in his ethics, the pragmatic theory of meaning raises the question as to the psychological and sociological consequences of the use of these metaphors.

The reference to Whitehead's method reminds us that the great integrating metaphors of Christian ethics that have influenced human behavior may not properly be studied or understood by means of a narrow conceptual analysis. They by no means have alone influenced behavior. Two things we have already hinted at must be mentioned here again. First, the metaphor has to be understood in the context of convictions about the nature of man and God, the nature of history, the nature and content of faith. Indeed, the entire Gestalt of Christian theology and piety must be taken into account if the inner meaning of a particular metaphor is to be properly understood. This consideration makes the application of the pragmatic theory of meaning much less simple than the formulation of the theory at first suggests.

The second consideration is, as we have already indicated, that in order to be effective an integrating idea

or metaphor possessing social-ethical implications must be given articulation in a particular historical situation. It cannot be adequately explicated in a social vacuum. Let us take an example from Ernst Troeltsch, namely, the historical situation in which a reigning conservatism is faced with protesting movements. Troeltsch's characterization of conservatism is a masterly one.

Conservatism, generally employing an organic metaphor, emphasizes above all, he says, the "natural inequalities" of humankind. Ethical values are derived from the acceptance of these inequalities. For these values conservatism claims the support of a realism that is not blinded by optimistic enthusiasm. The power structure, the separation of the classes, the need for strong leadership, the fundamental skepticism regarding the wisdom of the populace, are taken to be the dispositions that God has given to us; only in the context of this hierarchical structure does the conservative expect to achieve the good life. The powers that have historically evolved are to be regarded as God's ordinances to which one must submit as to a divine institution. They exist by the grace of God and demand submission. The recognition of sin should engender humility, readiness to be obedient and to be faithful to assigned tasks. A struggle for power on the part of the lower classes in order to change the system is the consequence of sin. Those in control of power maintain it by force in the service of God and the community. Through their service the natural process is to be purified and ennobled. Freedom for the average Christian is inner freedom. It can never become the principle of a political structure. The maintenance of the system is itself taken to be the will of God.

Now, in the face of this philosophy of conservatism a protesting movement must select symbolically powerful concepts if success is to be expected. The countersymbols selected will be calculated to undermine the religious sanctions claimed by the conservatives and to provide sanctions for fundamental social change. This means that the countersymbols must serve a dual purpose: first, they must reconceptualize the conservatism and thus show its injustice; and second, they must point in new directions. In both of these processes a pragmatic theory of meaning will attempt to function; first to show the inadequacy of the previous symbolism (largely by reason of its institutional consequences), and second to provide symbols that point in the direction of new institutional forms. A characteristic bifurcation can appear in this process. It may be that the countersymbols employed will serve primarily as radical criticism of the old regime and will be somewhat irrelevant or ineffective for purposes of positive construction. Moreover, a new constructive symbolization may in turn lend itself to opposite or at least to divergent interpretations. Here again bifurcation appears. Both of these types of bifurcation can be

illustrated by the familiar example of the Declaration of Independence in relation to the constitutional convention that followed the Revolution. The symbols of the Declaration for the most part were effective in making attack upon the old regime. But additional symbols were required "in order to form a more perfect union." And then division appeared again. Indeed, the same symbols were appealed to in order to define the more perfect union in varying ways. In these processes differing applications of the pragmatic theory of meaning came to the fore. In all of this we see a general feature of social change; namely, that new symbols and their pragmatic meaning always take their shape in face of a particular historical situation and in face of a previously regnant symbolism. History is made by latching onto what already has happened and onto what is occurring. Accordingly, the study of the pragmatic meaning of symbols cannot be adequately undertaken merely through the analysis of concepts, as though history proceeded from book to book or from theorem to theorem. It requires analysis of concepts in their contingent social situation and in terms of the social functions of the symbols, old and new.

There is no evidence that Peirce or James or Wittgenstein or Braithwaite has been concerned about this kind of analysis, particularly as it relates to the institutional consequences of belief or of symbols. Here we may observe that in general two kinds of answers have been offered by others, and not only by Christians. Each of those answers gives a special twist to the notion that the consequences of religious belief should appear in the realm of institutions. The first answer is that the demand for institutionalization requires the slow transformation of institutions. This is the answer of gradualism, of piece-by-piece transformation. One may call this the meroscopic answer, the attack upon crucial parts or segments of the problem. The second answer is that the entire system must be transformed. This second is the revolutionary or systemic or holoscopic answer.

It must be recognized, however, that institutionalization has an ambiguous character. It may give order to social existence, but it may also impose intolerable fetters. A certain type of religious belief may in a given situation only serve to increase rigidity, to sanction petrification. Religious belief of this sort may simply redouble the intensity of adherence to the Establishment, where improved means serve unimproved ends. Here nothing fails like success. The outcome may exemplify Howard Becker's definition of primitive religion: that set of motor habits that induces automatic resistance to change. This kind of religion finds illustration in the use that, alas, has been made of every one of the symbols we have discussed. Often the outcome represents an ethos quite contrary to that which prevailed at the beginning of a movement. Max Weber had in mind this kind of exploitation of symbols when he said that the Protestant Ethic began with a doctrine of freedom in the demand

for freedom of vocation and has ended by imprisoning us in the iron cage of "specialists without spirit."

Despite the ambiguities of institutionalization, we must be wary of the claim that social change simply requires a change of attitude. Attitudes do not necessarily find expression in institutional criticism and change. At least they do not do so soon enough. Something of this sort must be said about the currently burgeoning theology of hope. A theology of hope that does not indicate the specific institutional changes that are required is not yet a theology that follows through to the consequences of religious belief. It can leave us in the mood of Augustine when he prayed, "O God, make me chaste, but not yet." White suburbia today is bursting with new attitudes and with new hope but not with importunate demand for social change.

Troeltsch's description of the theology of conservatism may seem at first blush to be of something far away and long ago. But it is a transcription not only of the eighteenth-century *ancien régime*. It is a transcription also of the system of apartheid in South Africa. And for certain contingents of the Black Power movement in the United States it is a description not only of the racist system of discrimination but also of the system that keeps almost a quarter of the nation in poverty and dependency. Further, contemporary feminists can easily recognize the contours of this theology in everyday patterns of male-female relations.

If we ask the question how we are to get out of the cages in which we live, cages that are gilded with racism and sexism, we all recognize that a crucial question is that of the redistribution of power. The means to overcome our "unconquered past" of racism and sexism brings us to two fundamental aspects of our problem of the consequences of religious belief.

I. The consequences of religious belief will depend largely upon the distribution of power and whether or not the consequences are intended. If the social system is monolithic, the prevailing religious belief will have monolithic consequences. A different sort of consequence can issue only from a separation of powers that opens the space for new religious belief and for new consequences. It is a striking fact that already in the Bible one can discover this sort of shift again and again taking place. The late Henri Frankfurt discerned this separation of powers in the advent of the idea of a double covenant. The prophets, he pointed out, stood on the covenant of Jahwe with the people, and they attacked the monarchy for its betrayal of its own covenant with Jahwe. Max Weber has suggested that the Hebrew prophets, by not being attached to the court, represent an anticipation of the modern free press. Likewise, the early Christian community broke with the Establishment, and as much with the Roman as with the Jewish Establishment. They insisted that religious organization must be independent of the civic power. These early Christians also made membership in the

community transcend class, ethnic, and familial status. In short, the Christians formed a new kind of association as the proclaimer of a new freedom in Christ and an exhibition of the institutional consequence of their belief in this freedom. Thus the association could be at the same time the bearer and the institutional exemplification of its own message. An analogous outcome is to be seen in the institutional consequences of Athanasian orthodoxy at Nicaea. The Athanasians rejected the idea that the emperor, along with Christ, was a mediator: they forbade the emperor to sit in the chancel, restricting him to the nave; the arrangements were institutional consequences of religious belief. We can trace this pattern down the centuries as it recurrently challenges a monolithic Establishment—in the conciliar movement, in the abolition of the monolithic idea of "Christendom" (the dependence of civil rights upon religious confession), in the struggle for "comprehension" and for Nonconformity and Independency, in the ecclesiola in ecclesia, in the idea and institutional implementation of the priesthood of all believers, in the autonomy of pietistic groups, in the encouragement of freedom of inquiry, in the development of dissenting academies, in the encouragement and defense of trades unions, and in the current civil rights and women's movements. Analogous tendencies have appeared in Roman Catholicism—initially in the emergence of religious orders, later in the principle of subsidiarity, in the responsibilities assigned to collegial configurations, and in the lay apostolate. All of these institutional consequences of religious belief have served to disperse power and responsibility. The divisions of power were at the same time consequences and causes, consequences of religious conviction and conditions for the emergence of new convictions in new situations, in short, for the emergence of mutual criticism. In the main they presuppose that no one configuration of authority and power can be trusted.

II. What we have said of the significance of the division of power for the sake of the freedom of religious belief to find new institutional incarnation, may also be said regarding the importance of this division for the sake of the criticism of ethical ideals. If no single configuration of power may be trusted, so also no single ethical idea or virtue may be adopted as final or trustworthy. William Hazlitt once said that the trouble with the man with one idea is not that he has an idea—that is rare enough. The trouble is that he has no other. That way lies demony. "In my father's house they have many mansions."

Accordingly, the consequence of religious belief under a sovereign God must always be a rejection of idolatry before any one ethical idea and a promotion of "free trade" and tension among ideals. Following Pascal, we might call this the ethos of opposite virtues. According to him, the Christian has the obligation to exhibit opposite virtues and to occupy the distance between them. That is, we confront the obligation to pursue simultaneously the opposite virtues of freedom and order, freedom and equality,

participation and privacy, and justice and mercy. Because of the tension among the demands in the open situation, it should be clear that either in the sphere of subjective virtues or in that of objective, institutional virtues any attempt to deduce precise pragmatic judgments from a given creedal position is likely to be overzealous in intention and to reveal ideological taint—the desire to protect special privilege. Nonetheless, it is generally possible to advocate various social-ethical emphases or pragmatic meanings that derive from differing creedal positions. But the divisions and tensions of which we have spoken remain.

These divisions and tensions have never been more nobly or more powerfully depicted than by Giotto in the murals of the Arena Chapel at Padua. This chapel is a brick box, barrel-vaulted within. Over the chancel Giotto

painted the Eternal, surrounded by swaying angels, and listening to the counterpleas of Justice and Mercy concerning doomed mankind; the Archangel Gabriel is serenely awaiting the message that should bring Christ to Mary's womb and salvation to earth. This is the Prologue. Opposite on the entrance wall is the Epilogue—a last judgment, with Christ enthroned as Supreme Judge and Redeemer amid the Apostles. These tensions within the divine economy bespeak the tensions and contrarieties that belong to the human condition as well. Without them, religious belief and the consequences of religious belief are doomed to degenerate into deformity, disillusion, and destruction, and to call forth from the Stygian depths both hybris and nemesis. For, ultimately, the consequences of religious belief are not in our hands.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: THE LOVE OF GOD

James Luther Adams, published in *On Being Human Religiously* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1976). Used with permission.

In the largely secularized culture and language of our time, the subject of this chapter is by no means one that elicits universal interest. To many serious-minded people phrases such as "the love of God," "God's love for us," or "the human response to God's love" are almost meaningless. Yet the subject is actually one of universal concern. This is obscured by the fact that we often discuss it without using theological language and perhaps even without being fully aware of what we are doing.

Even among people who think of themselves as having made a religious commitment, one may not discuss our subject without considerable difficulty. The variety of religious traditions and affiliations in our society create almost as many semantic problems as are confronted in face of the "unbelievers." In addition, the sharp differences of religious outlook that prevail among Jews and Christians present a host of difficulties with respect to both language and content.

Taking this situation into account, the ensuing discussion will assume no explicitly religious commitment on the part of the reader. Therefore, we must as it were begin at the beginning; and we shall go scarcely beyond that beginning.

At the outset an attempt will be made to show that, contrary to the rather generally accepted view, the basic concerns of religion are inescapable; indeed that some sort of religious faith is found among all people. Thus the most significant differences between people will be interpreted not as differences between religion and irreligion but as differences between conceptions of faith and also of the love of God; ultimately, the basic issue concerns the question as to what the most reliable object of human devotion is. Finally, an attempt will be made to show that the decisive differences between conceptions of the love of God become most clear when we determine the social-institutional implications of these conceptions.

The very title of the present chapter will arouse hostility in some minds. Love of family, of friends, of country—these are loves that may be, and often are, frustrated or perverse. No one, however, doubts the reality of these objects of devotion. It is not so with "the love of God." For some readers the word "God" is not the sign of a reality but of a powerful illusion; it epitomizes all that belongs to the pathology of love and dreams. From this viewpoint, the only appropriate intent of the present discussion should be to expose the illusion.

Such an attitude may not properly be brushed aside. The God that is rejected by the "unbeliever" may be an illusion and wholly worthy of rejection. After all, a multitude of conceptions of God, and of the love of God, has appeared in the history of religion; not all of them can possibly be true. Many of these illusions are doggedly tenacious. The absolute sanction of authoritarian faith (both religious and secular), and of the security it affords, protects it from radical criticism; and nonauthoritarian faiths have their own ways of ignoring criticism, too.

Those who are hostile to religion will not find themselves alone in their critical attitude. In much that they reject they bear the heritage of a venerable company of religious thinkers. From even before the times of Amos and Plato there have been prophets, philosophers, and theologians who have devoted a supreme effort to unmasking the illusions of uncritical religion.

But there is also such a thing as uncritical irreligion. The rejection of all belief in God as illusory may be the consequence of a failure to consider conceptions of God more plausible than those rejected. In some instances, moreover, the rejection of belief in God issues from the false notion that theology and religious faith are possible only because people indulge in speculation on questions for which no dependable answers are available. This view can often find cogent justification. But this rejection of so-called speculation is itself a spurious speculation. It may be tied up with an illusion, the illusion that religious faith as such may be dispensed with. Actually, the nonreligious are not themselves without faith, even though they reject what they call speculation. There are many kinds of faith that may be dispensed with. But there remains one kind which no one can live without. We do not need to use the word "faith" to refer to it. The word "confidence" will serve just as well. No one and no culture can for long maintain a dynamic and creative attitude toward life without the confidence that human life has some important meaning either actual or potential, and that this meaning may in some tolerable fashion be maintained or achieved, in other words, that resources are available for the fulfillment of this meaning. This concern with the meaning of life and with the resources available is no merely optional luxury. It is a universal concern. It is the essential concern of religion. In its characteristic intention religion has to do with these inescapable issues and realities, and unless we are coming to terms with these issues our concern is not essentially religious. To be sure, what calls itself religion can be a means for attempting to evade these issues. Irreligion is often a protest against trivial or perverted religion; it may be a way of coming to terms with the serious and inescapable issues. Archbishop Temple perhaps had this fact in mind when he asserted, "It is a great mistake to suppose that God is only or even chiefly concerned with religion."

If we understand the word "religion" to refer to the concern with the inescapable issues regarding the meaning and the fulfillment of life, we may say that there is no such thing as a completely irreligious person. Both the "non-religious" and the "religious" person are concerned with these issues, and they are both somehow believers; they are people of faith, whether they use the word "God" or not. Indeed, the rejection of the word "God" may be only a sign that the word does not point to the ground of faith or confidence. The rejection itself may reveal confidence of some sort; it is a sign of devotion.

We live by our devotions. We live by our love for our god. All alike place their confidence in something, whether it be in human nature, reason, scientific method, church, nation, Bible, or God.

This confidence finds explicit or implicit expression in belief and disbelief. As Emerson observed, "A man bears beliefs as a tree bears apples."

To equate the devotion one lives by with the love of God may seem at first blush to be questionable. Is this not a mere playing with words? Does not this imply, for example, that an atheist who is utterly devoted to his atheism is thereby expressing his love for God? And is this not absurd?

The absurdity lies only on the surface. It is no mere word play to assert that the convinced atheist loves God, particularly if the atheism grows out of a total attitude toward life. Whoever with seriousness rejects belief in God (as that word is understood) expresses loyalty to a standard of truth or of goodness on which the judgment is made. The rejection implies that this truth or goodness is valid and reliable. For that person this truth or goodness is sacred; it may not be violated. The atheist rejects what appears to be sacred and sovereign for the theist; but in doing so recognizes something else that is sovereign and even holy for him or her. This recognition of something as sovereign, in practice if not in theory, appears in both the serious atheist and the serious theist. The one rejects the word "God," and the other accepts it. But both believe something is sovereign and reliable.

Sacred, sovereign, reliable. Just these are the qualities that have always been associated with deity. It would appear that even when belief in God ostensibly disappears, the attributes of deity remain and are attached to something that is not called "God." Religion therefore might say to the unbeliever, "When me you fly, I am the wings." In other words, if we discover what persons really believe to be sovereign, what they will cling to as the principle or reality without which life would lose its meaning; we shall have discovered their religion, their god. This sovereign object of devotion is not always readily discernible, but it can sometimes be detected by what we might call the "temperature test." When the temperature of a person's mind or spirit rises to defend something to the very last ditch, then generally that

person's sacred devotion is at stake. The test is as revealing when applied to the believer in God as when applied to the unbeliever. It may show that the God avowed by the believer is not really sacred to him or her. It can show also that a serious rejection of belief in God may be a form of the love of God in the sense that it is a giving of oneself to, an identification with, something cherished above all else.

This kind of atheism is really a happy, confident atheism. It is in its way an affirmation of meaning. There is another kind of atheism, however, which is far from confident or happy. It denies that there is anything worthy of ultimate loyalty, that there is anything sacred or sovereign. This kind of atheism is nihilism, it takes nothing (not even itself) seriously; it holds that nothing is worthy of love and that love itself is meaningless. This is the anomie that leads to suicide. This perhaps is the only consistent atheism. It asserts that nothing dependable remains.

Whether people call themselves theists or atheists, the issue comes down to this: What is sacred? What is truly sovereign? What is ultimately reliable? These are the questions that are involved in every discussion of the love of God. And even if we do not like to use the words "the love of God," we will nevertheless deal with these questions in any discussion of the meaning of human existence. These are the questions to which we are always giving the answers in the embracing patterns and the ultimate decisions of our existence. Indeed, the struggle between the different answers constitutes the very meaning of human history.

Nihilism, the sense of complete meaninglessness in life, has been vividly depicted by the French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre in his play *No Exit*. The setting of this play is hell, the hell of isolation. The author depicts the inferno of human loneliness and despair, the alienation of three souls—a man who had in life been a fascist collaborationist, and two women, the one a strumpet and the other a Lesbian. They are all three imprisoned and condemned to the eternal torture of keeping each other company. For them there is *no exit* from the torture of loneliness even though they are together. They share no common values that can give them dignity either as individuals or as a group locked in their room in hell. The souls in Dante's Inferno retain some human dignity; they seem to be at least worthy of punishment. But the souls in Sartre's hell have lost even that dignity. The three people struggle for each other's attention but without believing they have anything worth giving and without believing the others would really esteem anything worth giving. In the end, the man cannot decide whether his own spiritual leprosy allies him most closely with the woman who has been and still is a strumpet or with the one who can only give or receive affection from a duplicate of herself. And yet all of them are to remain for eternity without any other companions and without any affectionate, human interest in each other. Finally, in desperation the man says, "There's no need for hot

pokers in this place. Hell is other people." The "hell" represented in the play is the "hell" of sitting out eternity in common isolation from one another, again and again making abortive attempts at forming tolerable relationships, or at destroying one another.

The anti-heroes of *No Exit* live in the void of meaninglessness, for meaning is a shared and enjoyed relatedness. They participate in nothing that forms community. The only thing human that remains in them is the longing for community. Humans are made for relationship, and without it we are of all creatures the most miserable. In this play, then, we have a parable of the human condition, a parable of an inescapable reality. The condition of being human—of being made for community—is a fact that we cannot elude. We belong to a cosmos that is social. Only the despairing nihilist has lost the sense of belonging to it. The confident atheists, in finding some meaning in life (even though it be partly expressed in "atheism"), have the sense of belonging to a community. They even place their confidence somehow in that community. But in doing so they do not characteristically think of themselves as people of faith. They simply take the community, and also its possibilities, for granted.

The theists believe of course that they belong to a community of meaning; but they believe also that this community is not ultimately their own, either in its actuality or its possibilities. They believe that as human beings, they possess some freedom to choose the ways in which they will participate or not participate in the social cosmos in which they find themselves. But for them, the human condition as creatures longing for fellowship and as creatures possessing some freedom is a gift. In religious parlance, it is a gift of divine grace. Fulfillment of freedom is seen also as a divinely given task—and peril.

Here a positive parable of the divinely given community of meaning, the parable of the prodigal son, may with profit be added to Sartre's parable regarding the negation of community. The latter is a parable of the lost community; the former a parable of the community lost and found again.

The parable of the prodigal son is not primarily an ethical parable teaching right behavior. It is, we might say, a metaphysical parable, a picture of the social cosmos of divinely given community, of the divinely given human freedom, and of the divinely given task to fulfill that freedom in all its venture and risk. In short, this is a parable of the nature of existence and meaning, and of the love of God—of His love for humanity and of the human response to that love.

It is not possible or necessary here to spell out all the significant details of the parable. But we should observe that its principal religious import resides in the parable as a whole—in its assertion that the total human condition is to be understood as a manifestation of God's love and that participation in community is our

responding love for God. Each of the elements of the parable must be understood in this context, the dignity of the creature by virtue of its participation in the social cosmos, the community of relatedness in freedom ("Give me my portion," says the son), the isolation and frustration that issue from the breaking of fellowship, the possibility of new beginning, the enrichment and fulfillment of community that comes from reconciliation. And we should add that this whole picture depicts not only the loss and the regaining of community on the part of the son; it presents, in the image of the father, the attitude of love which all must take toward each other in the re-formation and transformation of community.

It is just at this point that our earlier questions become pertinent. We have suggested that we may determine anyone's conception of the love of God (including the atheist's) by answering the questions: What is sacred for him? What is considered sovereign, what the reliable object of devotion? If we pose these questions in relation to the parable of the prodigal son, we may secure highly significant answers. But this will require that we take note of another figure in the story. So significant is he in this parable that it has been often suggested that the story should be named "the parable of the elder son."

The elder son in the parable corresponds to the antihero of Sartre's play. He manages not only to lose participation in community; he also fails to regain it. But here the resemblance stops. His failure is due to the fact that he is a "good" man. He does the evil as well as the good that "good" men do. He does remain at home, and (unlike the prodigal) he helps to maintain the fabric of the community. But when the prodigal returns, the brother becomes the defender of morality, of law and order. He makes his ethical principles sacred and sovereign. But they turn out to be unreliable, for they would make the community exclusive; they have in them nothing that goes out to greet the prodigal who has come to himself and wants to be a part of the community again. In the mind of the teacher of the parable, the sovereign good, the sovereign reality, is not an ethical law. It is the outgoing power that transforms and fulfills the law; it is the creative element in the law that prevents justice from becoming self-righteous and unjust. But it cannot work here because it is resisted by the "good" man. And the consequence is that the "good" man is undone; he becomes alienated in isolation from the affectional community. He depends upon something undependable.

The love of God, then, is the giving of oneself to the power that holds the world together and that, when we are tearing it apart, persuades us to come to ourselves and start on new beginnings; it is not bound to achieved evil, and it is not bound to achieved good. The prodigal escaped from the one, the elder brother was bound to the other.

And why is this sort of love alone reliable? Because it alone has within it the seeds of becoming, even in the face of tragedy and death—when it keeps confidence, saying, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." This love is reliable also because it alone can engender respect and love for the necessary diversity of men. Through this love which is a self-giving to a process of transformation rather than to a "law," all persons, in their relation to each other and in their diversity, become mutually supporting and enhancing rather than mutually impoverishing. Here the antagonism between egoism and altruism is transcended in the devotion to the good of others, which is at the same time the fulfillment the good of the self. In the fellowship of the love of God one loses life to find it. And yet the loss and the finding are more than the process of self-realization. We become new creatures. This is the work of God that brings the self to something more than and beyond the self, beyond even the "highest self."

This kind of love, however, promises no rosy path. It may lead to what Thomas a Kempis calls "the royal way of the cross," a way which God as well as man traverses, not for the sake of suffering in itself to be sure, but for the sake of suffering, separated mankind. A comprehending mutuality rooted in immemorial being stirs and allows itself anew to heal and unite what has been wounded and separated.

I have never seen this re-creative power of love in its full orb portrayed more tellingly than in a sixteenth-century woodcut titled "The Prodigal Son," which used to be kept in the Durer Museum in old Nuremberg. In this picture the father and the son, with joy and suffering in their faces, are almost at the point of reuniting on the road that leads home. Their arms are extended toward each other, but they have not yet embraced. Yet out beyond them we see their shadows extending as it were into the depth of being. And there they are already embracing. The two had always belonged together. They belonged together in something antecedently given, as on the day of creation when the morning stars sang together and all the children of God shouted for joy. The reuniting of the separated is a re-creation, and thereby a new creation.

The love of God, then, is a love that we cannot give unless we have first received it. Ultimately, it is not even ours to give, for it is not in our keeping. It is in the keeping of a power that we can never fully know, of a power that we must in faith trust. Humanity's expression of it is a response to an antecedent glory and promise, the ground of meaning and the ever new resource for its fulfillment.

"By their fruits shall ye know them" is obviously a test that must be applied to love for God. We learn what is meant by any conception of the love of God by observing what sort of behavior issues from it. Indeed, the principal way to make a religious-ethical idea clear is to show what differences it makes in action. This test of the meaning of an idea we commonly apply in the realm

of personal behavior. Love for God, we say, which does not issue in individual integrity, in humility, and in affectionate concern for others, is counterfeit.

But the meaning of love for God must be clarified in another realm besides that of personal attitude and behavior. It becomes fully clear—and relevant—only when we know what it means for institutional behavior, when we know what kind of family, or economic system, or political order it demands. The decisive differences between the old Lutherans and the Quakers, for example, may not be immediately discerned from their words about the love of God, but they become sharply clear in their different conceptions of the family. The one group sanctioned a sort of patriarchal family in which the authoritarian father was the vicar of God in the home, and love of God among the children was supposed to produce instant, unquestioning obedience; the other group preferred a family in which a more permissive, persuasive atmosphere prevailed. Yet both groups avowed the love of God as proclaimed in the Gospels. In general, then, we may say that the meaning of a religious or ethical imperative becomes concrete when we see it in relation to the social context in which it operates. Often the meaning of an ethical generality can be determined by observing what its proponents wish to change in society or to preserve unchanged.

Recently in Greece I visited the remarkable Byzantine church of the eleventh century at Daphni, situated on the ancient Sacred Way from Athens to Eleusis. As one emerges from the vestibule into the main church and as the eyes meet the imposing and striking mosaics on the walls of the old monastic church, one senses immediately in this monumental style of Eastern Christendom a powerful feeling for the sacred and the sovereign, the majestic, and the commanding. The eye rises to the dome and one is awestruck by the grim King of Heaven, the All-Ruler (Pantocrator), surrounded by the cruciferous nimbus, holding in His left hand the Book and with His right hand blessing the worshippers. The commanding energy of Christ the Pantocrator in his high eminence above the mosaics of the Prophets and the Feasts of the Church recalls to the worshippers the familiar themes of salvation. But in its time this Pantocrator symbolized also a political idea, the absolute authority and the majestic unapproachability of the emperor. The authority of the Pantocrator was understood in terms of the rule of the emperor. The one buttressed the other. The church and its God have become a department of the absolute state.

Here was little freedom apart from that narrow and insignificant margin permitted by the Emperor-Pantocrator. To the modern man accustomed to the democratic way of life, or to anyone who esteems the community of mutuality and freedom reflected in the parable of the prodigal son, this Caesaro-papism is demonic. The contrast between the King of Heaven (and Emperor) in the mosaic and the Father in the parable

highlights opposite ends of the spectrum of conceptions of the love of God.

All the more striking is the contrast if one recalls that the primitive church, the social organization that emerged from the Gospels (which, to be sure, was not a democracy in any modern sense), gave a new dignity to Everyman—to the fisherman, to the slave, to woman, and even to the prodigal. The new fellowship enhanced this dignity by eliciting a new freedom from its members and by assigning them unprecedented responsibility. But, as the Byzantine outcome illustrates, this new freedom and responsibility were soon to be threatened and were later to be submerged.

It is beyond the scope of our discussion here to attempt to apply the spirit and the norms of the love of God (as

characterized all too briefly in these pages) to the contemporary situation. Our purpose at this juncture is only to propose that belief in God and the love of God must, as Whitehead has observed regarding the early Christian conceptions, become the basis for principles of social action and organization. This means that those who interpret the love of God as movement toward a community of freedom and mutuality will be able to vindicate the claim that they serve a power that is reliable, only by yielding to that power in the midst of a world that is suffering, divided by the cleavages of race, class, and nation. What is at stake is the creation of a world in which this kind of love of God becomes incarnate in a more just and free society.

LEADER RESOURCE 5: ADAMS' THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

This is a 30-minute activity.

Materials

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation

- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these questions:
 - Does our congregation encourage individuals to have a change of heart and a change of behavior that might be called a kind of conversion experience?
 - What elements of congregational life nurture individuals and encourage such an experience? Do these elements need to be strengthened?
 - What are some of the ways in which participation in your Unitarian Universalist congregation has changed your behavior and your engagement in the community and the world?

Description

Invite participants to consider:

James Luther Adams called his experience in Germany "a kind of conversion." Adams encountered a situation which caused him to rethink the commitments required by his own faith and to plunge himself into the activities of voluntary associations that worked for justice.

Invite participants to form groups of four to respond to the questions you have posted. Allow fifteen minutes for groups to discuss. Then, invite all to rejoin the larger group and share observations and responses.

LEADER RESOURCE 6: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

This is a 30-minute activity.

Description

Share with the group:

As a result of his conversion experience, James Luther Adams plunged himself into voluntary associations that were working to bring more justice into the community and the world. He stated that this was unusual for a Protestant clergyman.

Invite participants to consider their own engagement with voluntary associations beyond the congregation. Invite them to consider and to discuss the following questions:

- Do you agree with Adams that our faith calls us to involvement in the community beyond the congregation?
- How are you involved beyond your Unitarian Universalist congregation? Which of your involvements in the community and the wider world are through voluntary associations based in your congregation (i.e., a congregational group acting in the wider world)? Which of your involvements are through voluntary associations formed outside of the congregation (i.e., you as an individual participate in an association with people who are not necessarily from the congregation)?
- What is the proper balance of working inside the congregation and responding to need by working toward justice outside of the congregation?
- How do you as a religious leader encourage the kind of conversion experience that Adams talked about and encourage people to work for justice in the world?

FIND OUT MORE

[James Luther Adams](#) article in the online Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography.

"[James Luther Adams' Examined Faith](#)" (at www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/2871.shtml), by Christopher Walton, *UU World*, January/February 2005.

James Luther Adams, *Not Without Dust and Heat: A Memoir* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1995).

WORKSHOP 8: FORREST CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

If our religion doesn't inspire in us a humble affection for one another and a profound sense of awe at the wonder of being, one of two things has happened. It has failed us, or we it. — Forrest Church (1948-2009)

This workshop introduces Forrest Church's Universalist Theology for the Twenty-First Century. Church developed this contemporary "theological universalism" to address what he called a principal challenge to the creation of a viable theology today: social fragmentation. As he put it, we live in a world "where togetherness is no longer a luxury but a necessity; [where] we are thrown together by realities that shape our common destiny." Those realities include the global economy, global communication systems, and global nuclear and environmental threats. At the same time, "centrifugal forces spin us farther and farther from one another, fracturing the one world we now experience and jeopardizing our common welfare." A response to these 21st-century challenges can be found in our own theological heritage as Unitarian Universalists. Church invites us to proclaim a faith that invokes the broad spirit of our Universalist forebears, while, at the same time, moving beyond their 18th- and 19th-century Protestant doctrinal biases and limits.

And thus the good news from Church: Our own theology today can "provide symbols and metaphors that will bring us, in all our glorious diversity, into closer and more celebratory kinship with one another as sons and daughters of life and death. For Church, we must "[posit] the existence of a power beyond our comprehension." Only then, says Church, can we begin to account for the miracle of being with an appropriate measure of the two feelings he finds at the root of all direct human experiences of the Holy: awe and humility.

As we explore Church's emphasis on awe and humility as well as his "one Light, many windows" theological metaphor, participants will develop their own responses to his Universalist Theology for the Twenty-First Century. Does it help us discover or acknowledge feelings of awe or humility? Does his theology give us a way to frame religious pluralism?

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read in this order the resources included with this workshop:

- Leader Resource 2, Recovering Transcendentalist Universalism — Forrest Church
- Handout 1, Introducing Forrest Church
- Story, "Forrest Church's Redemption Experiences"
- Handout 2, Forrest Church's Theology

As time allows, read "[Universalism: A Theology for the 21st Century](#)" in *UU World*, November/December 2001. Use these questions as well as the spiritual preparation exercise and questions in this workshop to help you understand the Universalist Theology for the Twenty-First Century created by Church. You are encouraged to write your responses in your theology journal:

- Church identifies a major function of theology to interpret the text of creation. The foundation of his faith is not an absolute, rationally created and posited truth claim, but is rooted in feelings of awe and humility. First come feelings (direct experience), then thoughts (theological reflections) about them. Do you agree with Church?
- What do you think of Church's use of the image "Light" to conceptualize what all Unitarian Universalists and members of other religious traditions might share in common? Can you suggest an alternate image or feeling (or set thereof) that you might use when considering whether there is indeed a common emotional, experiential ground of your Unitarian Universalist faith and that of other faith traditions?

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build knowledge about the Universalist Theology for the Twenty-First Century created by the Rev. Dr. Forrest Church (1948-2009)
- Engage participants to explore whether feelings of awe towards life and humble affections for one another are possible foundational links to their own Unitarian Universalist faith
- Develop participants' awareness of how they use their own theological lenses to interpret and assess feelings in themselves and others.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Determine whether feelings of awe and humility are at the root of their own direct experiences of the Holy
- Explore their own understanding of what Forrest Church calls a major task of liberal theology: to posit the existence of a power beyond our comprehension so we can take into account the awe and humility foundational to all direct experiences of the Holy
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about the emotional foundations of their own Unitarian Universalist faith.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Experiences of Awe	10
Activity 2: Introducing Forrest Church — Stories and Reflections	30
Activity 3: Testing Church's Twenty-First Century Universalism	20
Activity 4: Cathedral of the World	20
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The questions highlight the personal experiences of life and death that helped prompt Church to define religion as "our human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die." Use these questions to help you reflect on Church's writings about his personal experiences with life and death. Are there connections between Church's theology and experiences and your own? You are invited to respond to some or all of the following in your theology journal:

- Recall and describe a time when you felt awe (or a feeling akin to it) stirred by an experience in nature or an encounter with other people. Is this feeling of awe related to your Unitarian Universalist faith?
- Have you had an experience with death that might parallel Church's experience, or one that seems akin to you? If so, how did it affect your understanding of life, and more particularly of your own life? How does your attitude toward death relate to your own personal Unitarian Universalist faith?
- Have you ever felt spiritually empty? If so, how have you dealt with such feelings? What do you think of Church's description of emptiness as a "God-shaped hole?"

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants.

Invite a participant to light the chalice while you share these words of Forrest Church:

Religion is our human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die... for most of us, knowing that we are mortal inspires a search for answers that will remain valid in spite of our mortality. If religion is our response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die, the purpose of life is to live in such a way that our lives will prove worth dying for.

Invite participants to join in reading the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: EXPERIENCES OF AWE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Write on newsprint, and post:
 - Do you recall a time when you felt awe (or a feeling akin to it) stirred by an experience in

nature or an encounter with other people? Describe this feeling.

- Is this feeling of awe related to your Unitarian Universalist faith? Explain.

Description of Activity

Introduce the workshop using these or similar words:

Can Forrest Church's Universalist Theology for the Twenty-First Century help us determine whether feelings of awe and humility are at the root of our own direct experiences of what we might call the Holy or the Life Force or the sacred? Can his 21st-century theological Universalism help us interpret and understand the religious meanings we link to these feelings?

Invite participants to recall a time when they experienced awe. Call their attention to what you have posted on newsprint. Invite them to draw or write about their experience and its relationship to their Unitarian Universalist faith.

Allow eight minutes for writing or drawing.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING FORREST CHURCH — STORIES AND REFLECTIONS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, [Introducing Forrest Church](#) (included in this document)
- Story, "[Forrest Church's Redemption Experiences](#)" (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [Forrest Church Portrait](#) (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Optional: Computer and digital projector

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to project or make copies of Leader Resource 1.
- Review the story so you can present it effectively.
- Copy the handout and the story for all participants.
- Arrange for three volunteers to read the three sections of the story. If possible, give the story to the volunteers ahead of time.

Description of Activity

Project or distribute copies of Leader Resource 1. Briefly introduce the Rev. Dr. Forrest Church as one of

America's pre-eminent liberal theologians who has been called "the most quoted Unitarian Universalist of this era." The senior minister of the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City for 30 years, he then became the congregation's Minister of Public Theology. Church at the time of his death on September 24, 2009 had written or edited more than 24 books, including *Love and Death: My Journey Through the Valley of the Shadow*, published in 2008, and his final book *The Cathedral of the World: A Universalist Theology* both published by Beacon Press.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about Church's life, and invite participants to read it at home. Read aloud the bolded section of the handout to introduce Church's theology.

Distribute the story. Ask a volunteer participant to read aloud the first section of the story. Pause for at least a minute of silence to allow participants to absorb the story. Then, invite them to write feelings and thoughts in their theology journals. Allow three minutes for writing or drawing.

When time is up, invite a second volunteer to read aloud the second section of the story. Invite them to note additional feelings and thoughts in their theology journal. Allow two minutes.

Finally, ask a third participant to read the third section of the story.

Pause for at least a minute of silence to allow participants to absorb the story. Then, invite them to write feelings and thoughts in their theology journal for three or four minutes.

ACTIVITY 3: TESTING CHURCH'S TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY UNIVERSALISM (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Write the question for small groups on newsprint:
 - Have you ever felt the need to "reboot" your life? If so, what did you do as a Unitarian Universalist to work toward this goal?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to form groups of three and to briefly, in turn, share thoughts and feelings they have written in their journals in response to the Forrest Church stories and reflections. Explain the small group process using these or similar words:

Each member of your group, in turn, will have two minutes to share briefly some of their journal reflections. Share with the group your own thoughts, feelings, and reflections and listen deeply, without comment, to the thoughts, feelings, and reflections of others. Your group is invited to appoint a timekeeper or to share timekeeping responsibilities to assure that all have an equal amount of time to speak.

Signal when six minutes are up. Ask participants to remain in their groups of three while you share these words written by Church:

If our religion doesn't inspire in us a humble affection for one another and a profound sense of awe at the wonder of being, one of two things has happened. It has failed us, or we it. Should either be the case, we must go back to the beginning and start all over again. We must reboot our lives until the wonder we experience proves itself authentic by the quality of our response to it.

Invite participants to recall the experiences of wonder and awe they described earlier in the workshop. Ask them to remain in their three-person groups and consider the posted question, and share, in turn, their responses. Explain that after all have shared for about two minutes each, each person will have another two minutes to offer additional insights and thoughts that arise from the initial round of sharing. Allow ten minutes for this portion of the activity.

ACTIVITY 4: CATHEDRAL OF THE WORLD (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 2, [Forrest Church's Theology](#) (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Arrange for two volunteers to read the two sections of the handout, or one to join share the reading with you. If possible, give the story to the volunteer(s) ahead of time.

- Write on newsprint, and post:
 - Do you find Church's image of a cathedral helpful in understanding your own personal Unitarian Universalist theology?

Description of Activity

While participants remain in their three-person groups, distribute Handout 2. Read or invite volunteers to read each of the sections in turn.

Ask the small groups to consider Church's image of a cathedral, particularly whether they find it helpful in understanding their own theology. Invite participants to identify one element that stands out for them and, each in person in turn, explain why this is the case. Allow six minutes for this small group exercise.

To conclude, invite persons to write one-sentence statements about their thoughts, feelings, and sentiments about Church's theology and how it might relate to their own way of thinking about awe, humility, or another key element of Church's theology. Then, invite volunteers to read their one-sentence statements to the entire group.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family. Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer as a benediction these words of Forrest Church, delivered in 2008 when he received the Award for [Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism](#), the most prestigious award given by the UUA:

Let us never forget what a privilege it is to be part of this great movement and to pronounce its saving faith: one Light (Unitarianism) shining through many windows (Universalism). Let us continue our quest together, with awe and humility, with saving openness and saving doubt, never forgetting to honor those who charted our way.

Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?
- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

If our religion doesn't inspire in us a humble affection for one another and a profound sense of awe at the wonder of being, one of two things has happened. It has failed us, or we it. —
Forrest Church (1948-2009)

Forrest Church invites us to explore our own life experiences of pain, suffering, and humility, along with those of joy and awe. He posits that in our life experiences, we may find the Holy. Reflect on your

own life experiences, especially those that come to the fore as a result of this workshop's reflections and questions. Use your theology journal to dive deep.

Meet with your three-person small group for a meal or after a worship service to continue sharing thoughts, feelings, and insights about Church's theology and your own experiences related to it. Practice the small group principles of listening, reflection, and sharing used in this workshop.

Faith in Action

Resolve to take time to quietly reflect on the experiences of awe and humility (or feelings akin to them) that are linked to your own Unitarian Universalist faith. How can you enable these feelings to guide you in an encounter with another person? To guide your behavior when you work on a social justice project?

STORY: FORREST CHURCH'S REDEMPTION EXPERIENCES

Stories and reflections from Forrest Church's book, *Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002). Used with permission.

Church's Childhood Death Fantasy

Etched in my soul, and by far the most haunting memory of my childhood, is a fantasy of death. I date it to sometime after my family moved to Washington, D.C., when I was eight years old. I can't remember how often I succumbed to this fantasy, but I do recall what prompted it (a brutal argument with my mother), the time of day when these battles took place (right before bed), and the thing that triggered them (always a lie). When my mother caught me lying, not content to leave bad enough alone, I would fabricate more lies to cover up the first one. What finally piqued her anger into fury, whether my transparent mendacity or my panic-driven tears, I'm not certain. Given the premium placed on cheerfulness in our household, probably the latter. In either case, possessed by my favored demon (naked fear), I spun out of control, my mother's anger intensifying until it reached a fevered pitch. Invariably, the battle ended with me in total humiliation and banished to my room.

More vivid in my memory than the struggle itself is its aftermath. After sobbing uncontrollably for a few minutes, I would launch my mind into a sea of self-pity. Into this wine-red sea sailed my fantasy of death.

Running away from home, I crawl out of my bedroom window into the snowy night. Wearing only my pajamas, I wander in the bitter cold through the woods between our house and the elementary school. I fall into a snowdrift. Never have I felt so alone. And then I die. The snow stops and morning dawns. A schoolmate finds me lifeless in the snow, bursts into tears, and rushes off to tell my parents. "Come quickly. Forrest is dead." My parents hadn't missed me. They didn't even notice I had run away. Hastening to my side and falling to their knees to embrace my body, they beg me to awaken. My father becomes distant. My mother moans in disbelief. Through tears of self-recrimination and overcome by grief, she pities me with all her heart.

At this moment in my imagined melodrama, the floodgate opens once again, my self-pity magnified by the specter of me dead, my mother's lamentations almost too poignant to bear. But not quite, for with this I rewind my fantasy and play it back again, embellishing it yet further with loving detail: ripped pajamas, my beloved sock monkey frozen to my breast, my mother's raven hair blowing in the wind, the dark sun, the snow on my forehead.

And then, interrupting my fantasy, the bedroom door opened. A crack of light pierced the darkness, and in slipped my mother. Sitting down on the bed, she leaned over and hugged me, saying she was sorry, confessing how very much she loved me. We cried together. She cradled me in her arms, my tears subsiding. An inexpressible calm settled over me. I shut my eyes. My mother rocked me gently until I drifted off to sleep. When I awakened in the morning, my fantasy of death was but a distant dream.

Church's Reflections on his Death Fantasy

My waking nightmare and its aftermath... reflect the basic elements of a familiar tale of sin and redemption. First, I abandon love in a search for love, flee home to find the comforts of home, destroy myself in order to be saved. Then, through no act of my own, I receive love, find home, and experience salvation. My mother knew nothing of my fantasy. It was not by willfulness or self-pity that I found fulfillment. It entered my room uncoerced and undeserved, like grace. All I contributed to my own redemption was to long for it and to be willing to receive it when it came.

In this childhood drama my mother assumes the role of a traditional Judeo-Christian God. She punishes me for my wrongdoing and then forgives me, each as an act of love

... What impels us to run away in the first place? In the search for an answer, consider the broader question: Why would we run away from anything we seek: success, companionship, community, health, freedom, responsibility, even love? What would drive us to subvert our most cherished aspirations?

Church's Reflections on his Former Drinking Problem

"... when fear spurs our flight we are running away not from another but from ourselves. Having many times been prompted to flight by inner demons—muting life or changing channels and turning up its volume—I know this pattern well. Turning to the comforts of the bottle was for me itself (at least in part) a fear-driven attempt to escape pain, especially that of worry or regret. Only after years of mistakenly self-serving resistance did I finally learn that suppressing pain strengthens its grip

I have pondered why I drank so much and for so many years. To any but the most attentive observer, it would not appear to have been from a lack of healthy self-esteem, but looking back I wonder. I certainly used alcohol to subdue unwelcome feelings. I was afraid of looking too deeply within myself, for fear of what I might find there.

More prideful expressions of my egoism were more obvious in my drinking. I dictated my own set of rules and then slavishly followed them. Nonetheless, having

counseled many addicts and alcoholics over the years, I didn't recognize myself in their glass. My work won me the respect of others, and my spirit—whether elevated artificially or not—contributed to the general bonhomie of most of the company I kept. For the most part, I lived life in the manner I wished and did what I chose to do.

To ease my conscience, I also prided myself on not being a moral perfectionist. I wrote books with titles such as *The Devil and Dr. Church* and *The Seven Deadly Virtues*. I edited a twelve-step book while drinking. I have discovered it to be useful to me now that I have stopped. At the time, however, I accepted drinking as a lubricant to creativity. If Faulkner, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald could write drunk, who was I to question such a muse? It even appeared to work for me. I found that Scotch muted self-criticism and thus facilitated my productivity. I would never be guilty of committing a bestseller, but that was fine also. Until my awakening began to complicate matters (when the emptiness of my life became unendurable), I was enjoying a good time and hardly raising a sweat as I did so. My appetites for both indolence and gluttony were well served and, far from being a bad person, I was merely a self-indulgent one. I believed that the world, on balance, was a better place during those years of my residence within, and in retrospect I think it probably was.

As things turned out, for me pride didn't lead to a fall; it simply took slow possession of my soul. Fortunately, when I awoke one day to discover that God was nowhere in my life, I knew enough to recognize that alcohol (thought symptomatic of more general self-

absorption) was part of the reason. I wasn't humiliated into humility as so many others have been, merely lost in the desert of self. I felt an emptiness I could no longer medicate against and to which I had to either respond or succumb.

Love gradually turned me from the bottle, which had become a kind of mistress. I discovered that I could fulfill my own hopes only by answering the needs of those I love. Old habits are hard to break, but over time love's responsibilities tempered and deepened this awakening. At first I simply cut my drinking back, and my pilgrimage progressed, albeit slowly. Were it not for my wife, Carolyn, I doubt that I would have attempted to continue it sober, for to do so entailed the loss of fond and familiar comforts. Notwithstanding her concerns, comforted triumphed over love for years. I walked toward God with a half-full bottle in my suitcase. I tried to cut a bargain between my appetites and my responsibilities. As most drunks will tell you, this didn't work. So I swallowed my last bit of pride and, at long last, found my way out of the thickets of addiction.

In retrospect, I am grateful today not only for my wife but, in a strange way, for my addiction also. It established the parameters of a God-shaped hole that I could fill only with God. Each of us has his or her personal version of this hole, and we attempt to fill it in our own private ways. Yet no God substitute can fill the God-shaped hole. For this reason alone—since little contentments disguise our spiritual emptiness by taking the edge off our hunger for spiritual renewal—we should welcome discontent when it visits.

HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCING FORREST CHURCH

At the time of his death on September 24, 2009, Forrest Church was one of America's pre-eminent liberal theologians. UUA executive vice president Kay Montgomery called him "the most quoted Unitarian Universalist of this era." After thirty years as senior minister of the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City, he served the church as minister of public theology. Church wrote or edited more than 24 books, including *Father and Son: A Personal Biography of Senator Frank Church of Idaho, God and Other Famous Liberals, The Founding Fathers and the First Great Battle over Church and State*, and most recently *Love and Death—My Journey Through the Valley of the Shadow*, published by Beacon Press in 2008. His latest book is *The Cathedral of the World: A Universalist Theology* (Beacon Press, 2009).

As newspaper columnist, visiting scholar, chair of the Council on the Environment of New York City for ten years, and media star through broadcast interviews beyond number, he gave liberal theology its contemporary credentials as a viable way of religious life for the American soul. Educated at Stanford University (A.B., 1970), Harvard Divinity School (M.Div., 1974), and Harvard University, where he received his Ph. D. in early church history in 1978, Church was a contemporary exemplar of our liberal tradition of the learned ministry.

Forrest Church was a self-proclaimed 21st-century liberal Universalist evangelist. According to Church, "a twenty-first-century theology needs nothing more and requires nothing less than a new Universalism." Nothing less will do, Church insisted, because we live in a world "where togetherness is no longer a luxury but a necessity;" where "we are thrown together by realities [e.g., a global economy, global communication systems, and global nuclear and environmental threats] that shape our common destiny" and yet "centrifugal forces spin us farther and farther from one another, fracturing the one world we now experience and jeopardizing our common welfare." According to Church, the only way we can make good on our theological heritage as Unitarian Universalists in the face of this new century is to proclaim a Universalism fit for the challenges of the 21st century. To this end, Forrest Church invoked the broad spirit of our Universalist forebears for his 21st-century inclusive faith, while at the same time reaching beyond the doctrinal Protestant Christian limits and divisiveness of American Universalism's original creators.

Forrest Church was the son of Frank Forrester Church III, who served as the United States Senator from Idaho for 24 years, which included most of his son's youth and all of his adolescence. As he freely confessed, he often boasted in his adolescence that he would die before he was 25, which is the age at which his father was expected to, but didn't, die of cancer. Church writes that although his father "survived his first bout with cancer, I seem somehow to have interiorized it. Perhaps... I viewed my own impending death as a sacrifice due the gods in exchange for my father's life. More likely, I merely enjoyed basking in the pathos of my mortality. Besides, since I was going to die before turning twenty-five, I could live a life of abandon in the meantime, untethered to future responsibility."

Diagnosed himself with cancer that went into remission after his esophagus was removed in November 2006, Church announced to his congregation in February 2008 that tumors had returned and his life would be measured in months, not years.

Death has always been central to Church's theology. As he put it: "I didn't become a minister in any meaningful sense until I conducted my first funeral. Of all things I am called to do, none is more important, and none has proved of greater value to me, than the call to be with people at times of loss. When asked at a gathering of colleagues what gives most meaning to my work, I replied that, above all else, it is the constant reminder of death. Death awakens me to life's preciousness and also its fragility." Moreover, Church's fundamental definition of religion marks death as well as life as its defining prompt. He said:

Religion is our human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die. We are not the animal with tools or the animal with advanced language; we are the religious animal. Because we know that we are going to die, we question what life means. Death also throws meaning itself into question, for some people rendering it moot. Yet, for most of us, knowing that we are mortal inspires a search for answers that will remain valid in spite of our mortality. If religion is our response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die, the purpose of life is to live in such a way that our lives will prove worth dying for.

HANDOUT 2: FORREST CHURCH'S THEOLOGY

This handout summarizes and contains quotes from portions of Forrest Church's book, *Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002). Used with permission.

The Awe and Humility Life's Gifts Evoke in Church

Church calls the feelings of awe and humility, fundamental feelings born of our experience of life itself, personal experiences of the Holy, the Light of God, Truth, the sacred. These feelings have their source in a transcendental realm of experience beyond our rational minds. These feelings reveal the unimaginable, the mystery, the hallowed ground in which our life abounds. This is the case, Church says, because of our cosmic origins: "Spun out of star-stuff, illuminated by God, we participate in the miracle we ponder." This miracle, according to Church, is the gift of life. More precisely, the gift of our life. And this gift is our shared common text: He writes:

Our common text is the creation. Though limited by the depth and field of our vision, we are driven to make sense of it as best we can. So we tell stories, formulate hypotheses, develop schools of thought and worship, and pass our partial wisdom down from generation to generation. Not only every religion, but every philosophy, ideology, and scientific worldview is a critical school with creation as its text. By whatever name we call its author or co-creator, we are all interpreters of the poetry of God. ("Universalism: A Theology for the 21st Century," *UU World*, November/December 2001)

He implores us to really consider creation:

Life on this planet is billions of years old. Our span of three score years and ten (give or take a score or two) is barely time enough to get our minds wet. By cosmologists' latest reckoning, there are some 100 billion stars in our galaxy, and ours is one of perhaps 100 billion galaxies. ... By my reckoning, the cosmic star-to-person ration is 1.6 trillion to one. ... Billions of accidents conspired to give [Jesus, the Buddha, Muhammad, and more] each of these compelling teachers the opportunity even to teach. Knowing this—pondering numbers beyond reckoning—doesn't strip me of my faith. It inspires my faith. It makes me humble. It fills me with awe. (*Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide*, p. 232).

From such contemplation and experiences of awe and humility comes a corollary basic rule:

If our religion doesn't inspire in us a humble affection for one another and a profound sense of awe at the wonder of being, one of two things has happened. It has failed us, or we it. Should either be the case, we must go back to the beginning and start all over again. We must reboot our lives until the wonder we experience proves itself authentic by the quality of our response to it. I may not believe as Jesus did, but I should dearly hope to love as Jesus did, to forgive and embrace others as unconditionally as he. The principle challenge of theology today is to provide symbols and metaphors that will bring us, in all our glorious diversity, into closer and more celebratory kinship with one another as sons and daughters of life and death. ("Universalism: A Theology for the 21st Century," *UU World*, November/December 2001).

Theological Lens

Church urges us to use a theological lens to make sense of our feelings of awe and humility and offers us a theological metaphor. Church's theology describes the world as a cathedral with windows beyond number that represent different religious worldviews. The Light shining through each set of windowpanes is the same Light of God, which Church, at various times, also refers to as the life force, the Holy, Truth, or Being Itself.

Each worshipper in Church's theological metaphor cannot comprehend the truth that shines through another's set of windows because the Light is refracted differently. Each vision of the Light, nevertheless, is beautiful: Some visions are "dark and meditative, others bright and dazzling. Each tells a story about the creation of the world, the meaning of history, the purpose of life, the nature of humankind, the mystery of death." All of the visions, as this metaphor makes evident, are interpretations. They are ways of thinking and meaning-making ideas about the Light. And so lightness and darkness mingle in these visions because the images are refracted through particular sets of windows. The result, says Church, are partial clarifications of reality that emerge in the patterns and play of shadow and light as the windows become shrines for worshippers and for those who reject religion but nevertheless seek truth.

Church calls his theology a 21st-century theological universalism that not only promises both breadth and focus to its adherents, but also honors different religious approaches, while excluding absolutist truth claims. While the conflicting "theological passions" that accompany these different visions can lead people to reject religion entirely and distance themselves from

those who attempt to interpret the meaning of the Light, such rejection carries the risk of rejecting the "deep encounter with the mysterious forces that impel our being." Church also observes that no one is "actually able to resist interpreting the Light."

Church developed his "theological universalism" to meet what he calls the principal challenge of theology today: Theology must "provide symbols and metaphors that will bring us, in all our glorious diversity, into closer and more celebratory kinship with one another as sons and daughters of life and death."

His own personal Universalism is Universalism modified by "Christianity, not the other way around The universalism I embrace . . . holds that the same Light shines through all our windows, but each window is different. The windows modify the Light—refracting it in myriad ways, shaping it in different patterns, suggesting various meanings—even as Christianity does my universalism."

Church provides us with five guidelines for a Universalism for the Twenty-First Century:

- There is one Power, one Truth, one God, one Light.
- This Light shines through every window in the cathedral.
- No one can perceive it directly, the mystery being forever veiled.
- Yet on the cathedral floor and in the eyes of each beholder, refracted and reflected through different windows in differing ways, it plays in patterns that suggest meanings, challenging us to interpret and live by these meanings as best we can.
- Each window illuminates Truth (with a capital "T") in a unique way, leading to various truths (with a lowercase "t"), and these in differing measure according to the insight, receptivity, and behavior of the beholder.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: FORREST CHURCH PORTRAIT



LEADER RESOURCE 2: RECOVERING TRANSCENDENTALIST UNIVERSALISM — FORREST CHURCH

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Liberal theology as a formal tradition began with Schleiermacher, but as an institutional North American tradition it began with the New England Arminians who, having called themselves liberal Christians, came to accept the name Unitarian. In the 1980s Forrest Church emerged as a leading advocate of the typical twentieth-century Unitarian rationalism, but later judged that liberalism without God makes a poor religion. The son of U.S. Senator Frank Church, he was educated at Stanford University and Harvard Divinity School, earned a doctorate in early Christian history at Harvard University in 1978, and immediately landed a high-profile perch as senior minister of All Souls Church (Unitarian Universalist) in Manhattan. By 2005, Church had served at All Souls for twenty-seven years, written or edited twenty books, and became his denomination's leading advocate of recovering its early spiritual sensibility in new forms.

In his early career he stressed what he did not believe, writing books with slightly cheeky titles (*The Devil and Dr. Church* and *The Seven Deadly Virtues*) that took pride in his minimal theology. Thomas Jefferson was his model of a good Unitarian rationalist. At the age of ten, Church had been given a Jefferson Bible by his agnostic father, who received it as an election gift; he later recalled that his belief in Jesus the Son of God died upon reading Jefferson's expurgated version of the Gospels. Jefferson separated the teachings of Jesus from those *about* Jesus, an approach that still made sense to Dr. Church. As a youthful pastor of a prestigious congregation he wore his "rational aridity" proudly, believing only what he comprehended. He could believe in a Jeffersonian version of the ethics of Jesus, but not the Emersonian Oversoul. (1)

For several years he preached like a taxidermist instead of a worshipper, as he later put it, taking the same approach to personal demons: "I muzzled as many as I could, all the while doing everything possible to keep those that eluded me from hiding under my bed and haunting my sleep." Consumed by literary ambitions and a desire for public recognition, and a bit unnerved by his quick ministerial success, Church drifted into alcoholism and a messy, very public end to his first marriage, all the while using alcohol as a lubricant to creativity: "If Faulkner, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald could write drunk,

who was I to question such a muse? It even appeared to work for me." He medicated his first stabs of spiritual emptiness with heavier drinking, all the while writing trade books with a ministerial bent, even editing a twelve-step book. Eventually the emptiness of his life became "unendurable," though not until he was well into a second marriage. Church's marriage to Carolyn Buck Luce and his awakening to a "God-shaped hole" in his life allowed him to crawl out of alcoholic darkness. Gradually he converted to the view that not much of a religion came from the taxidermist approach to it. "Nothing is emptier than a life in which God is palpably absent," he later wrote. "How lost I was, and how profoundly I needed God's help to find peace." (2)

He was not at home in the universe, nor in himself. Church began to look for a home in the universe before he faced his personal demons, taking a transcendental turn. Since he still shared the rational Unitarian distaste for God-language, his range of options was limited: "God is on the label of every bottle of religious snake oil I have ever tasted." To become more religious, he had to reimagine God, or at least clear a place for mystery "on the altar of my hearth, which before I had crowded with icons to knowledge." Something besides Unitarian humanism had to support his sermonizing that life is worthwhile and good. Instead of the eighteenth-century classical lithographs of architectural drawings that he had favored as a graduate student, he needed "something more arresting and humbling, something like Vincent Van Gogh's *Starry Night*." He found it in the twin strands of his own tradition, Unitarianism and Universalism. (3)

In 1989 Church coauthored a primer, *A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism* (with John A. Buehrens), that signaled his transition to a more personal, Emersonian universalism. Most of his beliefs had not changed, but now he emphasized the spirit of his believing, not the letter, declaring that religion is a human response "to the dual reality of being alive and having to die." The inevitability of death gives meaning to human loving, he wrote, for the more love that human beings find and give, the more they risk losing: "I have no idea what will happen to me when I die, but I know that I will die. And I know that the choices I make in this life affect the way I live. It is in this crucible, mysterious and uncertain, that my religion must be forged." (4)

That was traditional Unitarian Universalist music, but later in the book Church used the word "God" more often than many UUs liked, describing God as a name for "that which is greater than all and yet present in each." He also offered a universalist creed: (1) there is one Reality of Truth (God); (2) this Reality shines through every "window" in the "cathedral" of the world and out from every perceiving subject; (3) it is never perceived directly; (4) yet it is reflected and refracted in a myriad of meaningful patterns on the floor of the

cathedral and by every perceiver; (5) thus, every window illuminates Truth in a different way, leading to different truths. The same light shines through all windows. Church explained, but every window is different, refracting the light in different patterns that suggest different meanings. He favored "liberal religion" over "religious liberalism" because the latter reduced religion to mere adjective, like too much of Unitarian Universalism. A decade later he sought to head off the problem of relativism by adding to the fifth point that the various truths deriving from Truth differ in measure "according to the insight, receptivity, and behavior of the beholder." Truth is personalized in ways by which it can be judged; individual and collective acts that harm our collective well-being are sinful; acts that serve our collective well-being are saving. (5)

He loved his adopted UU tradition, but worried that it would shrivel and die if it did not make something like his own spiritual and intellectual course correction. Church's subsequent writings featured the five principles of his credo, sometimes explaining that the idea of the one light is Unitarian, while that of many windows is Universalist. Addressing the Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly in 2001, he accented the positive: "We Unitarian Universalists have inherited a magnificent theological legacy. In a sweeping answer to creeds that divide the human family, Unitarianism proclaims that we spring from a common source; Universalism that we share a common destiny." But he also warned that the UU tradition had little hope of flourishing if it did not become more "evangelical" in its theory and practice. Historically, Unitarianism was about the reality of a single God, and Universalism was about the promise of a shared salvation. But Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists had a pronounced tendency to divide over disagreements. They stressed their negations, assumed that only one person can be right in an argument, and mustered passion only for division. Church exhorted: "To make good on our theological inheritance, we must find a way to come together and proclaim a Universalism fit for the challenges of the 21st century." (6)

He reminded rationalist colleagues that he, too, had preached a gospel that clipped God's wings. Like a blinderd lepidopterist he had netted, chloroformed, and mounted butterflies for observation, concluding, after long examination, that "butterflies don't fly." But mere Enlightenment empiricism had not worked for him, and it wasn't working for Unitarian Universalism. "To give my universalism full play, I had to make room in my theology for a more capricious, if unfathomable, power." He did not believe that UUs had to return to "the old universalist God," the name "God," or even to Emersonian mysticism, because Church did not believe in single answers. His credo honored many religious approached, excluding only the truth claims of absolutists. Moreover, he argued elsewhere that Emerson's sovereign individualism and "aversion to

human intimacy" were non-starters for a progressive faith. But the UU tradition certainly needed an "affectionate relationship with the ground of our being." Otherwise, it was destined to "succumb to the temptation to divide it between our own and others' feet." (7)

He liked the metaphor of the holograph, describing three-dimensional holograms—laser recordings of images on a photo plate comprising thousands of tiny lenses—as analogies of divine reflexivity and transcendence. A single shard of a shattered photo plate contains the plate's entire image, just as each human cell contains the full genetic coding for a person's entire being: "The holograph suggests God's reflexive nature in a way that transforms our relationship not only with the divine, but with one another as well. Spun out of star-stuff, illuminated by God, we participate in the miracle we ponder." Noting his kinship to process theology, Church stressed that the best evidence for divine reality is within ordinary things and everyday experience: "The surest way to find the sacred is to decode our own experiences, not only of beauty ('heaven in a wildflower') but also in the sacraments of pain by which we commune with one another." (8)

Religious truth is very much like the truth of poetry, he argues. The text of both fields is creation, which theologians and poets strive to comprehend with limited tools and vision. If a poem can be validly interpreted in many ways, how can the same thing not be true of religious reality? Moreover, the human interpreters of God's poetry are always part of the poem itself. Church issued a warning: "If we Unitarian Universalists are unable to recognize the ground that we share, we shall remain only marginally effective in helping to articulate grounds on which all might stand as children of a mystery that unites far more profoundly than it distinguishes one child of life from another. To the extent that we fail in this mission, we betray our Universalist inheritance." (9)

Modern theology was a story of doubt and negation, and Unitarianism was an extreme example; Church compared modern theology to peeling the layers of an onion in search of its seed: "Eventually, nothing is left but our tears." When rationalism negates or displaces mystery, "our imagination and sense of wonder are just as likely to die as are the gods we pride ourselves for having killed." (10)

Equally committed to personal and public religion, Church wrote prolifically on both topics, fashioning sermons into book chapters. He was fond of saying that God is "the most famous liberal of all time." Like liberalism, God is generous, bounteous, and misunderstood, he explained. Every word that describes God is a synonym for liberal: "God is munificent and open-handed. The creation is exuberant, lavish, even prodigal. As the ground of our being, God is ample and plenteous. As healer and comforter, God is charitable

and benevolent. As our redeemer, God is generous and forgiving." Above all, Church analogized, "God has a bleeding heart that simply never stops." Though "liberal" is not a big enough word to describe God, he allowed—God is far too liberal for that—the word "illiberal" never fits God: "God is not miserly, parsimonious, penurious, or stingy. God is not narrow or rigid." (11)

Church did not want his tradition to go all the way back to William Ellery Channing, who described himself as a Unitarian Christian, not as a Christian Unitarian. Only a small minority of Unitarian Universalists considered "Christian" an important modifier of their religious identity. Church spoke for that option. He was a Christian universalist, not a universalist Christian. Believing in the Light that shines through all windows, he allowed Christianity to refract and shape its meanings, modifying his universalism. There is such a thing as Buddhist or humanist universalism, he reasoned, but one cannot be a Universalist universalist, for it is impossible to perceive through every window. Universalist Christianity is another impossibility, because in that case the thing that modifies one's faith becomes its nominative: "Primary allegiance is relegated to one part of the whole that encompasses it." Church's ambition for Unitarian Universalism was to recover, with a multiperspectival and outward-reaching consciousness, the best parts of Emersonian transcendentalism. The best way to do that was to "band together, cultivate interdependence, build strong institutions, support them generously, and become more fully accepting and embracing of one another." If twenty-first-century Unitarian Universalists could do it, their traditions would finally emerge from Emerson's shadow into his light. (12)

ENDNOTES

(1) Forrest Church, *Bringing God Home: A Traveller's Guide* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 190-91,

"rational aridity," 236; Church, *The Devil and Dr. Church: A Guide to Hell for Atheists and True Believers* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986); Church, *The Seven Deadly Virtues: A Guide to Purgatory for Atheists and True Believers* (San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1988).

(2) Church, *Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide*, quotes, 213, 148, 149, 150, 151.

(3) Forrest Church, "Universalism: A Theology for the 21st Century," *UU World* 15 (November/December 2001): 18-25, "God is," and "on the altar," 22; Church, *Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide*, "something more," 214.

(4) John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, *A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism*, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), quotes 8.

(5) Ibid., quotes, 84, 86-87, 160; Church, *Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide*, "according to," 222.

(6) Church, "Universalism: A Theology for the 21st Century," quotes 18, 19.

(7) Ibid., quotes 22; Forrest Church, "Emerson's Shadow," *UU World* 17 (March/April 2003): 29-31, "aversion," 30.

(8) Church, "Universalism: A Theology for the 21st Century," quotes 23.

(9) Ibid., quote, 25.

(10) Church, *Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide*, 214, 216.

(11) Forrest Church, *God and Other Famous Liberals: Recapturing Bible, Flag, and Family from the Far Right* (New York: Walker and Co., 1996), quotes, 3, 4.

(12) Church, *Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide*, "primary," 217; Church, "Emerson's Shadow," "band together," 31.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: CHURCH'S THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

This is a 30-minute activity.

Materials

- Handout 2, Forrest Church's Theology
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation

- If you have not already done so, copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Write on newsprint and post:
 - Do Church's definition and his very use of the word "holy" make sense to you as a way to reflect upon your own personal experiences of awe and humility, or those of others who have experienced such feelings as a positive state?

Description

Distribute Handout 2 and invite participants to read (or review) it. Explain and summarize the ways in which Church draws from Unitarian and Universalist theological roots, using these or similar words:

Church calls upon us to look through our own theological Unitarian Universalist windowpanes. Tell them that according to Church, traditional Unitarianism posited a single God. Traditional Universalism offered the promise of a shared salvation. Universalism as well as the mystical Unitarianism of Transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller, Church insists, gave us an inclusive faith. For Church, awe and humility become the principal handmaidens of Universalism as a religious tradition inclusive of theological differences. Birth and death become the sacraments that unite us all in the shared mystery of life. And the surest way to find the sacred, Church insists, is to decode our own experiences—the beauty and the pain: "We all suffer. We are broken and in need of healing... Illumination shines from heart to heart. We discover the healing and saving power of the holy within the ordinary."

Invite participants to define in their own words what Church meant by the term "holy," writing their definition in their journals. Explain that they are not being asked to agree with him, but rather to state his claim in their own words. Allow five minutes for participants to reflect and write.

When time is up, invite participants to move into groups of three and read what they each think Church means when he uses the term "holy." Next invite them to reflect on their various definitions and establish how each of these definitions are linked back (for Church) to the emotional experience of awe and/or humility. Allow ten minutes for sharing.

Ask participants to remain in their small groups and consider, in silence, the question you have posted on newsprint and respond briefly in their journals—ideally, with a single sentence. Allow three minutes for reflection and writing. Then invite participants to share their sentence with the other members of their small group.

Re-gather the large group. Invite participants to share personal and small group insights about Church's use of the term "holy" and whether it makes personal sense to them to link this term to their own personal experiences of awe and humility as positive experiences. Ask: Is Church's idea of the "holy" reflected in the life of your congregation (whether or not Church's term is the one used)?

LEADER RESOURCE 4: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

This is a 30-minute activity.

Materials

- Story, Forrest Church's Redemption Experiences

Preparation

- If you have not already done so, copy the story for all participants.

Description

Forrest Church's personal stories concern two spiritually and emotionally charged topics: death and addiction. Distribute the story and invite participants to read (or review) it. When they are done, invite them to consider and discuss these questions:

Addiction

- How do you, as a religious professional, understand addiction? Does Forrest Church's description of a "God-sized hole" ring true for you? Are there other words or metaphors you might use to describe addiction from a spiritual or religious point of view?
- Do portions of your personal or family history inform your understanding of addiction?
- How do you as a religious professional and/or your congregation reach out to those who are dealing with addiction?

Death and Dying

- Forrest Church writes that nothing in his ministry is more important than being with people in times of loss. Does his statement ring true for you?
- What experiences with death and dying in your life have had the greatest impact? What wisdom did you gain from those experiences?

FIND OUT MORE

A list of links to [Forrest Church's articles](#) can be found on the *UU World* website.

Forrest Church, ["Universalism: A Theology for the 21st Century"](#), *UU World*, November/December 2001.

Forrest Church, *Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).

Gary Dorrien, "Recovering Transcendentalist Universalism," in *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony Postmodernity*, 1950-2005 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

WORKSHOP 9: WILLIAM F. SCHULZ

INTRODUCTION

No one knows better than I that the [Spirit] often fails to keep appointments with our congregations on Sunday morning. When that happens, it is often useful to go for a walk in the woods on Sunday afternoon! But even so, what has happened Sunday morning is not without value. For even when the Spirit fails to show, the church is where we learn how to touch It elsewhere, what to look for in the woods, and how to see. — William F. Schulz

This workshop introduces the Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz's theology, Unitarian Universalism in a New Key. Schulz, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations from 1985-1993, executive director of Amnesty International USA from 1994-2006, and current president and CEO of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, created this theology to "sound Unitarian Universalism in a new and more melodic key." To this end, Schulz emphasizes the experiential aspects of our Unitarian Universalism faith tradition: "While what we believe about religion is important, what we experience of the religious is even more so." We must nurture, says Schulz, an "organic faith that refuses to truck with nationalism or cultural stereotyping but is faithful first to the needs of our planet. ... Human survival depends upon our willingness to think and act in global and nondualistic ways." Schulz shows us what this "organic faith" looks like as Unitarian Universalist theology and ministry today. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 46, 39)

Schulz emerged from his Amnesty experiences with a firm belief in the importance of the community consensus of nations, as he puts it, to assign worth, dignity, and value to individuals. Such valuing of persons does not come automatically, Schulz says. It is assigned. But who, Schulz asks, does the assigning? Schulz opts for global public opinion. And also something more: Unitarian Universalist religious tradition and our worship services where one learns how to seek, perceive, and touch the Spirit.

Thus throughout his 12-year tenure at Amnesty, Schulz regarded himself "first and foremost as a Unitarian Universalist minister." For him, his work at Amnesty was Unitarian Universalist ministry.

What in our religious history and our congregational life shapes and forms our moral values and informs the way we act in the world? And how does our own social justice work inform our own personal Unitarian Universalist religious perspectives, practices, and

experiences? How do we learn to look for, see, and touch the Spirit in our worship services? Schulz's Unitarian Universalist Theology in a New Key invites us to answer these questions. Schulz also calls on us to "invite **the Spirit** to dwell within our hearts;" to talk about "**the Holy**" as Unitarian Universalists; and to talk about **Grace** as a wellspring of our own Unitarian Universalist faith tradition.

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read Handout 1, Biography of William F. Schulz and Handout 2, The Theology of William F. Schulz. Use some or all of the following exercises and questions to help you reflect on Schulz's Unitarian Universalism in a New Key and how his theological perspective relates to his own personal experiences as a world renowned social justice leader and Unitarian Universalist minister. These questions and exercises parallel the five sections, or topics, presented in Handout 2. You may wish to write your responses in your theology journal:

I. Schulz's Assessment of Human Nature

- Schulz begins with personal experience. He believes that the power of our own Unitarian Universalist faith and congregational worship life can help us stay the course through our distressful emotions and anxious feelings that will lead us, as he puts it, "inexorably to our hearts." (Schulz, *Finding Time and Other Delicacies*) Have you had an experience when your Unitarian Universalist faith and congregational worship life helped you stay the course through your own distressful emotions and anxious feelings, until you found heartfelt feelings of emotional renewal or peace? If not, can you imagine a way your Unitarian Universalist faith and congregational worship life might do this for you?
- Schulz calls such experiences the "newborn intimations of possibility, faith, grace, and God." What words might you use to describe the possible uplifting experiences of your faith and your congregational life?
- Schulz says that assertions of the inherent worth and dignity of persons are "designed to cover up the fact that we all are sinners and that we are not always certain which sins (and hence which sinners) are worse than others." What is your definition of sin? What do you think Schulz means by sin? Using your definition of sin, do you agree that we are all sinners?

- Do you believe that every person has inherent worth and dignity? Why?
- Do you believe that your Unitarian Universalist community's worship life plays an important role in your religious life?

II. Unitarian "Universalist" Values

- What is your response to the observations Schulz makes about Universalism?
- How do you think the principles and other values from our Universalist and Unitarian heritages might function to not only put us in touch with our best selves, but also keep our "basest impulses," as Schulz puts it, constrained for the greater good? Do or could these values help you understand, adjudicate, and make peace with the way in which you can fall away from your own moral values?

III. Religion Is a Discipline

- What do you think Schulz means by the terms "religion" and "discipline"? Using his definitions, do you view your own Unitarian Universalist faith as a religious practice? A discipline? If so, why? If not, why not? What do you do to experience spirituality?

IV. Schulz's Definitions of Theological Concepts

- Paraphrase Schulz's definition of the term "grace. Have you had an experience that would fit Schulz's definition of grace? If so, did that experience motivate you to any particular action?
- Schulz's list of our sources for religious authority that complements the authority of the individual includes *tradition, community, reason, nature, and the Holy*. Do you believe that any or all of these religious sources of authority complement the religious authority of your own personal religious experiences? If so, how? If not, why not? What, if any, religious sources not listed by Schulz would you add to his list?

V. The Source of Our Ethical Injunctions

- Schulz says we are a creedless faith because we have a theory about Creation as too grand and complex and mysterious to be captured by a single creed or metaphor. And so, Schulz argues, we rely on the world's great religious traditions, the sciences, the secular arts, and more to express the complex majesty of creation. Now assess whether you believe his claims are true for you. In what personal experience of *yours* does your allegiance to our noncreedal faith tradition begin?
- What does it mean for you to be in right relationship with another person? What values

help you to be in right relationship with another person?

- What is the relationship between social justice work and your values and vision as a Unitarian Universalist?

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build knowledge about Unitarian Universalism in a New Key, a theology created by the Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz (1949 -) for our liberal faith in the 21st century
- Invite participants to investigate Schulz's observations and reflections about the role of religion and the faith community in saving us from our basest passions and helping us understand what our best selves look like
- Engage participants to explore whether and how their religious experiences in our Unitarian Universalist worship services teach them how to seek, perceive, and touch the Spirit beyond the doors of their own congregation
- Encourage participants to apply Schulz's theology to determine whether and how they consider their own Unitarian Universalist faith a religious practice and a spiritual discipline.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Achieve an understanding about the ways their own Unitarian Universalist religious experiences help them to confronting injustice and suffering
- Gain clearer understanding of Unitarian Universalist religious experiences within the institutional religious context of congregational worship services
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about whether and how the power of their own Unitarian Universalist faith and congregational worship life can help them stay the course through distressful emotions and anxious feelings that thereby lead them "inexorably to [their] hearts."

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Personal Faith and Your Congregational Life	10
Activity 2: Introducing William F. Schulz	5

Activity 3: Confronting the Scariest Things — Story and Response	30
Activity 4: Testing Schulz's Theological Reflections	25
Activity 5: Personal Experience — Large Group Reflection	10
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read Leader Resource 2, What Torture's Taught Me, or the story, "Amy," which is excerpted from the resource.

Part of the role of both government and faith community, Schulz says, is "to save us from our basest passions in order to extract some semblance of worth and dignity out of the muck and meanness that infects our hearts." He disputes the idea that the worth and dignity of every person is inherent, and asks who assigns worth and dignity. Of the available options—divinity, natural law, and global public consensus—he believes that public consensus is the only viable option.

How do you respond to Schulz's story and his assertions regarding the nature of human beings? What personal experiences lead you to agree or disagree with Schulz?

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:
We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you share Reading 429 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Come into this Place," by William F. Schulz.

Invite participants to join in reading the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: PERSONAL FAITH AND YOUR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.
- Write on newsprint, and post:
 - Have you had an experience of your Unitarian Universalist faith and congregational worship life that helped you stay the course through your own distressful

emotions and anxious feelings until you found heartfelt feelings of emotional renewal or peace? If not, can you imagine a way in which your Unitarian Universalist faith and congregational worship life might do this?

- Schulz calls such experiences the "newborn intimations of possibility, faith, grace, and God." What words might you use to describe the possible uplifting experiences of your faith and your congregational life?

Description of Activity

Introduce the workshop using these or similar words:

This workshop will invite you to use major insights from William F. Schulz's theology—his Unitarian Universalism in a New Key—to examine your own faith.

We will begin by focusing on a personal experience from our own lives.

Read aloud the questions you have posted on newsprint. Invite participants to reflect on the questions and respond in their theology journals. Tell them as the workshop unfolds you will invite them back to these personal reflections, to help keep their work grounded in their own personal experiences. Allow seven or eight minutes for journaling.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING WILLIAM F. SCHULZ (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Biography of William F. Schulz](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [William F. Schulz Portrait](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Microphone
- Optional: Computer and projector

Preparation for Activity

- Copy the handout for all participants.
- Prepare to project Leader Resource 1 or make copies.

Description of Activity

Project or distribute copies of Leader Resource 1. Briefly introduce the Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz. Read or convey biographical information using these paragraphs as a guide:

The Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz has celebrity status for all the right reasons. He has taught the world how to practice what we preach. Or as the June, 2002 edition of The New York Review of Books put it, he "has done more than anyone in the American human rights movement to make human rights issues known in the United

States." As executive director of Amnesty International, USA from 1994-2006, Schulz traveled hundreds of thousands of miles abroad, leading missions to Liberia, Tunisia, Northern Ireland, and Sudan and visiting places as diverse as Cuba and Mongolia—and he traveled tens of thousands of miles in the United States, spreading the human rights message from campuses to boardrooms to civic organizations. Add to this his frequent guest appearances on television programs like Good Morning America, The Today Show, Hardball, and Nightline and include the books he has written or edited on human rights, and you will know that we are talking about a social justice stellar figure. An ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, Schulz was president of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations from 1985 to 1993 before becoming executive director of Amnesty International, USA from 1994 to 2006. He is currently president and CEO of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Born November 14, 1949, in Pittsburgh, Schulz is third generation Unitarian. His father, William F. Schulz, was for 33 years a professor of law at the University of Pittsburgh. His mother, Jean Holman Smith Schulz was a housewife. Schulz's grandfather, also named William F. Schulz, was a professor of physics at the University of Illinois, a member of the Unitarian Church of Urbana, and for 17 years, the church treasurer who invariably paid the church's year-end deficit out of his own pocket. Schulz is married to the Rev. Beth Graham, also a Unitarian Universalist minister.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about Schulz's life, and invite participants to read it at home.

ACTIVITY 3: CONFRONTING THE SCARIEST THINGS — STORY AND RESPONSE (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Amy](#)" (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story so you can present it effectively.
- Copy the story for all participants.
- Arrange for a volunteer to read the story. If possible, give the volunteer the story ahead of time.

Description of Activity

Share with participants:

Schulz does not preach the assurance of faith. He preaches the practice of steadfastness. Schulz believes, "Religion exists in large measure to help us confront the scariest things under the sun: things like boundless injustice, the explosion of dreams, the hard edge of suffering, and the magnet of death." He says we must learn how to stay the course through our own anxious feelings. So Schulz encourages us to be "a little less ashamed of our anxieties."

Distribute the story. Introduce it as a personal experience Schulz relates to help explain his view. Invite a volunteer to read the story aloud; participants may either listen closely or read along, whichever will best help them absorb the full impact of the story. After the reading, invite participants to respond to the story in their theology journals. After five minutes, read Schulz's own reflections on his experience:

We are all tempted, in the face of our own failings, to lash out at others. But from a religious perspective, the appropriate response to a recognition of our own demons is not to demonize others. It is to seek out common bonds. It is to recognize that virtually all people, of whatever stripe, feel the need to be safe in their homes, to be treated fairly by the authorities; to pass on a better life to their children; and to enjoy their rightful share of the earth's abundance. Part of the job of a government is to make it as easy as possible for its citizens to be good, to be their best selves, not their most ugly and degraded, and part of religion's job is to help us understand what those best selves look like. (See Leader Resource 2)

Continue with these or similar words:

Part of the role of both government and faith community, Schulz says, is "to save us from our basest passions in order to extract some semblance of worth and dignity out of the muck and meanness that infects our hearts." He disputes the idea that the worth and dignity of every person is inherent, and asks who assigns worth and dignity. Of the available options—divinity, natural law, and global public consensus—he believes that public consensus is the only viable option.

It is important to remember here that Schulz defines himself as someone who begins with lived experience. He understands human beings based on the experiences that shape their interests, guide their lives, and help them restrain or release their basest impulses. For Schulz, communities play a major role in shaping the experiences of the individual. Schulz's experiences as executive director of Amnesty International, USA, for 12 years

caused him to fundamentally shift his perspective on human nature and the individual. Moreover, the role of the community (of nations, of worshippers, etc.) in shaping the individual's actions and mores gained new centrality in his thinking. He emerged from his Amnesty experiences with an even more firm belief in the power of our own worship services to be—even when they don't quite work—the "incarnational power of our faith."

Schulz believes "religion is not solely a matter of true or false beliefs. "Religion," he says, "is also a matter of practice and praise, feelings and faith. It is, that is to say, not just about the running itself; it is also about the catching of breath and the feel of the wind."

Invite participants to consider Schulz's observations and reflections about the role of religion and the faith community in saving us from our basest passions and helping us understand what our best selves look like. Allow two minutes of silent reflection and/or journaling. Then invite participants to form their small groups of three to share their personal experiences of the role their Unitarian Universalist community's worship life plays in their spiritual life. Would you think of it as the institutional incarnation of your faith, as Schultz suggests? Invite them to recall their example, thoughts, and reflections from Activity 1 to help them explain their response in concrete experiential terms.

Explain the small group process in these or similar words:

Listen deeply and caringly to the personal reflections of the other members of the group as each person speaks in turn for about three minutes. After each person has spoken a first time, the group is encouraged to move to a second round of reflection so each member may offer personal insights and ideas resulting from the first round of sharing. Please share your own feelings and thoughts rather than discussing or critiquing the thoughts and feelings of the other members of the group.

Allow 15 minutes for small group reflections.

ACTIVITY 4: TESTING SCHULZ'S THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 2, [The Theology of William F. Schulz](#) (included in this document)
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements
- Timepiece (minutes)

- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the handout, so before leading this activity you can select the most appropriate sections to highlight with this group, based on reflections participants have already shared.
- Copy the handout for all participants.
- Arrange for volunteers to read selections from the handout. If possible, give the volunteers the handout ahead of time.
- Write on newsprint, and post, the questions that pertain to section(s) of the handout you have chosen to highlight:
 - (III) Do you believe that the religious sources (any or all of them) of authority complement the religious authority of your own personal religious experiences? If so, how? If not, why not? What, if any, religious sources not listed by Schulz would you add to his list?
 - (IV) Have you had an experience that would fit Schulz's definition of grace? If so, did that experience motivate you to any particular action? What does it mean for you to be in right relationship with another person? What values help you to be in right relationship with another person? What is the relationship between social justice work and your values and vision as a Unitarian Universalist?
 - (V) Can you recall a way in which your own experiences in the world have informed your understanding of your own liberal faith? Does Schulz's description of a "global spirituality" offer a good model for describing your own Unitarian Universalist faith?

Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 2, *The Theology of William F. Schulz*. Say there will only be time to delve into some of this material and encourage them to read the entire handout at their leisure.

Call participants' attention to a section of the handout you have chosen to highlight. Invite volunteers to read aloud the quotes in this section.

Call participants' attention to the questions you have posted on newsprint and invite them to remain in their groups of three to reflect on the questions together. Explain the small group process using these or similar words:

Listen deeply and caringly to the personal reflections of the other members of the group as each person speaks in turn for about two

minutes, responding to the first question. After each person has spoken, move to the second question and follow a similar process. Continue in this manner until each member has responded to all of the questions. Please share your own feelings and thoughts rather than discussing or critiquing the thoughts and feelings of the other members of the group.

Encourage groups to appoint a timekeeper or share timekeeping duties so the group can devote time to each question. Allow 25 minutes for this small group exercise in deep listening.

ACTIVITY 5: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE — LARGE GROUP REFLECTION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Description of Activity

Re-gather the large group. Share this quote from Schulz:

We Unitarian Universalists believe that the future is not set, that History is not determined, that destiny is not fated. We believe that human beings create history and can change it if we will. But we also know that the tools with which we have to work—the measure of our energy, the degree of our intelligence, the allurement of the sun—are outside our control, are gifts of an abundant grace. Will and grace go hand in hand; justice and grace are inseparable. ("On Trying to be a Non-Anxious Presence")

Ask participants to think of an experience in their lives as Unitarian Universalists that leads them to affirm, amend, or refute Schulz's claim. Allow a minute for them to find their story. Then invite each person in turn, as they are willing, to share their experience with the larger group.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop will provide a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family. Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer a benediction from William F. Schulz, Reading 459 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop and plan future workshops. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?
- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders the next time around?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?
- What do we need to do to prepare for the next workshop? Who will take responsibility for each of these tasks?

TAKING IT HOME

No one knows better than I that the [Spirit] often fails to keep appointments with our congregations on Sunday morning. When that happens, it is often useful to go for a walk in the woods on Sunday afternoon! But even so, what has happened Sunday morning is not without value. For even when the Spirit fails to show, the church is where we learn how to touch It elsewhere, what to look for in the woods, and how to see. — William F. Schulz

Reflect with your family, your friends, or in your journal about times when you have found your own impulses and behavior not in line with your espoused values. What helps you to integrate your own scary impulses?

What keeps you from acting in a way that is counter to your own Unitarian Universalist values?

Faith in Action

Reflect on Schulz's notion that the international community determines agreed-upon human rights. Does this notion call us, as Unitarian Universalists, to action that will influence the international community to align itself more closely with Unitarian Universalist Principles and values?

Learn the work of [Amnesty International](#) and find out about the [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's](#) work on behalf of human rights. Explore how to bring this important work to the attention of your congregation and your community, perhaps as a small group ministry Unitarian Universalist theology initiative.

STORY: AMY

Excerpted from the 2006 Berry Street Lecture by the Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz.

When I was seven or eight years old, I lived across the street from a little dog named Amy. Every afternoon after my school let out, Amy and I would play together for an hour. One of Amy's favorite games was a dancing game in which I held her two forepaws in my hands and we would dance around the yard. Sometimes Amy even put her paws in my lap to signal that she wanted to dance. But I noticed that after a few minutes Amy's hind legs would get sore and she would pull her paws away. The first few times we played our dancing game, I dropped her paws the moment I sensed her discomfort and we went on to something else.

But one day I decided to hold on. The more Amy tugged, the tighter I held on until finally, when she yelped in agony, I let her go. But the next day I repeated my demonic game. It was fascinating to feel this little creature, so much less powerful than me, entirely at my mercy.

I was lucky that Amy was such a gentle dog for she had every right to have bitten me and when, after two or three days, I saw that my friend, who had previously scrambled eagerly toward me on first sight, now cowered at my approach, I realized with a start what I had done and I was deeply frightened of myself and much ashamed. Whatever had come over me that I would treat someone I had loved that way?

What had come over me, I now know in retrospect, was the displacement of anger onto one who held no threat to me. Bullies at school might pick on me. My two parents might tell their only child what he could and could not do. My piano teacher might try to slam the keyboard cover on my fingers when I played off key. But in that yard I ruled supreme. Not only did I hold the power but the one who was powerless for a change was Not-Me.

HANDOUT 1: BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM F. SCHULZ

This professional biography was provided by Dr. Schulz in 2009. On November 3, 2010, The Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) announced that Dr. William F. Schulz had been named the new UUSC president and chief executive officer.

"William Schulz ... has done more than anyone in the American human rights movement to make human rights issues known in the United States." — The New York Review of Books, June, 2002

From the refugee camps of Darfur, Sudan, to the poorest villages in India; from the prison cells of Monrovia, Liberia, to the business suites of Hong Kong and Louisiana's death row, the Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz has traveled the globe in pursuit of a world free from human rights violations. As executive director of Amnesty International USA from 1994-2006, Dr. Schulz headed the American section of the world's oldest and largest international human rights organization.

Dr. Schulz is currently a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress in Washington, DC, where he works in the areas of human rights policy and religion and public policy and holds appointments as an Adjunct Professor of Public Administration at the Wagner School of New York University and as an Affiliated Professor at Meadville/Lombard Theological School at the University of Chicago. He is or has been a consultant to many institutions and foundations, including the UN Foundation, Humanity United, and Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts. During 2006-07 he served as a Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

During his 12 years at Amnesty, Dr. Schulz led missions to Liberia, Tunisia, Northern Ireland, and Sudan and visited other places as diverse as Cuba and Mongolia. He was tailed by Tunisian secret police, threatened with assassination by Liberian warlord Charles Taylor, and made an appeal for reconciliation of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland that brought tears to the eyes of then-Prime Minister David Trimble.

He also traveled tens of thousands miles in the United States, spreading the human rights message from campuses to boardrooms to civic organizations. A frequent guest on television programs such as Good Morning America, The Today Show, Hardball, and Nightline, Dr. Schulz is the author of two books on human rights, *In Our Own Best Interest: How Defending Human Rights Benefits Us All* (2001, Beacon Press) and *Tainted Legacy: 9/11 and the Ruin of Human Rights* (2003, Nation Books), and contributing editor of *The Phenomenon of Torture: Readings and Commentary* (2007, University of Pennsylvania Press) and *The Future of Human Rights: U.S. Policy for a New Era* (2008, University of Pennsylvania Press). He is regularly quoted in *The New York Times* and other national publications. All of this prompted *The New York Review of Books* to say in 2002, "William Schulz ... has done more than anyone in the American human rights movement to make human rights issues known in the United States."

An ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, Dr. Schulz came to Amnesty after serving for 15 years with the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA), the last eight (1985-93) as president of the Association. As president, he led the first visit by a U. S. Member of Congress to post-revolutionary Romania in January, 1991, two weeks after the fall of Nicolai Ceausescu. That delegation was instrumental in the subsequent improvement in the rights of religious and ethnic minorities in Romania.

Dr. Schulz has served on the boards of People for the American Way, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and the International Association for Religious Freedom, the world's oldest international interfaith organization. He is currently chair of the board of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Board of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

Dr. Schulz has received a wide variety of honors, including seven honorary degrees (University of Cincinnati, Grinnell College, Lewis Clark College, Meadville/Lombard Theological School, Nova Southeastern University, Oberlin College, Willamette University), the Public Service Citation from the University of Chicago Alumni Association, and the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Oberlin College Alumni Association. He has been included in *Vanity Fair's* 2002 Hall of Fame of World Nongovernmental Organization Leaders and was named "Humanist of the Year" by the American Humanist Association in 2002.

Dr. Schulz is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Oberlin College, holds a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Chicago and the Doctor of Ministry degree from Meadville/Lombard Theological School (at the University of Chicago). He is listed in *Who's Who in America* and *Who's Who in the East*.

He is married to the Rev. Beth Graham, also a Unitarian Universalist minister. Dr. Schulz has two grown children from a previous marriage.

HANDOUT 2: THE THEOLOGY OF WILLIAM F. SCHULZ

Information and short excerpts from the writings of William F. Schulz—presented in five sections, or topics, for ease of study and discussion—convey his theological point of view. All quotations are used with permission of William F. Schulz.

I: Assessment of Human Nature

William F. Schulz defines himself as someone who begins with lived experience. He understands human beings based on the experiences that shape their interests, guide their lives, and help them restrain or release what he calls "their basest impulses." His experiences as executive director of Amnesty International, USA, for 12 years caused him to fundamentally shift his perspective on human nature and the individual. He understands the community (of nations, of worshippers, etc.) to be central in shaping the individual's actions and mores.

Schulz does not preach the assurance of faith. Rather, he preaches the practice of steadfastness. This is the case, he says, because Unitarian Universalist ministers can provide:

... the confession of one human soul that the way beyond mourning, for example, leads into it and not away; that the way beyond oppression requires confrontation and not avoidance The minister's job is to take affliction—her own surely but the world's every bit as well—to take affliction, to honor it, share it, as taste and health allow, knowing that out of such engagement will come, if they are to come at all, newborn intimations of the possibility, faith, grace, and God. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, Boston: Skinner House Books, 1992, p. 116-117)

Schulz's Unitarian Universalist faith, its principles, and its gathered worshiping community were the primary resources from which he drew his strength as Executive Director of Amnesty International, USA. It shaped and informed his best self. And this is why throughout his 12-year tenure, he always regarded himself "first and foremost as a Unitarian Universalist minister." Schulz explains his understanding of our ministry in this way:

Now I learn from my colleagues that a true minister strives to be what Rabbi Edwin Friedman calls a "non-anxious presence," and I feel more inadequate than ever The problem for me at least is that the aspiration to be a non-anxious presence is so frequently at odds with another value I hold dear: personal authenticity

Surely, some will want to contend that I have failed in my quest for authenticity—but of one

thing I am certain: that anyone who does not experience anxiety in the face of chaos or heartache is either far "healthier" than I can ever hope to be or dead to the world. The first step to coping with anxiety, I have found, is to give yourself permission to feel it. The way through pain is not around it but right through the middle. Religion exists in large measure to help us confront the scariest things under the sun: things like boundless injustice, the explosion of dreams, the hard edge of suffering, and the magnet of death. I don't think it makes much sense to try to pretend that things like that don't call up a little anxiety. Indeed, I think the great Danish existentialist Soren Kierkegaard had it exactly right when he suggested that "fear and trembling" are requisite to being a religious person and that only when we overcome our denial of death are we likely to truly "remember existence."

... I would almost always rather have passionate engagement, even if it be tinged with anxiety now and then

And I would like to encourage us all to be less ashamed of our anxieties. There are few more difficult lessons to learn: feelings by themselves are value-neutral. They really are. Only actions are good or bad. But feelings, no matter how "nasty" they may seem to us, lead us inexorably to our hearts. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, 119-120)

Schulz believes that anger displacement (and other emotional impulses) can lead persons to debase themselves and others. He believes that the role of a community is to show persons how to manage and restrain such feelings for the sake of the greater good. This is the case, he argues, because the worth and dignity of human nature is not innate. It is assigned:

So is the worth and dignity of every person inherent? No, inherency is a political construct—perhaps a very useful myth but a myth nonetheless—designed to cover up the fact that we all are sinners and that we are not always certain which sins (and hence which sinners) are worse than others. Each of us has to be assigned worth—it does not come automatically—and taught to behave with dignity because, as Sartre once said, "If it were not for the petty rules of bourgeois society, we humans would destroy each other in an instant."

But who does the assigning of worth? How do we decide that something is a sin? How do we know that torture is wrong? What is the basis for human rights?

There are only three options. Rights are established by divinity, by natural law or by pragmatic consensus. I wish we could get

everybody to agree on one of the first two. But because we cannot ... we are left with public opinion as the basis for determining rights. Global public opinion, to be sure, but public opinion. (See Leader Resource 2)

Schulz believes we should participate in corporate worship, because:

the holy—those things which matter most in life—does not show all its colors in solitude and silence. Sometimes it requires the clarity of another's voice, sometimes the cacophony of community, and often the touch of other pilgrim's eyes and arms and hands . . . [Moreover, another reason] to support the worshipping community is that whatever it is we value, be it freedom, courage, love, can only be preserved and only be transmitted with the help of institutions. No one passes on a heritage all by herself. No one by himself alone can provide a countervailing force to sheer iniquity. Our worship signals the institutional incarnation of our faith. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 111).

II: Unitarian "Universalist" Values

Schulz, a third-generation Unitarian, emphasizes his Universalist heritage as a Unitarian *Universalist*. He writes:

Indeed, what we gather from our Universalist roots may be even more germane to today's world than our Unitarian traditions. I can explain my Universalist fealty in four simple observations:

- 1) Universalism had a Gospel, a doctrine, a core of belief, around which its members rallied. While rarely putting that doctrine into creedal form, Universalism was unafraid to proclaim that it had some Good News which the world needed desperately.
- 2) Universalism imaged God as gentle and conciliatory rather than violent and retributive. If, as seems most likely, our images of divinity affect how we behave in the world, Universalism's conviction of God's beneficence has much to recommend it.
- 3) Universalism affirmed religious experience and feeling. Religion was not just something to think or talk about; it was something to be held deep inside the heart and something to be shouted from the rooftops.
- 4) Universalism taught a global consciousness long before it was fashionable. It called us to transcend national loyalties in the interests of the human spirit. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 95-96).

III: Religion Is a Discipline

Schulz believes that:

... religion is not solely a matter of true or false beliefs. Religion is also a matter of practice and praise, feelings and faith. It is, that is to say, not just about the running itself; it is also about the catching of breath and the feel of the wind.

Moreover, Schulz believes that:

The first thing we need to do is to understand that religion is not a pastime but a discipline; not an amusement but a craft. Woody Allen said, "I read War and Peace in twenty minutes. It's about Russia." Well, that's how we sometimes treat religion—casually, quickly—and we get about as much out of it. Unitarian Universalism is not fundamentally about creedlessness; it is not fundamentally about believing whatever you want; it is not fundamentally about the liberty of the individual—all of these are mere pastimes, amusements. It is rather an opportunity to pursue ultimate religious questions within a context which respects mystery and is open to a multitude of revelations. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 23).

He wrote:

The best way to experience spirituality is not to chase it—and surely not to run as if we're being chased. The best way, I suspect, is to pause and ponder in silence. In silence we can feel our breath return. And occasionally, if we are very, very quiet, even the wind itself may speak. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 10).

IV: Schulz's Definitions of Theological Concepts

In his *Unitarian Universalism in a New Key*, Schulz gives context and definition for traditional theological terms and concepts:

GRACE

To my mind no theological concept is more worthy of our reclamation than that of grace. Used so often by the orthodox to exclude and divide, grace in fact refers to whatever blessings of Creation come to us unbidden, unheralded, and unearned. In this sense, the gracious—whether manifest in the rising of the sun, the sparkle of a fish, the chuckle of a child, or the deliverance of death—is the gateway to gratitude and the wellspring of faith. We need to rescue the notion from the orthodox and claim it as our own . . . (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 40).

THE WORLD TO COME

We need, to be sure, a new theology of social change and a contemporary doctrine of evil capable, for example, of addressing the Holocaust. But what we need even more is a new eschatology, that is, a new vision of the social world to come. To the extent to which liberal religion has depended upon

liberal/economic liberalism for its image of the Blessed Community, the former will perish with the latter. But neither traditional capitalism (even in its neoconservative form) nor traditional socialism (even in its democratic form) offers viable alternatives . . . So we need a new Unitarian Universalist fantasy of utopia. We need, in other words, to know what (in the world) we're working toward . . .

If we are to be lost to the world, let it be because we were too far ahead of our times and not because we were oblivious to them. And if we are to be found, let it be for a faith worth finding. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 40)

SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

Schulz writes of sources of authority for Unitarian Universalists:

For though the individual certainly is the ultimate source of religious authority within Unitarian Universalism, the individual is not the only source . . . here are five additional sources of religious authority for Unitarian Universalists which complement the authority of the individual:

1) The Tradition. The Unitarian and Universalist traditions provide a sort of "early warning system" for the recognition of tenets at odds with the norms of our faith. The tradition is not definitive—part of our genius is our conviction that it will inevitably be superseded by new "revelation"—but if you hear someone preaching hellfire and damnation or insisting that the future is solely in God's hands, chances are it's not a Unitarian Universalist!

2) The Community. While Unitarian Universalism encourages each person to see his or her own religious truth, we also believe that such truth is most likely to be disclosed in the context of a religious community... hence, congregations. The love and nurturance, the feedback and critique, which we find in a healthy congregation, are invaluable resources in the shaping of a religious pilgrimage...

3) Reason. Sullied though it be by misuse and exaggerated expectations, the human capacity to reason and its most famous offspring, the scientific method, are still worthy recipients of our praise. Spirituality is not contra-reasonable but supra-reasonable, taking off from the boundary where reason cannot tread. But until we reach that boundary, reason reigns, and even once we pass beyond it, it is wise to keep our heads.

4) Nature. If we posit, as we do, the value of the earth, then the natural rhythms of Creation provide authoritative echoes of their own. Some of these are undeniable: our utter dependence upon the generosity of other living things, our

partnership with Being in the tending of abundance

5) The Holy. The final and most idiosyncratic source of religious authority is whatever we call Holy. Be it God or Good, Jesus or Jeremiah, the Bible or the Bhagavad-Gita, that which commands our highest loyalty commands our hearts. This last source requires testing against the previous four. But then those four must be judged also in reference to the fifth. Indeed, no source stands alone; each requires the wisdom of its colleagues, all informing the authority of the individual.

We Unitarian Universalists believe that the future is not set, that History is not determined, that destiny is not fated. We believe that human beings create history and can change it if we will. But we also know that the tools with which we have to work—the measure of our energy, the degree of our intelligence, the allurement of the sun—are outside our control, are gifts of an abundant grace. Will and grace go hand in hand; justice and grace are inseparable.

(*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 43-50)

V: The Source of Our Ethical Injunctions

Schulz says he sees "Unitarian Universalism today in the midst of a major theological transition. That transformation takes at least these five different, if related, forms:

- 1) Heretofore an exclusively North American movement, Unitarian Universalism is becoming more global in its focus and its consciousness.
- 2) Fiercely proud of its emphasis on individual freedom of belief, Unitarian Universalism is nonetheless becoming less frightened of the primacy of relationships and the disciplines of community.
- 3) While what we believe about religion is important, what we experience of the religious is even more so. Unitarian Universalists are learning not just to talk about religion but to invite the Spirit to dwell within our hearts.
- 4) Reason is still a cherished standard in our religious repertoire, but reason is coming to be supplemented by our immediate apprehensions of the Holy and by our conviction that the Holy is embodied in the abundance of a scarred creation.
- 5) If we Unitarian Universalists believe that human beings are responsible for History, we are at the same time far more aware of all that which we cannot control. We are, in other words, balancing a conviction of Will with an appreciation of Grace. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 46)

Schulz continues:

The reason ours is a creedless faith is because we have a theory about Creation and our

theory—unlike that of most religious traditions—is that Creation is too grand, too glorious, too complex, and too mysterious to be captured in any narrow creed or reflected in any single metaphor.

It is exactly because we so cherish the world in all its multi-hued grandeur that we resist the temptation to see it through only one lens. Our conviction is that we will come a little closer to the truth about the world—and certainly be more receptive to its splendor—is we use a variety of vehicles to apprehend it: all the world's great religious traditions, for example, but also the sciences, the secular arts, the disciplines of mysticism, and the electric touch of love.

The bedrock of Unitarian Universalist affirmation is not individual freedom of belief. The bedrock affirmation is a belief in the complex majesty of Creation which in turn entails the adoption of a creedless faith. But the complexity and the majesty come first! (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 47)

[W]e human beings are not masters of Creation but simply one more expression of Creation's jubilation

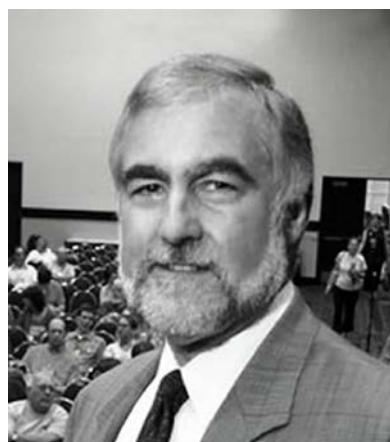
From this embrace of the holistic, a series of ethical injunctions flow: that I and the Other need not be enemies for we are both held in the hands of the same Creation; that rigid ideologies are an outmoded brand of politics; that all life on the planet—not just human—has value unto itself; that power is to be shared and ultimate

loyalty paid not to a nation or a region or a culture but to the Universal

To recognize the complex mutuality of Creation is to be in pain at any instance of its denial, to be a surrogate to anyone who suffers. It is to recognize, quite literally, that we and all that is are bonded

What is our special role as a religious movement today? Perhaps to teach the world that no one is saved until we All are—where All means the whole Creation: the animals, the rain forests, the tiniest of microbes, the Soviets, black and white South Africans, the Israelis and the Palestinians. Every religion is confronted with two great tasks: First, to teach human beings how to be in right relationship with each other and the world, and second, to help us be at peace even in the face of death. As to the first task, Unitarian Universalism derives from its convictions about the world the faith that strangers need not be enemies, that the interdependence of Creation compels us to acts of reconciliation. And as to the second, Unitarian Universalism begs us to be so engaged in life that—paradoxically—we may even look kindly upon the letting go. For we know that the best way to meet death is to have looked upon the routines of our dailiness through the prisms of surprise and to have found in the utterly unexceptional the very evidences of God. The more we love and the more we mourn, the more acceptable becomes the letting go. (*Finding Time and Other Delicacies*, p. 48)

LEADER RESOURCE 1: WILLIAM F. SCHULZ PORTRAIT



LEADER RESOURCE 2: WHAT TORTURE'S TAUGHT ME

This lecture was delivered by the Rev. William F. Schulz, Executive Director of Amnesty International, on June 21, 2006, at Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly in St. Louis, Missouri. It was the 2006 Berry Street Essay. Used with permission.

When I ended my term as UUA President in 1993, I vowed that I would never preach in the pulpit of any minister who had not been kind to me when I was President. That automatically eliminated about 50 percent of our congregations. But as I look out over the audience this afternoon, I realize that many of you weren't even around for this ancient history and, besides, I've matured, become more mellow, have put things in perspective, can let bygones be bygones and so will now be glad to preach in anybody's pulpit... unless you were really, *really* mean to me.

At one time I knew the name, settlement, and partner's name and occupation of virtually every minister in the Association. David Starr Jordan, the first President of Stanford, was a world renowned ichthyologist and after he became President, he was heard to complain that every time he remembered the name of a student, he forgot the name of a fish. But having known nothing about fish and little about anything else when I became President, there was very little danger that my remembering people's names would carry any great cost. But it does prompt me to apologize to those of you whose names I don't know (and far more to those I do but can't remember). If I get really desperate, I will simply resort to the practice of the first President of the UUA, Dana McLean Greeley, who never could remember anyone's name and therefore began every interaction by saying, "You're, you're..." at which point one would feel compelled to say "Bill Schulz," to which Dana would roar back, "Of course you are. Of course you are. Don't be ridiculous." All of which is simply to thank the Berry Street Lecture Committee for taking a chance on someone who has been somewhat removed from the life of the Association the past 12 years, despite his marriage to Beth Graham, and for whom this Lecture signals something of a homecoming.

But while I may have not been as active in Unitarian Universalist circles over the past decade as I once was, that does not mean that Unitarian Universalism has been far from my heart. It has of course been an enormous privilege to lead the world's oldest, largest and, I daresay, most respected human rights organization and Amnesty has afforded me unparalleled opportunities—the opportunity to be insulted in the nicest possible way by Lauren Bacall at a high-falutin' dinner party on the Upper East Side, for example ("Darling, aren't you that dear little human rights man?")

"Yes, Ms. Bacall, I suppose I am. "Well, may I sit with you at dinner?" Me, swooning: "Why, yes, Ms. Bacall, I'd be delighted." "You see, darling, I wouldn't ask but, frankly, I don't know a fucking soul here.") Or the opportunity to be tailed by the Tunisian secret police through the medina of Tunis and have them quite thoughtfully tap me on my shoulder and return my passport seconds after they had retrieved it from a pickpocket; or the opportunity to be threatened with assassination by a Liberian war lord (1); or the opportunity, when Amnesty in 2004, rather melodramatically, I must say, labeled Guantanamo Bay "the gulag of our times," to be denounced over the course of five days as "absurd" and "anti-American" by the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Sean Hannity (who, I can report, really is as much of a horse's ass as he appears on Fox).

Or perhaps, more to the point, the opportunity to greet Wei Jing Sheng, the Father of Chinese Democracy, on his arrival in America after 17 years in prison or the opportunity to work with Gary Gauger and several others of the 123 people convicted of capital crimes in this country, sentenced to death and subsequently exonerated after serving an average of 9.2 years on death row or the opportunity to go into the refugee camps in Darfur, Sudan to meet those terrorized out of their homes and then into the state offices in Khartoum to confront the ministers who ordered the terror.

There is a smell to refugee camps which, once you have inhaled it, you never forget—a smell of goat dung and human waste; of sweat and tears and unstaunched menstrual blood; but also a smell of desperation that gives way to sagging shoulders and the decay of the human soul. For a body can be clothed in the raiment of fear or stalked daily by death for only so long before the soul—whatever makes the human animal "human"—begins to collapse upon itself as surely as the shoulders do.

So the opportunities Amnesty provided me were singular and I am deeply grateful for them but I have always regarded myself first and foremost as a Unitarian Universalist minister. This faith and community have always been the principal resources from which I draw my strength and so I thank you for welcoming me back into the fold today, if not a wayward sheep, then at least one who has taken a very long detour and seen things both horrific and awesome along the way.

And of those things that I have seen nothing has had a deeper impact on me than my exposure to torture—to both victims of torture and perpetrators of it and, not incidentally, to all of us in between. So I want to talk with you this afternoon about torture but not in a political context—this is not another social justice screed imploring us all to do more to save the world or

excoriating the President one more time. You will get quite enough of that in other lectures this week. I want instead to talk about torture in a theological context and about what it may have to say concerning how we understand God, human beings and the world, and maybe even a thing or two about ministry.

About a week after I began my work at Amnesty in 1994, I came across a report of how the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan—the predecessors to the Taliban—got rid of their prisoners. They tied each live prisoner to a corpse and then left the pair out in the sun to rot. Clever, simple, low-tech, but to one who always tried to stand with his back to the open casket at memorial services, utterly terrifying.

Close to two-thirds of the countries in the world practice torture. (2) Of course if I had cited that statistic to an ancient Greek philosopher, his response would have been utter astonishment. "Why only two-thirds?" he would have said. "Why not every one?" For the ancient Greeks and the Romans who came after them, torture was not only acceptable; it was standard practice. But the Greeks were very discriminating about who could be tortured. It was only slaves—not free citizens—who could be subjected to the whip and the chain. That was true, however, not just because slaves were slaves. No. The reason slaves could be tortured was because slaves did not possess the faculty of reason and hence lacked the capacity to dissemble. And so if you wanted to know the truth about something, all you had to do was to torture a slave who, unlike a free citizen, wasn't smart enough to lie to you.

Unfortunate as the ancient use of torture may have been, it at least had the merit of being employed for a rational purpose, namely, to establish truth and resolve disputes. And the rational use of torture extended into medieval times. In the Middle Ages both civil and religious courts believed that it was unethical to convict someone of a crime on somebody else's word alone, that the only valid evidence of thievery or heresy or murder was a confession and what more effective way to elicit a confession than the rack and the screw?

Indeed, torture was such a reputable instrument of justice that it was not until 1754—only 252 years ago—that Prussia (now Germany) became, ironically enough in light of subsequent history, the first country to abolish the use of torture altogether. For about 150 years torture went out of vogue—at least as an official instrument of government policy. (3) But in the 20th century it began to raise its ugly head again. And this time there was an important difference: for whereas in ancient Greece and medieval Europe torture had been used to determine truth or convict someone of a crime, in the 20th century torture became an instrument of pleasure, a means of intimidating political opponents, a way to inflict pain on another person for the sheer sadistic joy of it.

The reason Abu Ghraib struck Americans like a thunderbolt is not because prisoners were being

tortured—some 63 percent of Americans say that torture is acceptable at least occasionally when, for example, information about the location of a ticking bomb in a high density neighborhood must be procured quickly. (4) (I don't have time to explain why the perennial "ticking bomb" argument for torture is itself a red herring but, believe me, it is.) The reason Americans turned ashen at Abu Ghraib was because even the staunchest defender of the use of torture as a means of extracting information could not pretend that forcing naked prisoners to form a pyramid or to masturbate for the cameras or to be tethered to a leash like a dog had any purpose other than sheer humiliation. The ancient Greeks would have been ashamed.

Over my years at Amnesty I was perpetually dumbstruck by the sheer creativity of modern torturers. Of course beatings are the most commonplace form of the art—on the back, the buttocks, most painfully on the feet. And electroshock, especially to the penis, the vagina, the eyelids, the earlobes, is quickly gaining popularity with ever more sophisticated electroshock equipment available now even to the general public. But these are for the mere beginners.

In King Leopold's Congo Belgian labor bosses regularly cut off the right hands of boys who did not meet their mining quotas for diamonds and then proudly displayed baskets of those severed hands on their office desks. (5)

In Brazil prisoners were stripped naked and locked in small, bare concrete cells with only one other occupant—a boa constrictor. (6)

In Central America soldiers were notorious for ripping open the wombs of pregnant women, tossing the fetuses into the air and catching them on their bayonets.

In Pinochet's Chile women were raped by men with visible open syphilitic sores, sexually abused by dogs trained in the practice, forced to watch their own children being sexually assaulted, and then fed the putrefied remains of their fellow captives. (7)

In contrast, our American obsession with water torture, most recently in the form of waterboarding or simulated drowning, sounds almost pristine. During our occupation of the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century, our soldiers inserted bamboo tubes into victim's throats and poured in gallons of water, the filthier the better. The Filipinos got their revenge, however. They buried captured American soldiers up to their heads in manure, poured molasses over their heads and dropped hundreds of fire ants into the molasses. (8)

Practices such as these have no rational purpose at all; they are designed solely to strip another of his or her humanity. If anything deserves to be called unadulterated evil, this does. I tell you about it not to shock you but to ask you to consider a question that has haunted me the last 12 years—is what I say from the pulpit about the world around us, about the nature of God and humanity, about the dynamics of human

relationships—is what I preach to the people sufficient to encompass a world in which such coarseness and brutality exists? Or, to put it another way, if a member of my congregation or my listening audience had herself been a victim of such terror, would she find my words, my faith, my theology, naive and pallid or authentic and satisfying?

I know of course that few Unitarian Universalists have been subjected to torture but far more people in our congregations than we know have been raped or abused and even those who have not have to live in a world, cope with a world, feel at home in a world in which such practices flourish. I find it a helpful exercise to use torture as a plumbline test of the adequacy of my worldview and sophistication of my sermonizing. I remember a cartoon from years ago in which the wayside pulpits of an Episcopal church and a Unitarian Universalist church were both visible on a street corner. It was Easter and the title of the Episcopal rector's Easter sermon was "The Truth and Power of the Risen Christ" while across the street the Unitarian Universalist was preaching a sermon entitled "Upsy-Daisy." My point is simply that to my mind an "upsy-daisy" theology fails the torture test.

Sallie McFague, a theologian whose work is popular among liberals, says that "there is no place where God is not." Process theologian Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki insists that "[God is] pervasively present, like water, to every nook and cranny of the universe, continuously wooing the universe... toward its greater good." (9) But I would submit that no God worthy of the name is present in a torture chamber. I am sure that some victims of torture have found solace in their faith sufficient to sustain them through the ordeal. That appears to be the case, for example, with some of the Islamic prisoners being held at Guantanamo Bay. But I have talked to dozens of survivors of torture, read hundreds of others' accounts, and I have rarely, if ever, come across a testimony that it was faith in God that saw them through the night. For when the needle slips under the fingernails and the pliers rip them off, that pain obliterates the very face of God.

I am not here scoring some cheap humanist point against vapid notions of God. Over the years I have myself become increasingly comfortable using the word to describe that source of graciousness upon which we depend for our very lives. All I am saying is that, whatever our conception of God, it needs to be both complex enough and circumscribed enough to account for the fact that God's absence—true absence—is as real a phenomenon as God's immanence.

Similarly, our traditional doctrines of human nature rest uneasy in a world full of torturers. In what sense can we defend the notion that a torturer is a person of "*inherent* worth and dignity?"

A South African neuropsychologist has recently theorized that cruelty, especially in males, is grounded in

an adaptive reaction from the Paleozoic era when early humans were predators and had to hunt for their food; that the appearance of pain and blood in the prey was a signal of triumph; and that gradually the evocation of such reactions—howls of pain, the appearance of blood—in our fellow humans became associated with personal and social power, with the success of the hunt. (10) That theory strikes me as plausible but, if it is true, it doesn't lend much credence to the notion of inherent dignity. As that great theologian Genghis Khan put it in the 13th century: "The greatest pleasure is to vanquish your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see their near and dear bathed in tears, to ride their horses and to sleep on the bellies of their wives and daughters." (11) Had he lived a few centuries later, Mr. Khan would surely have been a Calvinist.

So who are the torturers? Are they madmen? Deviants? Hardened criminals? Sexual predators? Almost never. In fact, most police and military units weed out the psychological misfits from their midsts because they know such people have trouble taking orders. No, the horrible truth is that the vast majority of torturers are average Joes (occasionally, but rarely, average Janes).

And it is remarkably easy to turn Joe into what most of us would regard as a monster. You put him in a restricted environment like a police or military training camp under the command of a vaunted authority figure. You subject him to intense stress. (The Greek military police in the time of the Greek generals, for example, were renowned for their brutality and they got that way because each of them was subjected during training to severe beatings, forced to go weeks without food, and not permitted to defecate for up to 15 days at a time.) And then, having created an angry, bitter, but obedient servant, you provide the sanction, the means, the opportunity and the rationale for that servant to take his outrage out on a vulnerable but much despised population. "These are the people who are threatening our country." "These are the people who are killing your comrades."

Who is this creature of "inherent dignity" who is so easily led astray? Sixty-five years ago James Luther Adams delivered the most heralded Berry Street Lecture of the 20th century entitled "The Changing Reputation of Human Nature" in which, while rejecting the doctrine of total depravity, he resurrected the notion of "sin."

... [W]hether the liberal uses the word "sin" or not, [Adams said], he cannot correct his "too jocund" [blithe] view of life until he recognizes that there is in human nature a deep-seated and universal tendency ... to ignore the demands of mutuality and thus to waste freedom or abuse it by devotion to the idols of the tribe It cannot be denied that religious liberalism has neglected these aspects of human nature in its zeal to proclaim the spark of divinity in man. We may call these tendencies by any name we wish but we do not escape

their destructive influence by a conspiracy of silence concerning them. (12)

Have we forgotten Adams' exhortation? If we no longer think of human beings as made in the "likeness of God," are we not still reticent to dwell upon the features of the flesh that make us not just "slightly lower than the angels" but out of the angels' league altogether? Do we even have a commonly shared doctrine of human nature today and, if we do, is it sufficient to explain why even the most reputable souls may, under the right circumstances, be transformed into savages?

When I was seven or eight years old, I lived across the street from a little dog named Amy. Every afternoon after my school let out, Amy and I would play together for an hour. One of Amy's favorite games was a dancing game in which I held her two forepaws in my hands and we would dance around the yard. Sometimes Amy even put her paws in my lap to signal that she wanted to dance. But I noticed that after a few minutes Amy's hind legs would get sore and she would pull her paws away. The first few times we played our dancing game, I dropped her paws the moment I sensed her discomfort and we went on to something else.

But one day I decided to hold on. The more Amy tugged, the tighter I held on until finally, when she yelped in agony, I let her go. But the next day I repeated my demonic game. It was fascinating to feel this little creature, so much less powerful than me, entirely at my mercy.

I was lucky that Amy was such a gentle dog for she had every right to have bitten me and when, after two or three days, I saw that my friend, who had previously scrambled eagerly toward me on first site, now cowered at my approach, I realized with a start what I had done and I was deeply frightened of myself and much ashamed. Whatever had come over me that I would treat someone I had loved that way?

What had come over me, I now know in retrospect, was the displacement of anger onto one who held no threat to me. Bullies at school might pick on me. My two parents might tell their only child what he could and could not do. My piano teacher might try to slam the keyboard cover on my fingers when I played off key. But in that yard I ruled supreme. Not only did I hold the power but the one who was powerless for a change was Not-Me.

Adams, like 19 centuries of theologians before him, would try to rescue humanity from its own degradation by asserting that *freedom* was what underpinned our inherent worth—the capacity I retained to decide to stop tormenting Amy, the fact that not every student of torture chooses to finish the course.

But, quite apart from arcane philosophical debates about free will or more contemporary insights into the traits of animals, is freedom robust enough a characteristic of human beings sufficient to overcome the basest of

brutality? And when we speak of the "inherent worth and dignity of every person," are we really thinking first and foremost of free agency anyway? I doubt it. I suspect that we base our belief in the inherent worth of human beings on some far vaguer notion that *aliveness* itself is good and some long-outdated hierarchical assumption that because human beings represent the pinnacle of aliveness, we possess inherently some kind of merit.

Well, I don't buy that anymore. I have fought tirelessly against the death penalty in this country. I have visited death rows, spoken frequently with condemned prisoners. Some of them have acknowledged their crimes and altered their hearts. Others of them are truly innocent. Many of them are mentally ill. And some of them are vicious, dangerous killers. I oppose the death penalty not because I believe that every one of those lives carries inherent worth. In some cases their deaths would be no loss at all to anyone. I oppose the death penalty because I can't be sure which of them falls into which category and because the use of executions by the state diminishes *my* own dignity and that of every other citizen in whose name it is enforced. I need, in other words, to *assign* the occupants of death row worth and dignity in order to preserve my own. But I find no such characteristics *inherent* in either them or me.

If a loved one of mine were murdered, I would want her murderer to suffer the worst torments of hell I could imagine. No torture would be too great to satisfy my lust for revenge. But I do not want the state to indulge me in my worst impulses. Part of the role of government is to save us from our basest passions in order to extract some semblance of worth and dignity out of the muck and meanness that infects our hearts.

So is the worth and dignity of every person *inherent*? No, inherency is a political construct—perhaps a very useful myth but a myth nonetheless—designed to cover up the fact that we all are sinners and that we are not always certain which sins (and hence which sinners) are worse than others. Each of us has to be assigned worth—it does not come automatically—and taught to behave with dignity because, as Sartre once said, "If it were not for the petty rules of bourgeois society, we humans would destroy each other in an instant."

But who does the assigning of worth? How do we decide that something is a sin? How do we know that torture is wrong? What is the basis for human rights?

There are only three options. Rights are established by divinity, by natural law or by pragmatic consensus. I wish we could get everybody to agree on one of the first two. But because we cannot—because not everyone agrees with the Montanists, for example, that God will only save those who eat a steady diet of radishes nor with Isak Dinesen's conception of natural law as reflected in her famous question, "What is man but an ingenious machine for turning red wine into urine?"—we are left with public opinion as the basis for determining

rights. Global public opinion, to be sure, but public opinion.

This is a discomfiting notion, I know. We Unitarian Universalists are champions of the individual as the source of authority for both truth and righteousness. We are well aware of all the many instances in which majority opinion has been just plain wrong. We are aficionados of the lonely, courageous soul standing up for truth, justice, and Esperanto even in the face of the crowd's disparagement.

But you know something: Most of the time those lonely, courageous souls are sheer crackpots. And unless they can get a whole bunch of other people to agree with them—at least eventually—we would usually be wise to keep them at a safe distance.

Was torture wrong even before anyone in the world, including the slaves being tortured, thought it was wrong? The hard answer is "No." Or if it was "wrong" in some parallel ethical universe, it was certainly no violation of anybody's rights until a significant number of people (13) I'm sorry but there is as yet no international consensus that all human beings have a right to play video poker.

Human rights are whatever the international community—through its various declarations, covenants, treaties, and conventions—say that they are. This means that theoretically at least the world could regress and torture could once again be deemed acceptable. But experience seems to show that the more people who are involved in decision-making about rights, including the victims of their violation, the less likely the backsliding. If there is one arena in which Theodore Parker's famous dictum that "the arc of the universe bends toward justice" seems to have been borne out, it is the evolution of human rights.

But what all this means is that, when it comes to deciding right and wrong, when it comes to assigning worth and dignity, the individual is *not* the final source of authority and without a reference to the values of the larger community—the *world* community, not that of any one nation alone—our judgments are fit only for a desert island upon which we ourselves are the only occupant.

But what it also means is that our job as ministers, as builders of the blessed community, is tougher and more important than ever for if we can't rely upon the inherency of human worth and dignity, if we have to assign worth and teach dignity, then we cannot escape confrontation with the forces of idolatry who would reserve worth to only a few and save dignity for their immediate neighbors, people like those children and grandchildren of immigrants, for example, who would not be where they are today if their forebears had been treated the way they propose to treat a new American generation .And if the individual is *not* the ultimate source of authority when it comes to some of the most important decisions on earth, like who lives and who

doesn't, then autobiographical theology, popular as it is and tempting, is inadequate—not deleterious or to be shunned—but insufficient for a faith that would not just engage the world but transform it. What torture has taught me is that, fascinating as I find my own life, it alone is a cloudy prism through which to view Creation absent reference to the experience of others, the wisdom of community, the demands of tradition, the judgment of history, and the invitation of the Holy.

And it has taught me one thing more. If these 12 years have caused me to re-think the nature of God, the inherency of human worth and the credibility of individual authority, they have more than confirmed two other bedrock Unitarian Universalist principles, the indomitability of the spirit and the mysterious workings of an unfettered grace. I want to close with four short vignettes out of dozens I could have chosen, four vignettes which build upon each other, the first from the memoir of a torturer, in which the stirrings of the spirit are just barely visible but working nonetheless.

General Paul Aussaresses was a French intelligence officer in occupied Algeria in the 1950s. To this day he is one of the most outspoken defenders of the use of brutality in the cause of national security. His memoir, *The Battle of the Casbah*, is full of callous disregard for his victims. But here is his fascinating description of a conversation he had with a physician over the dead body of a prisoner he had just tortured to death.

"I was talking to the prisoner and he fell ill," I said unconvincingly. "He told me he had tuberculosis. Can you see what's wrong with him?"

"You were talking to him?" the doctor asked incredulously. "But he's drenched in blood. You must be kidding!"

"No, I wouldn't do such a thing," I said.

"But he's dead," said the doctor.

"It's possible," I answered, "but when I called for you, he was still alive."

And then, since the doctor was still not cooperating, I lost my cool and said: "And so? You want me to say that I killed him? Would that make you feel better? Do you think I enjoy this?"

"No," said the doctor. "But then why did you come to get me when he was dead?"

I didn't answer. The doctor finally understood. I had called him so that he would get the body out of my sight once and for all. (14)

Occasionally the angel finds even a torturer's ear. But more often of course it is the victims of torture and their families who teach us how to live.

The great Soviet poet, Anna Akhmatova, spent 17 months waiting with others in the prison queues of Leningrad to see their loved ones who were being

tortured inside. One day somebody in the crowd recognized her. "Standing behind me," Akhmatova later recalled, "was a woman with lips blue from the cold ... 'Can you describe this?' [she asked] ... I said, 'I can.' Then something like a smile passed ... over what once had been her face." (15)

Nick Yarris spent 23 years in prison for a murder he did not commit—a singular form of torture. When he was released and was asked how he felt, he said, "What are my choices? I could be really devastated and angry and let them continue to own me or I could have fun. [Having fun] sounds better . . . The lowest insult would be if I came out destroyed, a broken man . . . My survival technique was to become a good man." (16)

Perez Aguirre was tortured mercilessly in a South American prison. Many years later, walking along the street, he ran into the man who had tortured him. The torturer was now among those being prosecuted and he tried to avoid Aguirre's gaze. But Aguirre took the initiative. "How are you?" he asked his torturer. The man said he was very depressed. There was a long pause and then Aguirre said, "If you need anything, come to see me." And then, "Shake hands, friend. I forgive you." (17)

What torture has taught me, what all those brave souls and, yes, even a few of their tormentors, have taught me, is to never give up on the glimmers of grace for not everything is all that it seems. If even survivors of torture can reclaim a sense of life's bounty, then surely you and I and all to whom we minister can too. If the torturer cannot fully break the human spirit, nobody can. For we Unitarian Universalists know, out of the depths of our faith and the teachings of our tradition and the succor of our community, that the chess master was right. Chancing upon a great painting in a European gallery of a defeated Faust sitting opposite the devil at a chess table with only a knight and a King on the board and the King in check, the master stopped to stare. The minutes changed to hours and still the master stared. And then finally, "It's a lie," he shouted. "The King and the knight have another move! They have another move!" And that's finally what torture has taught me—that it is not just the King but the knight, not just the Queen but the rook, not just the Bishop but the pawn, not just the wealthy but the pauper, not just the fortunate but the weary, not just the torturer but the tortured, not just the powerful but every single person, every single blessed person, until the day we die, every single blessed person on this earth, every single blessed person who has another move. We all have another move.

ENDNOTES

(1) A story described in detail in Schulz, William F.,

- (2) In its annual country reports Amnesty International cites about 130 countries every year as practicing torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading (CID) treatment.
- (3) For the history of torture, see Peters, Edward, *Torture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) and my own *I Used To Be Innocent: Readings in the Study of Torture* to be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in late 2006 or early 2007.
- (4) Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "America Place in the World," November 17, 2005. Fifteen percent say it is "often" justified; 31% "sometimes" and 17% "rarely."
- (5) Hochschild, Adam, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), pp. 120-123.
- (6) Archdiocese of Sao Paulo, Jaime Wright, Trans. Joan Dassin, Ed. *Torture in Brazil: A Report by the Archdiocese of Sao Paulo* (New York: Vintage, 1986), pp. 16-17.
- (7) Robertson, Geoffrey, *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice* (New York: The New Press, 1999), pp. 390-91.
- (8) Schulz, William F., *Tainted Legacy: 9/11 and the Ruin of Human Rights* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2003), p. 155.
- (9) Quoted in Rasor, Paul, *Faith Without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century* (Boston: Skinner House Books), pp. 20-21.
- (10) Victor Nell, "[Cruelty's Rewards: The Gratifications of Perpetrators and Spectators](#)," forthcoming in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. www.bbsonline.org, 2005.
- (11) Quoted in Buss, David, "[The Evolution of Evil](#)," www.edge.org, accessed on January 8, 2008.
- (12) Adams, James Luther, *Voluntary Associations: Socio-Cultural Analyses and Theological Interpretation* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1986), pp. 49-50.
- (13) "South Carolina High Court Derails Video Poker Game," *The New York Times*, October 15, 1999.
- (14) Aussaresses, Paul, *The Battle of the Casbah* (New York: Enigma Books, 2002), p. 131.
- (15) Akhmatova, Anna, "Instead of a Preface," in Forche, Carolyn, ed., *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1993), pp. 101-02.
- (16) Recounted to author.
- (17) Weschler, Lawrence, *A Miracle, A Universe: Settling Accounts With Torturers* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), pp. 198-99.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: SCHULZ'S THEOLOGY IN THE CONGREGATION

Begin by sharing this reading:

... the holy—those things that most matter to us—does not show all of its colors in solitude and silence.

Sometimes it requires the clarity of another's voice, sometimes the cacophony of community, and often the touch of other pilgrim's eyes and arms and hands ... [Moreover, another reason] to support the worshipping community is that whatever it is we value, be it freedom, courage, love, can only be preserved and only be transmitted with the help of institutions. No one passes on a heritage all by herself. No one by himself alone can provide a countervailing force to sheer iniquity. Our worship signals the institutional incarnation of our faith.

Invite participants to consider together the ways their own Unitarian Universalist congregation understands itself as the institutional incarnation of our faith. Engage participants using some or all of these questions as a guide:

- How does the congregation invite individuals into conversation with one another as a means to apprehending the holy?
- How does the corporate worship of the congregation help shape the actions and mores of individuals within the congregation?
- How is the importance of corporate worship reflected in the New UU class, small group ministries, the coming of age program, the adult programming and all the children and youth ministries of the congregation?
- What insights from the What Moves Us workshop on Schulz may push us toward strengthening some aspects of our congregational life?

LEADER RESOURCE 4: ENGAGING AS RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

Materials

- Leader Resource 1, What Torture's Taught Me
- Pens/pencils

Preparation

- Copy the Leader Resource for all participants.

Description

Invite participants to silently read Dr. William F. Schulz's Berry Street lecture, even if they have heard or read it before. Invite them to mark the copy as they read, noting places that trouble them, challenge them, or provoke thought. Invite them to also note places where their response is enthusiastic agreement.

After everyone has read the lecture, engage participants in conversation, using questions and topics participants suggest.

FIND OUT MORE

William F. Schulz, *Finding Time and Other Delicacies* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1994).

William F. Schulz, ed., *The Future of Human Rights: U.S. Policy for a New Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008).

William F. Schulz, *Making the Manifesto: The Birth of Religious Humanism*, (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2002).

WORKSHOP 10: THANDEKA INTRODUCTION

We love beyond belief. — Thandeka

This workshop introduces the Rev. Dr. Thandeka, author of the What Moves Us program, and her Unitarian Universalist Theology of Personal Experience. In this workshop, Thandeka presents in her own words the key assumptions that guided her creation of this Tapestry of Faith theology program.

Thandeka is cited by Gary Dorrien, author of The Making of American Liberal Theology, as one of our most influential contemporary Unitarian Universalist theologians. Participants will discover why she believes that small group ministry programs in our congregations are one of the most effective ways of practicing Unitarian Universalist theology today.

Note: Thandeka will sometimes refer to herself as "the author" when talking about her own role as creator of her Unitarian Universalist Theology of Personal Experience. — the Editors

Our personal faith as Unitarian Universalists begins with our own life experiences. This is a conclusion of the 2005 Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA) Commission on Appraisal Report, "Engaging Our Theological Diversity," which found that "almost universally among UUs, personal experience is considered the most important source of religious conviction." The report calls for "theological literacy," inviting us to deepen and clarify our theological understanding of personal experience "individually and collectively." To this end, we must do two things, says Thandeka: We must investigate *what* personal experience means for us today as Unitarian Universalists and we must explore *how* our individual personal experiences become *Unitarian Universalist* religious convictions. Thandeka developed her Unitarian Universalist Theology of Personal Experience to help us achieve these goals.

Thus Thandeka's basic question for this workshop: What is it about personal experience that not only establishes the common ground of our Unitarian Universalist faith convictions as one religious people, but also, at the same time, shows us how our amazing theological diversity is able to thrive? As Thandeka reminds us, Unitarian Universalist theists cite personal experience to affirm the sanctity of God. Unitarian Universalist humanists, on the other hand, use personal experience to affirm the sanctity of human life. Others among us use personal experiences to affirm their Pagan, Buddhist, agnostic, Christian, or Jewish claims about the fundamental nature, value, and meaning of their lives. Others use personal experience to define themselves

simply as Unitarian Universalist. So what binds us together?

Thandeka's answer: We love beyond belief. Our liberal faith tradition encourages us to embrace persons rather than creeds, and so we endeavor ever anew as Unitarian Universalists to love others beyond their own beliefs. Our Sunday morning worship services and small group ministry programs endeavor ever anew to create an ethos of care and compassion in which we feel loved beyond belief. This is why our personal experience of love beyond belief is the binding principle of our faith, says Thandeka. It is the major source of our religious unity and our theological diversity.

Is she right? Does her Unitarian Universalist Theology of Personal Experience show us what we feel beyond belief? Is it, as she claims, "love beyond belief"? Moreover, does the author's theology help us understand how the personal experience of love beyond belief enables our theological diversity and our shared identity as Unitarian Universalists to thrive? Finally, does her claim that "we love beyond belief" ring true? Participants develop their own answers to these questions as the workshop unfolds.

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction.

Preparing to lead this workshop

Read three stories from Thandeka: "Thandeka's Change of Heart," "A Lonely Soul in Community," and "Doctrinal Freedom" (including the author's reflections). Read Handout 2, Thandeka's Theology of Personal Experience. Use the exercises and questions that follow to help you understand the reading.

Change of Heart

First, use this three-part exercise to help you reflect on personal experience of a change of heart:

1. Recall an occasion when you were able to create a shift in your emotional mood from downcast to uplifted—even if for just a few hours—through an experience such as listening to music, watching a movie, play, or sporting event, or undertaking some other entertaining adventure.
2. Reflect on and describe in your theology journal the ways in which you knew that your emotional state was shifting and then positively altered. What did the shift feel like? Did you, for example, feel warmer or cooler? Did you stop sweating or crying? Did your pulse rate noticeably slow down? Did you begin to smile or laugh? Be as precise as possible about the ways in which you discerned that your internal emotional mood was indeed shifting and then in the end, had shifted in a positive and uplifting manner.

3. Note that the author calls the uplifting shift in your emotional life: a "change of heart." Would you describe your experience as a change of heart? If so, why? If not, explain why and then give your own experience of a positive shift in your emotional state a name that makes sense to you. If you have given your experience of emotional uplift a different name, substitute this name for the author's term "change of heart" to describe your personal experience of a shift in emotions from downcast to uplift.

Three Elements of Personal Experience

The author uses three stories with further reflections to highlight the three elements she believes are entailed in the personal experience of love beyond belief as a major source of religious convictions for Unitarian Universalists:

- (1) A change of heart,
- (2) An ethos of care and compassion, and
- (3) Doctrinal freedom

The first story, "Thandeka's Change of Heart," focuses on the individual. It recounts how the author experienced a change of heart.

The second story, "A Lonely Soul in Community," and the reflections that follow it focus on the feelings of the individual's change of heart within a Unitarian Universalist community setting. To this end, the story spotlights the ethos of care and compassion created by a Unitarian Universalist religious community.

The third story, "Doctrinal Freedom," focuses on the intellectual zone of doctrinal freedom that enables individuals to draw upon various religious and scientific sources to explain how their own transformed feelings become personal Unitarian Universalist religious convictions.

In sum, these three stories (with their reflections) focus our attention on the three constitutive elements of personal experience Thandeka identifies in her Unitarian Universalist Theology of Personal Experience: (1) a change of heart, (2) a community matrix of care and compassion, and (3) a zone of doctrinal freedom that sanctions and enables persons to draw on different theological, religious, scientific, and spiritual resources to explain the way their change of heart becomes a Unitarian Universalist religious sentiment or conviction. Thandeka calls this threefold content and structure of personal experience for Unitarian Universalists "love beyond belief."

Consider these questions:

Thandeka's Three Elements of Personal Experience

- Thandeka uses these stories to highlight three basic elements that make personal experience a major source of Unitarian Universalist religious convictions: (1) a personal change of heart, (2)

a community matrix of care and compassion, and (3) a zone of doctrinal freedom that encourages theological diversity when explaining how one's own change of heart became a Unitarian Universalist religious sentiment or conviction. How would you amend Thandeka's list of essential elements in order to explain more fully why personal experience is a major source of your own religious convictions as a Unitarian Universalist? Explain in detail.

Unitarian Universalist Congregational Responses to a Change of Heart

- During a Sunday morning Unitarian Universalist service in your congregation do the lighting of the chalice, the use of music and singing, invitations to silent meditation or prayer, or other elements of the service affect your mood? If so, how? Do you believe that any, most or all of these kinds of liturgical activities (or the coffee hour following the service) create certain kinds of emotional feelings within you and the rest of the community? If so, which ones? If this is the case, do you believe this emotional ethos is by design or accident?
- Think of two or three Unitarian Universalists in your own congregation who have theological standpoints very different from your own. What do you think enables all of you to attend the same service as members of the same congregation? The author calls this enabling factor our ability to affirm persons rather than creeds and in this way to practice a love beyond belief. Do you agree? Explain.
- What is your view of the author's claim that our theological differences can be explained in part by the different theological lenses we use (Christian, Jewish, Pagan, Humanist, Buddhist, etc.) to explain what our shifts in feelings—our change of heart—mean in religious terms?

Creating an Uplifting Emotional Ethos in Unitarian Universalist Congregations

- Have you ever participated in a small group ministry program in your congregation? How did the experience affect you? What parts of the program could be improved? Might such an improved small group ministry program help you and your congregation develop and sustain an emotional ethos of care and compassion within your own faith community? Can small group ministry programs become places where love beyond belief is practiced as a spiritual discipline? Explain in detail.
- Has the small group ministry program in which you have participated include a social service or social justice component as part of the small

group practice so as to share its ethos of care and compassion with the larger world? If you have participated in such small group service or social justice projects, reflect carefully on your experience and then evaluate it. What is your general evaluation of such a faith-in-action component of small group ministry as a practical theological project for Unitarian Universalists? What are your thoughts and feelings about small group ministries and their possibilities as a practical theological movement, a faith-in-action way of loving beyond belief?

As time allows, read these other resources, in the order listed below:

- Leader Resource 2, Healing Community
- Leader Resource 3, Covenant Groups — What They Are and How They Work
- Leader Resource 4, Future Designs for American Liberal Theology

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Build knowledge about the Unitarian Universalist Theology of Personal Experience created by the Rev. Dr. Thandeka (1946 -) to affirm our religious identity and explain our theological differences as a 21st century people of liberal faith who love beyond belief
- Engage participants to explore the way they link their emotions, thoughts, and actions when explaining their own Unitarian Universalist faith
- Encourage participants to become more aware of the way some Unitarian Universalists choose and use different theological lenses (e.g., Judaic, Christian, Humanist, Pagan, Buddhist, etc.) to interpret and assess shifting emotions within themselves and others
- Invite participants to consider the next practical stage of their own theological work beyond the What Moves Us program.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand what they mean when they cite personal experience as the major source of their own religious convictions as Unitarian Universalists
- Demonstrate increased self-knowledge about the emotional foundation of their own Unitarian Universalist faith and its link to reason and social action
- Be ready to consider a faith-in-action, small group ministry project as a next practical step for themselves in their ongoing theological journey as Unitarian Universalists.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Experiences of a Change of Heart	10
Activity 2: Introducing Thandeka	5
Activity 3: Stories and Reflections	30
Activity 4: Testing Thandeka's Theology of Personal Experience	20
Activity 5: Personal Experience — Large Group Reflection	15
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read three stories from Thandeka: "Thandeka's Change of Heart," "A Lonely Soul in Community," and "Doctrinal Freedom" (including the author's reflections). What stories of your own come to mind in response to these stories? You may want to record your reflections in your theology journal.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Set up the altar or centering table with the cloth, chalice, candle and matches or lighter.
- Place chairs in a semicircle around the table.
- Prepare and post a sheet of newsprint with these words of Annie Dillard:

We are here to abet creation and
to witness to it,
to notice each other's beautiful
face and complex nature
so that creation need not play to
an empty house.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite a participant to light the chalice while you share words written by Rev. Dr. Thandeka:

We [Unitarian Universalists] affirm human nature in positive terms rather than condemn it as irretrievably broken and fallen from grace. We nurture the redemptive capacity of the human heart to be transformed. This means that we are pro-active in creating human communities that nurture the capacity of human beings to bond in ways that are productive for their own wellbeing and for that of the wider world.

Invite participants to join in reading the opening words you have posted on newsprint, "We are here to abet creation" by Annie Dillard.

ACTIVITY 1: EXPERIENCES OF A CHANGE OF HEART (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements

Preparation for Activity

- If participants may need journals, obtain notebooks with unlined pages. Gather a variety of writing and drawing implements.

Description of Activity

Introduce the workshop using these or similar words:

Can Thandeka's Unitarian Universalist Theology of Personal Experience help us understand why we "almost universally," as the Commission On Appraisal 2005 Report Engaging Our Theological Diversity noted, make personal experience a major source of our religious convictions as Unitarian Universalists? Does her theology help us explain our ability to affirm persons rather than creeds and, in this way, to love others beyond belief? And finally, does her theology help us track how we can feel loved beyond belief during our Sunday morning worship services and our small group ministry programs?

Tell the group you will lead a three-part exercise to help participants answer these questions in ways that are personally relevant and meaningful. Read the prompt for each part, and then allow two minutes for reflection and writing before moving on to the next part.

Part I

Recall an occasion when you were able to create a shift in emotional mood from downcast to uplifted—even if only for a few hours—through an experience such as listening to music; watching a movie, play, or sporting event; or undertaking some other entertaining adventure.

Part II

Recall and describe in writing the ways you knew that your emotional state was shifting and then positively altered. What did the shift feel like? Did you, for example, feel warmer or cooler? Did you stop sweating or crying? Did your pulse rate noticeably slow down? Did you begin to smile or laugh? Be as precise as possible about the ways in which you discerned that your internal emotional mood was indeed shifting and then in the end, had shifted in a positive and uplifting manner.

Part III

Thandeka calls the uplifting shift in your emotional life a change of heart. Would you describe your experience as a change of heart? If so, why? If not, explain why and then give your own experience of a positive shift in your emotional state a name that makes sense to you. If you have given your experience of emotional uplift a different name, substitute this name for the term Thandeka uses—"change of heart"—to describe the first of three elements she spotlights as the content of what personal experience means for us as a major source of our Unitarian Universalist religious convictions.

ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING THANDEKA (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing materials
- Handout 1, [Introducing Thandeka](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a copy of the handout for each participant.

Description of Activity

Briefly introduce the Rev. Dr. Thandeka using these words as a guide.

Rev. Dr. Thandeka is cited as one of our most influential contemporary Unitarian Universalist theologians. She is the author of two books and numerous articles, and a contributor to major theological publications. Thandeka, as a congregational consultant, leads the "We Love Beyond Belief" project (revthandeka.org). She has taught at a number of seminaries and universities and her work has been important in the ministerial preparation of many of our current Unitarian Universalist ministers. Before receiving her doctorate in philosophy of religion and theology from the Claremont Graduate University, Thandeka was an Emmy award-winning television producer. Over 16 years, she produced, directed, written and/or produced more than 400 television programs.

Thandeka's !Xhosa name means "beloved;" it was given to her by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. She has been a keynote speaker at Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist events in Britain, Paris, and Prague, and also spoken to and led workshops for hundreds of our congregations in the United States. She is one of the major voices of the small group ministry movement that has brought this new program initiative into most of our congregations.

Distribute Handout 1, which contains more detail about her life, for participants to take home.

ACTIVITY 3: STORIES AND REFLECTIONS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Thandeka's Change of Heart](#)" (included in this document)
- Story, "[A Lonely Soul in Community](#)" (included in this document)

- Story, "[Doctrinal Freedom](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the stories so that you are able to effectively read them aloud.
- Optional: Arrange for volunteers to read stories aloud. Provide the stories to volunteer readers before the workshop.

Description of Activity

Share with participants:

Thandeka believes we Unitarian Universalists know what moves us as religious people: personal experience. But she sees us stumbling when we try to articulate our own theology of personal experience. So Thandeka says we have to start with the basic elements of personal experience for us as Unitarian Universalists. To this end, Thandeka uses stories with further reflections to spotlight what she calls the three basic elements of personal experience for us today:

- (1) Our individual change of heart,
- (2) Our religious community's ethos of care and compassion, and
- (3) Our doctrinal freedom.

The first story focuses on our individual experience of a change. Here, Thandeka uses her own personal experience as primary text.

Invite participants to sit comfortably and listen to a story about how Thandeka learned to feel love beyond belief. Read aloud the story or invite a participant to do so.

Pause for at least a minute of silence to allow time for participants to absorb the story. Invite them to write feelings and thoughts in their theology journal.

Invite another participant to read aloud the second story, "A Lonely Soul in Community" and Thandeka's reflections.

Invite a third participant to read the third story, "Doctrinal Freedom."

Pause for at least a minute of silence to allow time for participants to absorb the stories and the author's reflections. Invite participants to write feelings and thoughts in their theology journals.

ACTIVITY 4: TESTING THANDEKA'S THEOLOGY OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Participant journals
- Variety of writing and drawing implements

- Handout 2, [Thandeka's Theology of Personal Experience](#) (included in this document)
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions for small groups on newsprint, and post:
 - Do elements of a worship service in your Unitarian Universalist faith community affect your mood? Have you ever had what Thandeka calls a change of heart in response to an element or elements in the service? Was that change of heart experienced by others in the congregation?
 - How do you respond to Thandeka's claim that we should pay more attention to the way we create and sustain the emotional atmosphere of our religious life? Thandeka believes that our own congregation's ability to create an atmosphere of unconditional love—love beyond belief—is the emotional bond that binds us together and makes us one religious community filled with persons who hold disparate religious beliefs. Do you agree?

Description of Activity

Distribute Handout 2 and ask participants to read it. Ask participants to form groups of three and invite them to test the author's Theology of Personal Experience.

Invite participants to share the reflections they wrote about their own experiences during Activity 1. Explain the small group process with these or similar words:

Each person is invited to take a minute or two to share their journal reflections on their own experiences. After all have shared, you are invited to a second round of sharing. In this round, evaluate whether and how Thandeka's distinction between the personal experience of a change of heart and a personal change of heart within a gathered religious community makes personal sense to you.

Remind participants that this is an exercise in deep reflection and compassionate listening rather than an invitation to critique the feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences of others. Encourage them to do this work as a spiritual practice of deep listening and deep reflection. Allow ten minutes for this portion of the activity.

Now, indicate the posted questions. Invite participants to share, in turn, their responses with the others in the group. If there is time, the group may move on to a second round of reflections. Remind them that this is an exercise in deep reflection and compassionate listening rather than an invitation to critique the feelings,

thoughts, ideas, and experiences of others. Encourage them to do this work as a spiritual practice of deep listening and deep reflection.

ACTIVITY 5: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE — LARGE GROUP REFLECTION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Microphone

Preparation for Activity

- Write questions on newsprint, and post:
 - Have you ever participated in a small group ministry program in your congregation? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the program? How did the experience affect you?
 - Has the small group ministry program in which you have participated included a social service or social justice component as part of the small group practice? What is your evaluation of such a faith-in-action component for small group ministry?
 - Do you believe the personal experiences of open-mindedness and open-heartedness, which Thandeka calls the love beyond belief created within our own religious communities, prompt us as Unitarian Universalists, to work in the world for justice, equity, and freedom as moral agents?

Description of Activity

Re-gather the large group. Say:

Thandeka believes small group ministries have great potential as a Unitarian Universalist religious discipline and spiritual practice for helping us create and sustain personal experiences of love beyond belief within and beyond our congregations. She also believes that part of small group ministry programs must include a social action component, which is one way our ability to love beyond belief is shared with the larger world.

Invite conversation, using the posted questions as a guide.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small worship table and cloth
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook

- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handouts for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Review the Taking It Home section. Decide which extension activities you will encourage participants to do.
- Download the Taking It Home section to your computer, customize it for your group, and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the altar or centering table. Affirm the good work that participants have done in this workshop.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Explain that each workshop provides a Taking It Home handout with ideas for continuing to explore the workshop's subject with friends, co-workers, housemates, and family. Mention that the Faith in Action activities included in the handout offer another extension opportunity.

Offer a benediction these closing words from Thandeka's story:

Gradually, I began to notice a shift, a letting go, a change of heart. It was subtle. ... And yet, for me, it was ... vividly affirming. I had finally said to myself—"I am sad and for good reason." And I heard myself reply: "Yeah."

Suddenly, I felt a childlike intensity of feeling that turns every experience of life into something unmistakably marvelous.

I felt love beyond belief. And I loved life, every moment of it.

But I could not sustain this change of heart by myself. I needed the care and compassion of my own Unitarian Universalist community to stay the spiritual course of my change of heart, my experience of love beyond belief.

Extinguish the chalice and invite participants to go in peace.

Including All Participants

Be inclusive of people with a variety of living situations—for example, living alone, with a significant other, in a multigenerational family, or with housemates—in the way you explain the Taking It Home activities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After the workshop, co-leaders should make a time to get together to evaluate this workshop. Use these questions to guide your shared reflection and planning:

- What have you learned about your own ability to explore personal experiences as part of your own strategy to construct a Unitarian Universalist theology that links you to our forebears?
- What were some of your favorite moments of the workshop?
- What were some of your most challenging moments?
- What did we handle well as leaders?
- What could we handle better as leaders another time?
- What can we affirm about the effectiveness of one another's leadership?
- What can we affirm about one another's leadership style?

TAKING IT HOME

We love beyond belief. — Thandeka

Think of something you can do to create more of an ethos of care and compassion within your own congregation or small group ministry program. Explore the possibilities and make a commitment to make it happen.

Consider what you have learned in the What Moves Us program. How would you now articulate your own Unitarian Universalist theology of personal experience? Refine and expand your own theological reflections with journaling, conversations, or intentional reflection on your own service or social justice work.

Faith in Action

Does your congregation intentionally create a space for those whose life circumstances leave them longing for the uplift and embrace a faith community can offer? Find a way to start this as a small group project in your congregation. Enlist appropriate help in the congregation to plan a gathering or series of gatherings to offer care and compassion (and good conversation) to those who are lonely, both in your congregation and in the wider community. Possibilities include a cooperative Thanksgiving meal for those who are away from family or gathering parents of young adults newly away from home to share experiences and create "care packages."

Build a liturgical element into the gatherings (such as music from our faith tradition, a reading, a chalice-lighting, or another element). In that way, you will create sacred time and strengthen your congregation's ethos of care and compassion.

STORY: A LONELY SOUL IN COMMUNITY

Several years ago, I spent an evening discussing Covenant Groups with members of a New England church who were interested in starting a small group ministry program. Part of my ministry is dedicated to helping congregations start and sustain small group ministries of six to twelve persons who meet regularly as a spiritually empowering practice.

Different Unitarian Universalists congregations call small group ministries by different names—covenant groups, chalice circles, shared ministry groups, or engagement groups (in England)—but the different names refer to a common ground of experience: the personal experience of a change of heart, of being loved beyond belief. The usual opening ritual for covenant group meetings calls forth this feeling by creating it. As the members sing a song together, light a chalice, offer a prayer, pay attention to their breath, attentively notice the sounds in the room, hear their own heart beating and so much more, the time when how we do something, the manner in which we say something, the tone of voice we use when speaking become as important as what is said. The time when we will feel loved beyond belief is created by the gathered community. Sacred time begins.

At the end of my formal remarks in the New England church, I asked the members of the audience if they might be willing to simply get together in small groups over a meal and talk about their unmet needs for community in their church.

One of the most respected elder statesmen of the church stood up and slowly walked to the front of the assembly, faced his fellow congregants and said he was interested in joining such a group. He had wanted something like this for years, he said, because he was lonely. "I do not have any friends," he finally confessed.

Waves of shock rolled through the gathering. How could *he* be lonely? He was a revered and beloved member of the congregation, a pillar of the church. Many persons expressed incredulity.

When the group quieted down, the man spoke again, saying "Every man in this room who is my age knows what I am talking about. Our social upbringing has taught us not to talk about our feelings. We are not supposed to be emotionally vulnerable or close to anyone except our wives."

Something happened to me as he spoke. I felt the man's vulnerability. I could feel his vulnerability because his heart spoke the hidden language of my own heart: loneliness. My own social upbringing had taught me *not* to talk about my feelings to anyone. I had learned to be emotionally invulnerable and closed to everyone. But now, here, in the midst of this gathered community—someone so much like my self—had stepped forward and said "I'm lonely."

He did not step forward as an authority figure, or as someone whose racial identity or class status was at issue. He stepped forward to talk about his own unmet needs for intimacy. His story was my story. My story was his story. He had heard a call and he responded.

All of us in the room were now in the presence of an open space, an opened heart, a change of heart; a call for healing that could be performed only by a religious community because human salvation is not a solo act.

Together, we loved this man beyond belief, beyond our own mistaken ideas and thoughts about who he is. Together, we had created an ethos of care and compassion in which we could simply love him.

I call this atmosphere of care and compassion created by religious community the second major element of personal experience for us as Unitarian Universalists.

STORY: DOCTRINAL FREEDOM

There was an extraordinary range of personal beliefs among the participants in my 2003 small group workshop in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. They were the delegates, staff and visitors attending the annual meeting of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. Some were self-defined Christians. Others were Humanists. Some did not define themselves as religious at all. And one participant, a self-identified Unitarian, believed that Jesus is not only God, but also believed that he died to save a sinful humanity, was resurrected on the third day and now is seated at the right hand of God. Clearly, a common set of religious ideas and beliefs was not the unifying factor for this gathered community. Rather, our Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist doctrinal freedom was writ large. Each participant drew on different theological and/or scientific sources to explain their own personal experience of a change of heart that occurred within this small group workshop community setting of care and compassion that we created together.

Reflecting on the workshop experience, one woman said she had felt God in the room. Another said he saw a spirit moving around the room. Several persons said they had discovered something about their religion, a feeling of repose they did not know existed until that moment and they felt trust and love of the persons around them with a new depth not known before. One man said he always hoped for a moment at these international conferences when something miraculous happens and this workshop, for him, was that moment. Many persons described a heightened sense of awareness accompanied by a deep and abiding sense of peace, relaxation, and the cessation of inner turmoil. All were amazed by the variety and diversity of ideas participants used to express what the small group experiences they had created together meant to them individually.

The participants could freely draw on different theological and scientific resources to interpret and express the change of heart they individually experienced in this community setting of care and compassion—because all are members of a doctrinally free, liberal religious tradition.

This doctrinal freedom is the intellectual signature of our liberal faith tradition. I call this *zone of intellectual doctrinal freedom*, the third major element of personal experience for us because it sanctions our theological diversity as members of the same religious community.

STORY: THANDEKA'S CHANGE OF HEART

In July 2003, I went on an eight-day spiritual retreat at a Benedictine monastery in Wisconsin. The night before I left Chicago to drive to the monastery, as preparation for the journey, I made a series of decisions about what kinds of clothes I would need while on this retreat. I was thorough. I thought about the weather conditions in Chicago. The past few days had been quite hot. I looked up the weather conditions in the city closest to the monastery. The temperature there had also been quite warm for several days.

As part of this prep work, I remembered that the weather in Wisconsin was often colder than the weather in Chicago. I knew this fact because I had gone on a college retreat 30 years ago to a camp site in northern Wisconsin in the dead of winter and had not taken adequate clothing, so I had been cold for three days.

Not wanting to repeat this clothing disaster of 30 years ago, I decided to prepare for the worst—just in case the hot July summer weather suddenly turned unseasonably cold. So I packed a heavy winter coat, two heavy sweatshirts, a turtleneck sweater, a Polartec(R) hat, Polartec(R) mittens, and a heavy scarf. I also decided to take a blanket with me just in case my room at the monastery became uncomfortably cold because the heating system might not be turned on in July.

When I arrived at the monastery, I schlepped all of this stuff up two flights of stairs, neatly folded all of the winter items, placed them in the storage space facing my bed, and left them there, untouched, for eight days because the temperature never fell below 75 degrees.

I had done this before. I travel a lot in order to lead workshops, present sermons, and read papers on my theological work. So it is not unusual for me to spend two or three weekends a month on the road. And yet, more often than not, I have tended to take the wrong clothes with me on my travels. As a result I have often felt ill-at-ease in my body, while I led workshops on spiritual practices intended to help others feel more at ease in their bodies.

As I sat in my monastery room in July looking at my winter clothes, I sensed that if I could figure out why I had such a difficult time thinking about my body, I might discover something new about me. Why couldn't I make realistic decisions about my own body's future, physical needs?

The Wisconsin retreat seemed like the perfect place to answer this question. So everything I did while on my retreat was framed by this question. Thus, when I read a story in the contemporary neurologist Antonio Damasio's book, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the*

Human Brain, about a man who thought about himself "as if" he had a body, I had an "aha" experience.

The story that galvanized my attention was about a man who had suffered injury to the prefrontal lobe of his brain, which made it impossible for him to do anything internally with his body except to think *about* it. He could not think *within* it or through it. He was unaware of the emotional feelings linked to his thoughts and sensations. So he reasoned "as if" he were wrestling with his body's emotional feelings, but he wasn't. The man's mind could not grasp the actual give and take of his own emotional life—that push and pull of feelings that occur when our body reacts against a considered idea such as wearing winter clothes on a hot summer day.

Damasio's account and reflections gave me pause. Was I an "as if" thinker? My ability to think through and predict the probable state of my body while on retreat in Wisconsin and my decision to pack a suitcase filled with winter clothing as well as a suitcase full of summer clothes seemed to me to be an example of "as if" thinking. No, I had not suffered a brain injury. But I seemed to have lost the capacity to make realistic predictions about my own body using the ebb and flow of my own body's affective feelings as the physical sentiments gauged to modify and limit my mind's thoughts and reflections.

I took small consolation from Damasio's observation that I was not alone in having lost the capacity to link my mind to my body through emotional feelings. This kind of disembodied thinking, Damasio has found, is endemic to Western culture. But this endemic condition of Western minds, I now reasoned, could not have come about through physical injury to each of our individual prefrontal brain areas. Surely the "fall of man" should not be explained neurobiologically as a fracture to the brain of the biblical Adam that condemned his progeny to disembodied thinking and mindless feeling. Something else must be going on. But what?

I had spent decades, first as a broadcast journalist and then as religious scholar, minister, and theologian, asking why people so often act against their own best interests or confound their own best wishes and desires. I never imagined that the practical way this spiritual question would show up in my own life would be as a clothes issue, a dress-for-success issue while on a spiritual retreat.

I knew that I no longer wanted to be an "as if" thinker and vowed to start thinking *with* my body again. But how could I achieve this end? How could I think my way back into my own body's feelings, my own emotions? How could I keep my mind focused on my own body's emotional feelings and sentiments? Clearly, it was time for me to experiment.

I had brought a small paperweight with me on the retreat, so I decided to start carrying it around in my pocket during the day and to keep it in hand at night. This way, I reasoned, my mind would be aware of something different about my body, and would thus be forced to stay focused on actual feelings within my body instead of taking flights of fancy into interesting or important ideas.

The first day was rather heady. I smiled to myself at my silly game as I carried the paperweight with me all day. Perhaps I did not suffer from a prefrontal brain injury, I thought, but I might nevertheless be addled. But I was on retreat and gave myself permission to persist with this silly game. And so I arrived at the first night of this experiment. I climbed into my small monastery bed in my small monastery room with my paperweight in hand.

I decided that if I awakened during the night, as I sometimes do, I would make my mind sink into the feeling of the weight in my hand. And so, when I awoke, I held onto the paperweight. I directed all of the attention to the feelings and sensations entailed in holding a six-ounce weight in my hand. I did this for about an hour until I fell into sleep, still focusing on the feelings of the extra weight in my hand.

In the morning, I awoke with a profound sense of a physical sadness that I had not known before. I was not depressed; I did not feel shame or guilt. I simply felt inexplicably sad.

Could it be, I now wondered, that I have such a difficult time thinking *with* my body *about* my body because it is so sad? Extravagant eating, drinking, shopping, gallivanting, even reading had dulled my awareness of this pervasive feeling in me for years. These practices had dulled my awareness of me. I resolved to hold onto the emotional sadness I now felt.

I stayed in this sea of sadness, night and day. I was now in a state of mourning, letting go of what I had already

lost: an internal sense of community. Until now, I had held onto that lost sense of community as if real community were present in my home. My mind now understood my body's sadness. At home, I had felt abandoned and alone—but without emotionally acknowledging it. I, the mind, was a head-trip of a body at sea.

Gradually, I began to notice a shift, a letting go, a change of heart. It was subtle.

This shift was so subtle that I can only describe it by referring to an extreme example of it—a story recounted by psychoanalytic R. D. Laing during his work with a catatonic schizophrenic.

Each day, as Laing made his rounds, he would sit next to the immobile man and say something like this: "If my mother had locked me in a closet for all of those years, I wouldn't want to talk to anyone either." Day in and day out, year after year, Laing made such statements to the man and then would move on to his next patient.

And then the day came. Laing sat next to the man, told him he would not want to speak to another either—if he had been treated the way this man had been treated by his mother—and the man turned to him and said "Yeah."

The shift I felt within myself was not this dramatic. And yet, for me, it was as vividly affirming. I had finally said to myself—"I am sad and for good reason." And I heard myself reply: "Yeah."

Suddenly, I felt a childlike intensity of feeling that turns every experience of life into something unmistakably marvelous.

I felt love beyond belief. And I loved life, every moment of it.

But I could not sustain this change of heart by myself. I needed the care and compassion of my own Unitarian Universalist community to stay the spiritual course of my change of heart, my experience of love beyond belief.

HANDOUT 1: INTRODUCING THANDEKA

The Reverend Dr. Thandeka is cited as one of our most influential contemporary Unitarian Universalist theologians. She is the author of *The Embodied Self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Solution to Kant's Problem of the Empirical Self* and *Learning To Be White: Money, Race, and God in America*, and contributor to books including *The Cambridge Companion to Schleiermacher*, *The Oxford Handbook on Feminist Theology, Religion and its Relevance in Post-Modernism*, *A Language of Reverence, A Global Conversation: Unitarian/Universalism at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, *A Theological Symposium June 25-30, 2000*, and *Thematic Preaching: An Introduction*. Her numerous publications in journals include essays in *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, *The International Journal of Practical Theology*, *Harvard Theological Review*, *Process Studies*, *The Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, *Faith and Freedom: A Journal of Progressive Religion*, *Tikkun*, and *UU World*. She is presently at work on her next book, a systematic theology of personal experience.

Thandeka has taught at San Francisco State University, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Williams College, Harvard Divinity School, and Brandeis University, and has been a Fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center at Stanford University, and a Visiting Scholar at Union Theological Seminary in New York and the Center for Process Studies at the Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, California.

Before receiving her doctorate in philosophy of religion and theology from the Claremont Graduate University, Thandeka was a television producer for 16 years and is an Emmy award winner. She directed, wrote and/or produced more than 400 television programs.

An ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, Thandeka has served as community minister at The Unitarian Universalist Church of Utica, NY; and affiliated minister at The Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford, Illinois, and at The Community Church of New York.

She has been a keynote speaker at Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist events in Britain, Paris, and Prague, and spoken to and led workshops for hundreds of our congregations in the United States. She is one of the major voices of the small group ministry movement that has brought this new program initiative into most of our congregations.

The !Xhosa name Thandeka, which means "beloved," was given to her by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1984.

She is the daughter of the award-winning American artist Erma Barbour Booker and the American Baptist minister Merrel D. Booker, who trained with Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr at Union Theological Seminary and retired as an adjunct professor of pastor counseling at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.

Educated at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (B.S., Journalism, 1967), The Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University (M.S., Journalism 1968), The University of California, Los Angeles (M.A., the History of Religions), and Claremont, Thandeka believes we can become one of the largest religious movements in America. She has dedicated her life to help make this happen.

HANDOUT 2: THANDEKA'S THEOLOGY OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Love beyond belief, according to Thandeka, means that personal experience has three basic elements for us as Unitarian Universalists: (1) a change of heart, (2) a congregational ethos of care and compassion, (3) doctrinal freedom to explore various sources to explain our religious feelings and sentiments and the moral values and actions linked to them. We use different theological lenses to examine and explain a personal change of heart. We perceive the difference between what we emotionally feel (a change of heart) and what we intellectually cite (God, the Universe, the Holy Spirit, Humanity, etc.) as the source of our change of heart.

Unitarian Universalists maintain a mental space of difference between our thoughts and feelings, which enables others to make a diversity of personal theological claims about what brought on their own personal change of heart. This mental space for different religious beliefs is our intellectual signature as a religious people. We call this mental space our doctrinal freedom. Using this mental space, we are able to affirm our common emotional ground as one religious people, while at the same time affirming our intellectual freedom to make a diversity of personal theological claims about the source and meaning of our own change of heart.

We thereby establish and affirm a noncreedal religious tradition, which Thandeka calls "loving beyond belief," as definitive of our Unitarian Universalist faith. Orthodox, conservative, and traditional evangelical and fundamentalist traditions, by contrast, do not allow for this mental space of doctrinal freedom that enables and encourages a theological diversity of explanations among its members regarding the cause that prompted the personal experience of a change of heart. Our liberal faith tradition is founded, in part, on this difference between emotion and belief. This is why we can love beyond belief. Our hearts are not restricted by belief.

We maintain this mental space of doctrinal freedom liturgically during our Sunday services. Moreover, we transmit this openness to difference to our children through the way we teach them how to handle their shifting emotions long before their own personal religious belief systems as Unitarian Universalists are set in place. This is our emotional signature as a caring and compassionate religious people, a people who love beyond belief. We align our thoughts and feelings liturgically within an intellectual context of doctrinal freedom.

We are members of a democratic faith because of our ongoing affirmation and experience of intellectual freedom as a religious right and because of our ever-renewing experience of emotional integrity through our liturgical rites. These personal experiences of open-mindedness and open-heartedness as a religious practice prompt us, as Unitarian Universalists, to work in the world for justice, equity, and freedom as moral agents.

Our social justice work emerges from the ways in which we intellectually and emotionally handle the ongoing capacity of human beings to experience a change of heart. This is why we affirm human nature in positive terms rather than condemn it as irretrievably broken and fallen from grace. We nurture the redemptive capacity of the human heart to be transformed. This means that we are pro-active in creating human communities that nurture the capacity of human beings to bond in ways that are productive for their own wellbeing and for that of the wider world.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: THANDEKA PORTRAIT

This photograph was taken by Merrel D. Booker, Jr. Used with permission.



LEADER RESOURCE 2: HEALING COMMUNITY

"[Healing Community](#): Small group ministry as a spiritual practice," by Thandeka, *UU World*, January/February 2005.

Recall a time when you were filled with joy. Where were you? At home? At a concert? A party? Maybe you were in a religious service or on vacation. Perhaps you were on a hike or seated on the sand at a beach, watching the tide roll in. Were you alone or was someone with you? Maybe you were making love, gardening, telling a joke, or jogging.

Now pay attention to how you recalled this time. You found things: memories, sensations, experiences. You gathered them together and by so doing filled a moment of time. You packed it full of thoughts and feelings, places and things, and bound them together as yours.

This recollecting and binding process is a spiritual act. It is opening up time and giving it the texture, content, feelings, and ideas actually present in your experience. This way of packing time with detail and dimension, slowing it down by filling it up with the full presence of life, is the essence of every spiritual practice.

Small group ministries are about this spiritual practice. This is why they are sweeping into so many Unitarian Universalist congregations. They aim to make moments matter again. In these gatherings of six to ten persons, usually meeting twice a month to build spiritual lives, each member holds on to the same moment through personal sharing and by asking for or by listening to the details, texture, content, feelings, and ideas packed into someone's experiences. As people pay active attention to the details of each other's lives, this gathered community can extend a moment of time until it is filled to overflowing with the thoughts and feelings that turn time into an experience that is not fleeting, but abiding, because we are now fully present. Sacred time begins here.

Different congregations call small group ministries by different names—covenant groups, chalice circles, shared ministry groups, or engagement groups (in England)—but the different names refer to a common ground of experience: sacred time. The usual opening ritual for covenant group meetings calls forth this time by creating it. As the members sing a song together, light a chalice, offer a prayer, pay attention to their breath, notice the sounds in the room, hear their own heart beating, sacred time begins: the time when how we do something, the manner in which we say something, the tone of voice we use when speaking are as important as what is said.

Sacred Time

Sacred time is not the opposite of profane time. Sacred time is the opposite of fleeting time. Fleeting time is the kind of time in which we are distracted, racing around and trying to catch up as we fall further behind; it's working at the computer while a friend talks to us on the phone. By contrast, sacred time is noticing a shift of tone in a person's voice and asking what's wrong; it's full presence, paying attention in the moment. It's what happens in a covenant group when we discover how to stay present to life again.

Sacred time is biological time, the time our bodies take to act or think or feel. When we pay attention to biological time, we focus on the science and the art of spiritual practice.

Dr. Stephan Rechtschaffen, who is a physician, author, and co-founder of the Omega Institute, the largest holistic education center in the country, explores the science in his essay "Timeshifting," in *Sustainable Planet: Solutions for the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Juliet B. Schor and Betsy Taylor. He begins with a simple question: "Do you have enough time in your life?" Few persons in his workshops and seminars answer this question affirmatively. At a Fortune 100 gathering where he raised this question, Rechtschaffen reports, "not one of the one thousand persons present raised a hand to say yes." Stress is rampant.

Rechtschaffen uses two sets of exercises to help us understand his point. Try them right now: First, think of a red balloon.

Next, think of a pink elephant.

Now, pay attention to how long it took to shift from one thought to the next—a fraction of a second. Rechtschaffen's term for this split-second kind of time is "mental time."

Now try his second set of exercises: Feel sad.

Now feel angry.

Now feel rapturously in love.

How long did it take to shift? Rechtschaffen says that if the shift is much slower than with mental time, it is a sign of what he calls "emotional time." Emotional time is not quicktime thinking; it's longtime feeling. Emotional time takes so long, Rechtschaffen explains, because ... feelings can't be conjured up just like that.

Feelings are experienced by way of chemical communication within the body. They are a hormonal surge, a wave that washes over us. It takes "emotional time" for them to emerge. And to adequately deal with real feelings takes more time—so, when we are rushed, it's much easier to habitually go to our mind and repress our feelings.

The mind, with its lightning-quick synapses, seems to get the job done. Feelings just get in the way—and given full rein, we fear they might pull us under and drown us. So when we pause and unpleasant feelings inevitably bob up, we bolt from them—by turning on the TV, eating sugar, making a phone call. Anything to not be in the moment.

Rechtschaffen helps us think about timeshifting as our innate human ability to alter the kind of time in which we live, simply by paying attention to the manner in which we make our way through our life. Do we navigate this moment as mental time or do we navigate this moment as emotional time?

If we resolve to pay attention to the way in which we timeshift and if we also make the commitment to enter into emotional time, then our scientific analysis of time turns into a personal practice. One benefit of this personal practice is stress reduction. Rechtschaffen explains:

Being open to and accepting of our emotions allows us to sit quietly in the present. And then we experience something quite remarkable that is key to living at ease with time: In the present moment there is no stress.

Stress comes from resisting what is actually happening in the moment—and what's usually happening is an emotion, or feeling. Our continued effort to change what is so in this moment is, in fact, the very cause of the stress we wish to avoid. Pain, either emotional or physical, may be present right now, however, it's the resistance to it that causes stress, while acceptance leads to relief. If, for example, you're going through a divorce, a job loss, a painful illness, problems with children, etc., and you don't allow yourself to feel the pain, then the suppressed pain becomes a lens through which you see all of life. And life seen like that holds little but stress.

In small group ministry this personal practice of paying attention, of experiencing stress-free moments with others, is sacred time. Small group ministries are the practice of sacred time, which is why they are transforming our religious landscape.

Congregations Transformed

Five years ago, few churches had small group ministry programs. There has been no formal survey, but anecdotal evidence that reaches me in my role as co-president, with the Rev. Michael McGee, of the Center for Community Values indicates that at least 70 percent of our churches now have them or are making plans. Small group ministries are revitalizing the spiritual life of our congregations.

Small group ministries can affirm and care for congregants in new ways and inspire visitors to return.

Often, pledging goes up and volunteer work expands. The groups can help equip people to create and sustain relational communities where justice, democracy, and human dignity prevail. They can work wonders and transform lives.

These groups usually meet in participants' homes, following a simple two-hour format of an embodied practice such as listening to the sounds in the room or listening to the sound of one's own breath or heartbeat, a check-in, discussion, a check-out, and a closing ritual. In addition, groups often work on community service projects at least once or twice a year.

The Rev. Bob Hill, the UUA's Southwest District executive, characterizes these groups in *The Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry* (Skinner House, 2003) as "saving the world ten at a time." The Rev. Calvin Dame, one of the early Unitarian Universalist leaders in this movement, is now president of the UU Small Group Ministry Network. The Center for Community Values is a nonprofit organization that encourages the development of small relational groups in UU congregations, in other faith traditions, and in business and other secular settings. All of us are spreading the word: Small group ministries heal and transform lives.

The Science

Small group ministries begin with a biological fact: Our bodies matter. They are the way we experience sacred time. I learned this hard lesson several years ago when I accidentally slammed a door on my finger. My finger pulsed with excruciating pain. I did everything I could to ignore the pain. But I was with a friend who, unknowingly, had walked around on a broken leg for three years because her doctors had mistakenly assumed that the source of the problem was elsewhere. So my friend had to learn how to deal with pain—all the time—until her leg injury was, finally, surgically corrected. Now, my friend saw me trying to pay attention to everything except the pain and she said, "Stop."

"Pay attention to the pain," she said. "Concentrate your entire attention on the pain because your body is trying to tell you something. It's signaling distress. Danger. Your body is telling you to get out of harm's way. The pain will decrease as your attention to it increases. Your body wants to make certain you have received the message."

I stopped everything I was doing, gave up all the distractions, and concentrated full attention on the pain so that my body would be fully satisfied that I had received its message of distress. As I did this, quite to my surprise, the pain began to subside. My finger still hurt, but not as much as before because I now felt the rest of me. I was fully present in this moment. My finger was now part of my full life again, and my whole life was wider than this immediate pain. As I discovered and then entered this difference between the immediate pain and the rest of my life, my stress level was reduced. This is

why small group ministry dissolves stress. In our groups, we pay attention to aching souls. And the attention is healing.

As a spiritual practice, small group ministry focuses on process, not problems. It aims to treat all content of a person's life in the same way: as a moment worthy of one's full, undivided attention. It does not aim to offer advice, guidance, and direction or to resolve personal problems. It simply stops time so that the full presence of each person is acknowledged and appreciated in that moment. The idea is not to work on problems. The idea is to share feelings. Each moment is packed full of the joys and sorrows, the victories and defeats, the thoughts and ideas that make each lived moment of our life an experience worthy of our time.

Neurologist Antonio Damasio, in his book *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, calls the source of this feeling of life itself our "background feeling," our sustaining mood that carries us through the ebbs and flows of our life. Here timeshifting ends. We no longer reflect; we experience. We no longer observe; we are.

We are more than our thoughts. We are more than our ideas. We are alive.

The Theology

Fifty years ago, the composer John Cage, wanting to experience absolute silence, entered a small, six-walled, echoless chamber constructed with special soundproofing materials to eliminate all external sound. Once inside the chamber, Cage, quite to his surprise, heard two sounds: one was high pitched, the other was lower. Afterwards, the engineers who constructed the chamber told Cage what he heard: the sound of his own nervous system in operation and the sound of his own blood circulating.

This experience led Cage to conclude, "Until I die, there will be sounds." But Cage went on to draw a second, less obvious conclusion. These sounds, he concluded, "will continue following my death." Cage had discovered a sustaining power that was more than himself alone.

While he was in the chamber, he felt the floor and his shoes and the skin on his feet as they met and altered the pattern of his nervous system. He saw color. The color of the walls and the light patterns in the room altered his retinas and thus his nervous system. He felt the air in the room enter his lungs. The quality and temperature of the air in the room affected his breathing and thus the flow of his blood. He felt all of these things and more.

The two sounds he heard were not only the sounds of his nervous system and blood. Cage heard the way he—all of him—and the world met.

In reflecting upon his experience, Cage described this infinite feeling of being stirred by life itself as a revelation of the universe. His ostensible turn inward had led him

into the very heart of the world. Here's how he put it: "One sees that humanity and nature, not separate, are in this world together; that nothing was lost when everything was given away. In fact, everything is gained."

Two hundred years ago, the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, recognized today as the father of modern liberal theology, used strikingly similar words to describe this "basic feeling for the infinite" in his book *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*:

Observe yourselves with unceasing effort. Detach all that is not yourself, always proceed with ever-sharper sense, and the more you fade from yourself, the clearer will the universe stand forth before you, the more splendidly will you be recompensed for the horror of self-annihilation through the feeling of the infinite.

In Schleiermacher's view, the human foundation of this "feeling for the infinite" is a physical feeling. Each shift of feeling within us is an amplification of the way the world alters us. This shift, this felt sense of being altered by life itself, is the binding principle of our lives, the sustaining power of our life.

Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh invented the word "interbeing" to describe the structure of this binding principle of our lives. In any and every human experience, he tells us in *The Heart of Understanding*, everything is present. Just think of the paper on which his words appear, he suggests. Really look and you will see everything there.

Your mind is in here and mine is also. You cannot point to one thing that is not here—time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. "To be" is to inter-be. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be.

"This sheet of paper is," Nhat Hanh concludes, "because everything else is."

The human experience of interbeing is our experience of an incarnational moment of the universe, as the Rev. David Bumbaugh, my colleague at Meadville Lombard Theological School, has described it. In Bumbaugh's words, we Unitarian Universalists find the "universe continually incarnating itself in microbes and maples, in hummingbirds and human beings, constantly inviting us to tease out the revelation contained in stars and atoms and every living thing." Following from this view, revelation is the lover's tease, the rush of life through us as we, lovers of life, unite.

For Good Reason

So why do we need small group ministries? Why can't we do this work by ourselves? Because it takes a village to sustain a soul. I use an extreme example to make this

small point. The story is recounted by psychoanalyst R. D. Laing during his work with a catatonic schizophrenic patient.

Each day, as Laing made his rounds, he would sit next to the immobile man and say something like: "If my mother had locked me in a closet for all of those years, I wouldn't want to talk to anyone either."

Day in and day out, Laing made such statements to the man and then would move on to his next patient.

And then the day came. Laing sat next to the man, told him he would not want to speak to anyone either, if he had been treated the way this man had been treated by his mother. And the man turned to him and said, "Yeah."

The man had heard another person say to him "You are sad and for good reason." This man had been left alone for so long that his feelings and thoughts had been gutted of content. He had become an abstraction of time, an experience without thoughts, feelings, or an inner life because no one was there with him; no one was there who cared.

In covenant groups, members say to each other, "I am lonely and for good reason," and the group is there with them and says, "Yeah."

Someone says, "I feel sad and for good reason." And the group is there with them and says, "Yeah."

Someone else says, "I need more love, more compassionate engagement, more attentive care—and for good reason." And the group says, "Yeah."

So if someone tells you that they know pain, loneliness, loss, fear, and dismay, but do not know the feeling of being sustained by a love that is wider, deeper, and infinitely vaster than the sorrows, hear those words as a commission.

Hear your commission to love, to create community, and to heal. One at a time in personal relationships, ten at a time in covenant groups, hundreds at a time in our congregations, hundreds of thousands at a time in our religious movement, millions at a time as we take our commission deeper and deeper into humanity's heart as a justice-loving people who will transform the world.

This is the Good News of our faith. The power that sustains our faith turns our small group ministries into spiritual practices that can heal and transform the world.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: COVENANT GROUPS — WHAT THEY ARE AND HOW THEY WORK

Excerpted from *A Covenant Group Source Book*, second edition, revised (The Center for Community Values, 2003).

Covenant Groups

A covenant group is a small relational group made up of six to twelve people who meet regularly to establish and nurture themselves in their own beloved community. Covenant groups provide an opportunity for group members to build strong relationships with each other and with the larger organization of which the small group is a part.

Covenant groups encourage people to talk, learn, work and play together over time. Members may tell their life stories, offer support, and engage in work to serve the larger community. Covenant groups offer expanding opportunities for growth, caring and connection within a congregation. Covenant groups offer caring affiliative networks, mutual responsibility, leadership opportunities, and a way for people to build and strengthen their communities.

In a covenant group, people experience a relational individuality that affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person. People experience themselves and each other as part of the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part. Together, people establish communities that embody the values of justice, democracy and human dignity. Each person is treated equitably. Each has a voice and is heard. And each person is respected for his or her own intrinsic humanity. The defining purpose of a covenant group is to bring people into right relationship with each other and with the larger world.

Covenant Groups: The Pattern

Size: 6-12 members

Meetings: At least once a month, perhaps twice a month or once a week

Format:

- *Opening.* Welcome and statement of group purpose.
 - Reading or ritual that ties the group to its larger organization and transcendent purpose
 - Review of group covenants
- *Check-in.* What, briefly, is going on in your life today?

- *Content.* Experiencing, learning, discussion, planning, action, reflection: It is the group's choice.
- *Check-out.* How is everyone feeling now?
- *Closing.* Ritual which ties the group to its larger organization and transcendent purpose.

Leadership: Leader and co-leader are chosen and trained to facilitate the group's process. Leaders of groups meet together with the minister as a covenant group for ongoing training and support. Area ministers may also form a covenant group.

Covenants:

- Ground rules for the group's relationship and interaction
- Commitment to welcome new members to the group
- Service to congregation and larger world.

Covenant Group Meeting Format

A typical covenant group meeting format is as follows. Each component of the meeting is important to the group's relationship and effectiveness.

- *Opening:*
 - Welcome and Statement of the Purpose of the Group: The welcome and statement of purpose set the stage for the group. The welcome is essential, particularly when the group has new members. The statement of purpose starts everyone off on the same page. This is particularly important when there are new members and in the early stages of the group's development.
 - Ritual: The opening ritual marks the beginning of the group's time together. This ritual ties the group to the larger organization of which it is a part and reminds the group of its transcendent purpose. Ritual exemplifies an embodied spirituality. It is a time for centering and for helping the members make the transition from the busy-ness of daily life to the more intentional and focused activity and discussion of the group. The centering time could be a song, a reading or a prayer. It can be accompanied by a symbolic gesture such as lighting a candle or chalice. If it is effective it will help the members to relax, center, breathe a little deeper and let go of the mundane thoughts with which they have entered the meeting.

- Review of Group Covenants: Particularly in early meetings and whenever new members are present, it is important that the facilitators restate the covenants by which members are agreeing to abide. For these covenants to be meaningful, they need to be remembered and used. It may be helpful to post ground rules at each meeting.
 - Check-In: The check-in is an invitation to each person to state their name and to speak briefly about what of significance they would like to share from their life. Other than saying their name, a person can pass, that is, they need not say anything. The group leader facilitates the check-in by inviting each person in turn to participate. A check-in is not a time for discussion or debate. The benefits of the check-in are many. To be welcoming of newcomers and to help build rapport among members of the group, it is particularly important that old and new members alike introduce themselves. A person who has come to the meeting with particularly pressing news is given an opportunity to speak immediately. Having had the opportunity to share what is pressing on their mind, a participant then is more able to turn their attention to the other business or activities of the group. The physical and emotional states of members may vary and have a strong impact on the dynamics of a particular meeting. In the check-in members can share information on their physical or emotional state at that particular time. This may help to prevent or diffuse problems. For example, a person may be angry because of a problem at work. If the angry person states this, other members are less likely to misunderstand or misattribute the anger. An additional benefit of the check-in is that it may be a catalyst for quiet or reticent members to participate in conversation and discussion. If a person has spoken once, they are more likely to speak again. Conversely, if a person has been sitting silent well into the meeting, it is much harder for them to break into the conversation. With the check-in, everyone gets to speak within the first few minutes of the meeting. This serves as an auditory reminder for the particularly talkative members that the other members present need and deserve time to share their views. The check-in sets a tone for valuing all members and equalizing participation.
 - Content of the Meeting: During the body of the meeting, the group engages in what it has come together to focus on. This is a time for experiencing, learning, discussion, planning, action, reflection, or whatever activity the group has agreed upon. One approach is to generate the agenda for the body of the meeting during the check in, that is, members are invited to state as part of their check in a topic or issue they would like to discuss during that session or the next. The pattern of group meetings might include every fourth meeting a service activity for the church or larger community of which the group is a part.
 - Check-Out: The check-out is an invitation for each member to make a brief concluding statement, usually one or two sentences. This can be a statement of their impression of the meeting, how they are feeling, something they have not yet had a chance to say, or something they do not want to leave hanging. The group leader facilitates the check-out by inviting each member in turn to make a statement. Members have the option to pass. The benefits of the check-out are also many. It gives an indicator to the whole group and to the co-leaders in particular as to how the group is doing. It highlights strengths and gives quick notice of potential problems. It clears the air of items that may be hanging. It gives another opportunity for more quiet people to speak. It helps bring closure to a meeting. It underscores the importance and value of each member.
 - Closing: A closing ritual to mark the end of the group's time together. Like the opening ritual, the closing ties the group to the larger organization of which it is a part and reminds the group of its transcendent purpose. The closing may be a reading, a song, blowing out the candle, an individual or group prayer, or another activity chosen by the group.
- Meeting Frequency:** A covenant group meets at least once a month, perhaps twice a month or even weekly. A group needs to meet often enough that there is continuity from meeting to meeting. If the group meets less than once a month, it will be more difficult for activities and relationships to carry over from meeting to meeting.
- Group Size and Growth Pattern**
- Ideally a covenant group will have between six and twelve members. A group needs to be small enough that each person can speak, be heard and be known. It needs to be large enough to generate energy and provide continuity.
- There are a variety of ways that groups welcome new members and grow. Each group is started with the intention of welcoming new members to the group. Newcomers can be encouraged to attend at least three meetings to see what the group is about. Through this process of newcomers visiting and deciding to become members, the group will grow. As new members come into the group, a group peaks out in size at about ten to twelve members. At that point, new members no longer

continue coming into the group. However, all groups over time experience attrition of old members who leave due to various life circumstances. Each time an old member leaves, this can create an opening in the group into which a new member is welcomed, keeping the group dynamic and vital.

Another strategy for welcoming new members is for a well-established group to birth a new similar group. This is done by a co-facilitator of the first group leaving that group, either temporarily or permanently, to help facilitate and get the new group started.

Yet another method for bringing in new members is for the group to divide when it reaches about twelve members, thus resulting in two groups of about six members each. These two groups are then open to new members to join. In practice this approach can be very challenging. However, when generating new groups is seen from the outset as a part of the covenant group experience, members can anticipate and thus are less stressed by the process.

Regardless of the method used to bring in new members, the key idea is that the groups stay open, dynamic, welcoming and not cliquish or factional. The covenant to welcome new members also means a commitment within the congregation to keep developing new groups.

Covenants

The members of a covenant group, early in the group's formation stage, create and agree to abide by a set of covenants. These covenants are a key part of what distinguishes a covenant group from other kinds of gatherings. The primary covenant will be about how the members agree to be in relationship with each other over time. Together, the group establishes a community in which justice, democracy and human dignity are embodied. Thus, the members agree to abide by a set of ground rules for right relationship.

A second covenant is a commitment to welcome new members to the group. Some groups always have an empty chair at each meeting to symbolize and remind themselves of the new members who are yet to come. The purpose of this covenant is to keep the group connected to the larger congregation and to prevent exclusiveness or factionalism. In practice there are a variety of ways of bringing new members into the group.

A third covenant is an agreement to engage in service to the congregation and larger world on a regular basis. This covenant helps to reinforce the group's connection to the larger organization of which it is a part. It helps group members develop and maintain an external focus, providing opportunities for members to put their values into practice.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: FUTURE DESIGNS FOR AMERICAN LIBERAL THEOLOGY

By the Rev. Dr. Thandeka, originally published in the *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* (January 2009).

Friedrich Schleiermacher gave liberal theology a foundation no one could find. He accomplished this amazing feat by making a neurological fact of consciousness the foundational referent for his new theological system. Schleiermacher called this neural material Affekt [affect] and defined it as the product of stimulated "nerves or whatever else is the first ground and seat of motions in the human body."(1) But the science needed to find this neurological fact of consciousness was established two centuries later.

The results are well known: Modern liberal theology has appeared foundation-less since its inception.(2) With the establishment of affective neuroscience and the publication of its first textbook in 1998,(3) however, the location of liberal theology's foundation was disclosed exactly where Schleiermacher had placed it: outside the theological domain.

The present essay shows how this discovery of liberal theology's foundation by affective neuroscience gives American liberal theology new access to its own foundational design. More precisely, this paper shows how the use of this access point by American liberal theology will produce two results. First, emotional relevance. American liberal theology will be able to reconcile conflicting religious sentiments in an America increasingly defined by Protestants and post-Protestants who "pick and choose" their religious affiliations based on feelings rather than by traditional denominational creeds. (4) Second, collective power. American liberal theology will be able to identify the common ground of the ever-widening diversity within its own academic field and consolidate its power for the common good.

Such is the twofold task of this present essay. As a work in constructive liberal theology, this essay uses historical analysis, neuroscientific insights, and examples taken from contemporary liberal religious studies and the American public square. This essay begins with historical reconstructions of the lost and found story of liberal theology's foundational design.

I.A. Schleiermacher's Design and Its Three Design Problems

Friedrich Schleiermacher designed liberal theology to find and affirm the common ground of faith for the Lutheran and Reformed Protestant traditions in nineteenth-century Prussia.(5) As Schleiermacher noted in his Preface to the second edition of *The Christian Faith*, he sought to clarify the meaning of the

Evangelical Church of Prussia by showing how this Union of these two distinct Protestant traditions did not require "any dogmatic adjustment between the two sides, still less... a new Confession."(6)

To this end, Schleiermacher identified pious feelings rather than creedal claims, church tradition, the Bible, reason, the conscience, or revelation, as their common foundation.(7) Moreover, Schleiermacher established his new theological system as a non-confessional, self-contained academic field of inquiry at the University of Berlin.(8)

But Schleiermacher seemed to make his new, non-confessional, secular, academic discipline dependent upon philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, and psychology for knowledge of its own foundation.(9) He thus seemed to confound his own claim that liberal theology was an independent academic field of inquiry.(10)

Thus a dependency problem came to the fore: Liberal theology, as a self-defined independent academic field, seemed dependent upon secular science for the clarification of its own foundation in human experience.

Moreover, the foundation of liberal theology was obscure to the readers of Schleiermacher's Christian Faith. As noted to his friend Dr. Friedrich Lucke, Schleiermacher had assumed that the non-rational, affective state of self-consciousness foundational to his theological system as well as to his explanation of Christian faith would be immediately self-evident to his readers. It was not. Writes Schleiermacher:

I presumed—and I did not fail to say so—that all would somehow bring along with them in their immediate self-consciousness what was missing [in his text], so that no one would feel short-changed, even though the content was not presented in dogmatic form until later. But all these hints were overlooked because, as I said, many who were interested in the book... did not bring with them anything that they would not receive first from dogmatics. Should I not have rather begun my work with a description of Christian consciousness in its entirety?(11)

This obscurity problem of the foundational reference, when linked to the dependency problem, created a third structural problem for Schleiermacher's new theological system: the problem of self-contradiction.

The complex structure of independence and dependence coupled with the obscurity of its foundational affective reference in human consciousness set off self-contradictory perceptions of Schleiermacher's liberal theology in its reviewers' minds. More precisely, Schleiermacher's liberal theology

appeared to both assert and deny its own independence as an academic field of inquiry. It also seemed to hide this contradiction in non-Christian, emotional obscurity.

And so a barrage of mutually contradictory claims about Schleiermacher, his theology, and its foundation followed. Schleiermacher's work was called self-contradictory, a reintroduction of paganism, a system perfectly compatible with the papal system of the Roman church, and a venture that made faith in God inconsistent with Schleiermacher's own position.(12) Moreover, Schleiermacher, himself, was called a Gnostic, an Alexandrian, a proponent of monastic morality, a Cyrenian, someone influenced by Schelling, or by Jacobi.(13)

Two centuries later, the barrage of conflicting claims about Schleiermacher's theological project continues.(14) Modern and contemporary scholars, as Ulrich Barth's survey reveals, believe Schleiermacher's explanation of the foundation of his theological claims and its reference to Christian doctrine is basically adequate (Friedrich Wilhelm Gess); psychological (Christoph von Sigwart); pantheistic (Wilhelm Bender); ontological (Martin E. Miller); a specific mode of time-consciousness (Hans-Richard Reuter); the basis for interpreting religion as mystical, anti-moral and anti-intellectual (Emil Brunner); the basis for a system of aesthetics as the process of an ethical activity (Rudolf Odebrecht); inadequate as the basis for a philosophic doctrine of art (Edmund Husserl); platonic (Bernard Tidt); Kantian (Wilhelm Dilthey); Fichtean (Immanuel Hermann Fichte); Spinozistic and Schellingian (Christoph von Sigwart); or Jacobian (Eilert Herms).(15)

This is the modern context from which postmodern atheological studies emerged proclaiming "the ineradicable duplicity of knowledge, shiftiness of truth, and undecidability of value."(16) This is also the context in which women began to notice what all of the disparate claims about liberal theology's foundation had in common: men. Thanks to the professionalism of theology in the 19th-century spearheaded by Schleiermacher, "scientific" theology had assumed the nature of an academic guild that excluded women(17) and analyzed the human condition from the point of view of men.(18) From these insights about liberal theology's male formulations, feminist theology arose as "advocacy theology"(19) for the liberation of women from the vested, androcentric interests of men. Add to this the racial, ethnic, class, and gender issues linked to the exclusion of others from the original "guild"; late 20th-century American liberal theology did not search for its original foundation but created new foundations rooted in self-defined advocacy interests and issues. Liberal theology in America was thus prodigious in its creation of offspring: postliberal and postcolonial theologies, gender, racial, and ethnically defined identity-based theologies, and more.(20)

Garry Dorrien has documented this modern context in fine detail. The main achievement of American liberal theology toward the end of the 20th century, Dorrien observes, was diversity. And as American liberal theology became progressively "more liberationist, feminist, environmentalist, multiculturalist, and postmodernist," Dorrien concludes, the contested pronouncements of these contested theologies revealed the present impossibility of American liberal theology claiming for itself an uncontested foundation of and for liberal Christian theological studies as a secular, academic field of inquiry.(21) The requirements for academic membership in these respective theological guilds also created a gap, as Carter Heyward at Episcopal Divinity School observed, between the theological studies of students in the progressive seminaries spawned by liberal theology's heirs and the ability of these students upon graduation to communicate with the congregations they were hired to serve. As Heyward pointedly puts it, the students "spoke of transgressing religious and cultural boundaries while American politics and religion moved to the right."(22) Seminaries, theology schools, and religious studies programs became progressive collections of interest groups without a shared foundational ground.

This is a story of American liberal theology linked inextricably to three basic structural problems that made it seem as if liberal theology, from its inception, was congenitally flawed. The solution to this problem was either to abandon the search for a foundation or to establish one linked to specific interests. In this way, the secular academic field of liberal theology increasingly resembled any other "disciplinary community," in which professors were not "subject to any motive other than their own scientific conscience and a desire for the respect of their fellow-experts."(23)

A measurement problem also arose. The measuring rod used by many of liberal theology's 19th-century Protestant evaluators judged Schleiermacher's system by the standard from which he had intentionally discharged it of duties: the doctrines of human nature formulated by Martin Luther or John Calvin. Both of these Reformers included their doctrine of human nature within their theological systems. Their use of conscience was the lynchpin here.(24) In contrast, Schleiermacher established liberal theology's foundation (i.e., its doctrine of human nature) outside his theological system. His liberal theology's human foundation was not part of his theological structure. The importance of this difference cannot be over-emphasized.

Unlike the use of conscience by Luther and Calvin, Schleiermacher did not make Affekt an innate religious capacity implanted in human nature by God as a link between God and human beings. Rather, Affekt, in Schleiermacher's system, is an aspect of human nature that can be determined piously but is not in itself pious. It is simply a neurological impulse.

I.B. Affekt — Schleiermacher's Neurological Fact of Consciousness, Historically Reconsidered

Schleiermacher tried to bring religion back to its emotional senses by making the foundation of his new theological system a neurological fact of consciousness: Affekt.(25) The rational theology of Kant (among others) made Reason the organizing principle of religious experience. Left out of this rational, Enlightenment scheme of religion were human feelings of joy, regeneration, and celebration as foundational affective material for religious life and thought. Schleiermacher retrieved these feelings through his doctrine of human affections, which can also be called the foundational level of his doctrine of the human soul.(26) He did not want to replace Kant's system. He wanted to fix it, give balance to it, by establishing reason and physical, emotional feelings as both worthy constituents of human nature and religious experience.(27)

Moreover, Schleiermacher made a division within emotional feelings. An example highlights this distinction.

Imagine two persons who have just experienced the same shocking event and as a result anger is triggered within them. Both persons display the same initial spontaneous movements: their jaw muscles tighten; their eyes bulge; and their lips turn downward. But there the similarities end because of the ways the two persons immediately handle their triggered anger. One person has an emotional volatile personality and begins to rant and rave, flailing arms, shouting, and punching at the air. The other person tends toward emotional quiescence so the anger does not peak with a bang but ends with a whimper, a sigh of sadness, and a tear of remorse.

The point of this example is that there is a difference between (1) the triggered anger with its spontaneous somatic displays (the facial expressions, etc.) by the two persons, and (2) the way the anger was then handled by their respective dominant and pervasive emotional dispositions.(28)

Schleiermacher noted this difference. Moreover, he used two different German terms to describe it: Affekt and Gefühl. He called the stirred up impulse with its spontaneous physical expressions—affekt, and the overarching dispositional emotional state that modified the physical experience and determined its emotional valence—feeling [Gefühl].

According to Schleiermacher, affects are the ways in which a shift in disposition is first noted in the body. This shift is first felt like a clenched jaw or a downturn of the lips, or a heartbeat quickened. Unlike other philosophers and affect theorists in his own era, Schleiermacher accordingly described affect as a physical, neurological process rather than as a strictly disembodied mental/spiritual state.(29)

Moreover, how this affective state is transformed into a motive for action, Schleiermacher argued, is determined by feeling. Schleiermacher designed his new theological system to take note of how one particular kind of feeling—pious feeling [Frommigkeit]—is created within individuals and communities. Pious feeling, Schleiermacher argued, is the essential element of faith of a particular religious community. (30) For Christians, the common element, according to Schleiermacher, is the feeling of redemption wrought by Jesus of Nazareth. Schleiermacher designed his theological system to study how triggered impulses (affects) are handled piously and expressed piously through ideas, actions, and speech. (31)

All pious feelings are thus, for Schleiermacher, culturally determined. Their affective ground, however, is not culturally determined. Culture can determine, for example, if an anger system of the brain is triggered, but biology and culture are not the same in Schleiermacher's scheme. Culture entrains that which precedes the acculturation process: affect. Affect is a neural fact of consciousness. Pious feeling mediates and modifies triggered affect. Pious feelings are a creation of a religious community and thus a cultural creation of human experiences in the world. This is why Schleiermacher claimed that any positive religious pronouncement always entails anthropomorphic claims: they pertain to human self-consciousness linked to experiences in the world.(32) Christian doctrine, in Schleiermacher's system, always pertains to propositions that can be related back to piously determined affections.(33)

By referring to the pious determination of Affekt as Gefühl, Schleiermacher thus made a fundamental distinction between a pious feeling (Gefühl) and a-religious, material ground as a neurological shift in self-consciousness. In short, an affect.(34) Accordingly, Schleiermacher identified Affekt as the physical, material locus of immediate self-consciousness. The term immediate self-consciousness thus refers to a fundamental structural device: an affective shift in consciousness. The immediate awareness of this altered state of consciousness (i.e., the shift) is itself the felt affect. It is a peaked affective state within the organism. The unmediated awareness of this affective state (affective consciousness) is the experience of personal coherence of the self, affectively felt, and it functions as the transition point from one determinate moment of rational consciousness to the next.(35)

Affect, in Schleiermacher's theological system, became bedrock for faith. Affect, however, was not a faith state per se. It was the neurological foundation of a faith state, i.e., the neurophysical material organized into a pious affection. Schleiermacher thus turned modern liberal theology into a rational study of human affect piously determined, expressed, and organized. But he assigned the investigation of the neural foundation of this

foundational theological reference to ethics, psychology, philosophy, and aesthetics.

The investigation of affect was thus not something his liberal theology depended upon. Rather, it was something his theological system required knowledge of if it wanted to understand the emotional foundation of piety, and thus the primal human ground of the material referent for theology's own reasoned reflections.(36)

Accordingly, when Schleiermacher made affect the foundational referent for liberal theological inquiry, he established his new academic discipline, at birth, as an interdependent field. He gave this new theological system its own distinct terrain: the investigation of the pious determinations of affect within a religious community's historical tradition. The dependency problem, from this perspective, was not a problem within Schleiermacher's original design: it was a problem for those who could not find the foundation where they looked for it (within his system) or for those who did not know what to look for (affective neurological states of self-consciousness). Moreover, when the interdependency of Schleiermacher's new system was not understood or acknowledged, Schleiermacher's liberal theology appeared obscure and self-contradictory by design. Schleiermacher's foundation of liberal theology was thus not ill-conceived; it was not perceived.

Moreover, Schleiermacher's liberal theology, by design, was a "positive" science: an empirical, culturally informed, historical science.(37) Accordingly, it had to reconcile absolute truth claims about God found within the Christian tradition with the academic protocol that all human pronouncements are relative, historical claims. Without a method for reconciling the absolute claims of faith with the relative perspectives of the academy, liberal theology lacked a "fundamental methodological integrity" and became structurally disoriented. This is Gerhard Spiegler's point, after reviewing the field of liberal theologies in the late 1960s. As he put it:

Disorientation in theology today suggests nothing less than that theology itself is in question. It is no longer any one theological point which is at issue but the point of theology: that is, its fundamental methodological integrity. Consequently, efforts to dispel theological disorientation can no longer presuppose a clear and distinct understanding of theology, for it is precisely the self-identity of theology which is in doubt. The confusion of contemporary theology is self-confusion, expressed in the shape of methodological chaos and uncertainty; and the task of confronting theology is the task of critical self-understanding.(38)

A major source of this problem of "theological disorientation" as Spiegler notes in the above citation was indeed a self-confusion expressed in the shape of

methodological chaos. The "self-confusion" was a foundation problem.

Schleiermacher knew that the primal affective states (e.g., rage, joy, anger, fear) are not relative. He also knew that the ways these states are determined and expressed are relative to the cultural and social environment in which they are acculturated. Accordingly, Schleiermacher turned the primal affective states into the non-relative foundation of liberal theology. And he made the way these neurological states are determined as "pious," the empirical, culturally-linked relative foundation of theology. His liberal theology was thus a cultural theology, but the foundation upon which it rested was not cultural. Critical self-understanding of the difference between piety and its affective foundation, as Schleiermacher discovered, was lacking among his readers.(39) So Schleiermacher's original foundation went unseen and with it a solid ground upon which to build a viable theological method for the entire academic field lacked structural integrity.

Two centuries elapsed before a neuroscientific field was created adequate to the task of disclosing for liberal theology its own, non-relative, affective foundation.

II. Affective Neuroscience Investigates Affect and Thereby the Foundation of Schleiermacher's Liberal Theology

Jaak Panksepp did not create affective neuroscience or write its first textbook in order to help liberal theologians discover the foundation of their own field. Rather, he created it to show his own neuroscientific colleagues what they repeatedly overlooked: the affective foundations of human and animal emotions. He wanted to counter the regnant belief among brain scientists and philosophers that the subjective, affective experiences of human beings were "an impenetrable mystery to science."(40)

To study the non-rational, affective states of consciousness, Panksepp concluded, scientists simply have to enter the subcortical realm of emotional feelings,(41) the areas schematized as the lower two portions of the human "triune brain." And this is exactly where Jaak Panksepp went.

Accordingly, Panksepp's attention turned to the oldest and innermost core of the brain, the area Paul MacLean's model refers to as "the reptilian brain, or the basal ganglia or extrapyra-midal motor system."(42) This is the realm, as Panksepp demonstrates, in which fear, anger, and sexuality neural circuitry are linked to core motor movements to ensure survival. The next layer of the brain in this triune schematic is the limbic system also referred to as the visceral system. Here, as Panksepp notes, "the various social emotions [are found,] including maternal acceptance and care, social bonding, separation distress, and rough-and tumble play." These two regions, as Panksepp observed, "are similarly organized in all mammals."

Around these two regions, in evolutionary terms, the newest and highest level of the brain is found: the neomammalian brain, also referred to as the neocortex. Unlike the subcortical layers, the neocortex "is not a fundamental neural substrate for the generation of affective experience."(43) Accordingly, to study the emotional operating systems of the brain and the ways in which these systems are affectively amplified into conscious but non-conceptual awareness, Panksepp studies these two lower regions of the human brain that produce feelings rather than thoughts.(44)

Panksepp codified these affective states, i.e., the links between what goes on within the brain and how it shows up in the body and the mind. Affective neuropsychologist and theorist Douglas F. Watt calls his work with Panksepp on identifying these categories "a basic taxonomy of emotion."(45) Drawing upon insights from thousands of research studies by scientists and psychologists engaged in affective studies, and also producing more than 300 published papers on his own original research in this field, Panksepp created a brain science that goes from the stem of the brain upward rather than from the neocortex downward.(46)

Panksepp found three basic types of affect: (1) affect that make us aware of the internal state of our body (e.g., hunger or fatigue); (2) affect that makes us aware of the type of emotional system that has been triggered and thus aroused (e.g., the awareness of being enraged); (3) affect that makes us aware as commentary on bodily sensations (e.g. tactile and visual stimulation from sources exterior to the body).(47)

These affective commentaries on our sensations, emotions, and internal muscular and anatomical shifts, Panksepp concluded, are the way we initially, consciously but non-conceptually, take note or become aware of what has just happened to our body. This awareness is indeed a state of consciousness, defined here functionally as the "bare awareness of 'something.'" (48)

Referring to affects as "pre-propositional feelings," Panksepp found that they alert us, not through ideas, but through a felt sense of life—called affective consciousness—about how we are faring in the world, within ourselves, and with others at the somatic level of our lives.(49) To be sure, Panksepp argues, these affective triggerings can be mediated by rational consideration as well as through dream work on alternative ways of responding behaviorally to the triggered feelings.(50) Nevertheless, they are a way in which the brain neurologically assesses the surrounding environment in order to make affective judgments, links to motor movements that dictate approach or retreat, seeking, rage, fear, play, lust or other neurochemical systems constructed as physical value judgments that prompt actions by the organism in its exterior environment, its world.

These genetically predetermined, trans-species feeling systems resonate as internal attention-getters, -stoppers, and -sustainers. They move human bodies to act before belief and rational reflection set in.

Moreover, Panksepp found primal affective links to social behavior. Biology is not necessarily destiny, Panksepp concluded, because, as he puts it, we do have the ability to make cognitive choices. But our neurobiology qualifies our destiny affectively. If, for example, the underlying groups of molecular structures produced by the brain that create our affective feelings of social solidarity, acceptance, nurturance, and love are compromised, our affective bonds with others will "probably remain shallow and without emotional intensity."(51) His findings concur with other recent brain investigations showing that "social bonding is rooted in various brain chemistries that are normally activated by friendly and supportive forms of social interaction."(52)

These investigations revealed the role of affect in the creation of social bonds and the material content of what Schleiermacher called the human soul. It is here that the foundation of liberal theology is found and affirmed by affective neuroscience and its related fields in two basic ways.

First, affect as foundational for the creation of community. Affect, as Schleiermacher insisted, is foundational to religious community. Pious communities, he said, are created by the reproduction of affective states, "by means of facial expressions, gestures, tones, and (indirectly) words" such that the contagion(53) of collective affective displays becomes for others not only a revelation of the inward as foundational for religious community, but also creates and maintains pious communities through affective consciousness as an emotional "consciousness of kind."(54)

Schleiermacher's fundamental claim here about "consciousness of kind" makes affects a foundational material enabling the creation and maintaining of community. Affective neuroscience and its related fields confirm Schleiermacher's claim that the foundational material here is shared affect.

For Panksepp, consciousness of kind begins affectively. It is our "internal biological logic," and it pertains to our "emotional minds." Our emotional minds create our desire to express our deeply social nature to other human beings, Panksepp suggests, "especially those with whom we share attachment bonds, and to mutually glory in the kinds of deeply feeling creatures that we are."(55) Consciousness of kind thus entails an acculturation process. Clinical psychoanalyst and theorist John E. Gedo, who uses insights from Panksepp's work, calls this acculturation process a "cybernetic loop between infant and caretaker."(56) It pertains to the central nervous system of the infant and the caretaker as a dyad, Gedo observes. The unity of the self is thus a collaborative achievement.(57) Schleiermacher agrees.

As Schleiermacher succinctly put it, "We never do exist except along with another." Human consciousness, Schleiermacher insisted, always entails the co-existence of an Other whose affective signals we have first received. Schleiermacher made this "cybernetic loop" foundational to the creation and sustaining of religious community.

Second, affect as the neural content of the soul. Schleiermacher, as noted above, called the study of the core affective level of human consciousness a study of the material impulses of the human soul.(58) Panksepp makes a strikingly similar claim.

At the foundational level of consciousness, Panksepp suggests, we are aware of "our ineffable sense of being alive and an active agent in the world."(59) Panksepp describes this ineffable sense as the "primordial self-schema" or "self-representation," and refers to "it" using the acronym, the "SELF—A Simple Ego-type Life Form"—to refer to this primordial structure of agency found "deep within the brain."(60)

Moreover, as Panksepp suggests, this foundational fact of non-rational, affective conscious awareness can be thought about as a "core self"—or even as a soul. Perhaps it is now appropriate, Panksepp suggests, to "entertain neuro-psychological conceptions of human and animal 'souls'"(61) Panksepp calls this primal material "a subcortical viscero-somatic homunculus,"(62) a SELF, and a soul. Here, Panksepp and Schleiermacher meet.

Neurologist Antonio Damasio also investigates this primal, affective level of human experience. He, too, talks about a self—a "proto-self"—where consciousness begins. Moreover, Damasio affirms here Panksepp's own work on the link between the body and the self "by means of an innate representation of the body in the brain stem."(63) Damasio concludes that neither the mind nor the soul can be adequately discussed today without attending to a neurological analysis of the subcortical structures of consciousness.(64) Here, Damasio and Schleiermacher meet.

More broadly, Panksepp suggests that the analysis of affect is challenging regnant Western religious claims about the nature of the human soul and the human spirit as strictly rational entities. The human soul and the human spirit, like all other mammalian experiences, Panksepp insists, have neurological characteristics, constraints, and histories, and so they must no longer be described as disembodied, rational, emotion-less entities.(65) If the human soul and the human spirit are human experiences, Panksepp is asserting here, then they have to have human characteristics—and the foundations of such characteristics are neurological, affective states.

Panksepp is affirming basic claims made by Schleiermacher here without ever mentioning Schleiermacher's name. And similarly to

Schleiermacher, Panksepp's claims are not proffered as theological claims or as creedal belief. Rather, they are presented as a neurological aspect of human consciousness that can be investigated by neuroscience.

In sum, affective neuroscience goes down under concepts, below doctrines and creeds, and investigates the ineffable sense of being alive. For Schleiermacher, this affective sense is not religion, but its inception: the "natal hour of everything living in religion."(66) Schleiermacher did not make this sense the content of his theology. He made it the foundation of his theology. To reiterate, affective neuroscience found and affirmed this affective, ineffable sense exactly where Schleiermacher placed it: outside the theological domain.

III. The Future of American Liberal Theology

Affective neuroscience has revealed the cogency of original claims by Schleiermacher about liberal theology's affective foundation. American liberal theology can reveal the promise of Schleiermacher's original insights for its own future in the following way. Familiarity of American liberal theologians with affective neuroscience and its related fields can give American liberal theology access to insights needed to distinguish shifting primal affective states from the ways in which they are being culturally determined as religious states of faith. This promise is a design program, a methodology, with structural integrity for doing American liberal theology in the 21st century.

This design program for American liberal theology enables three basic steps: (1) paying attention to affective shifts in human experience, (2) noting the ways in which these shifts are handled emotionally as pious(67) states of self-consciousness, and (3) studying these pious states and the faith pronouncements linked to them as emotional and rational expressions of a particular religious community's faith tradition (e.g., historical traditions and contemporary modifications of them, symbol systems, sacred texts, cultic practices, particular individual and communal variants within particular communities based on race, gender, class and other identity factors, etc.). Such a threefold methodology, which can be called affect theology, can give American liberal theology a viable future in two basic ways.

First, emotional relevance. America needs a liberal theological system conversant with primal emotions and how they get culturally determined as states of faith, i.e., pious feelings. This is the case because more and more Protestant and post-Protestant Americans, as noted earlier, now "pick and choose" their religious affiliations.(68) These choices are based on immediate personal needs rather than on long-term product loyalty to particular doctrines, creeds, and institutional affiliation. This seems an obvious conclusion of the survey of 35,000 Americans about their religious life

conducted and published by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in February 2008. The Report, titled "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey," found that:

More than one-quarter of American adults have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion or no religion at all.

- 44% of adults have switched their religious affiliation.
- A third of all Protestants do not define their religion by a denomination—an administrative structure characterized by particular doctrines and practices (e.g., the Southern Baptist Convention or the United Church of Christ).
- 16% of American adults define themselves as religiously unaffiliated.

In this "winners" and "losers" religious marketplace, all groups, the survey concludes, are both gaining and losing individual adherents. But the emotional turmoil linked to these structural changes in America's "religious marketplace" is not disclosed in this Report.

American liberal theology as a liberal theology is designed not only to adjudicate shifting human emotions that get defined by faith, but also to do this without eliding the doctrinal and liturgical differences linked to them. But presently, the legacy of the foundation problem within liberal religion has prevented American liberals informed by this liberal tradition and its Enlightenment context from seeing the affective foundation of religious beliefs. Rather, affective states, religious feelings, and creedal beliefs have been conflated and discussed as if all three can be assessed similarly as scientifically sound or unsound ideas.

A case in point: Garry Wills' 2004 post-election essay, "The Day the Enlightenment Went Out."(69) Bemoaning Senator John Kerry's loss of the presidential election to George W. Bush, Wills asked rhetorically: "Can a people that believes more fervently in the Virgin Birth than in evolution still be called an Enlightened nation?" His answer was a resounding "No."(70)

Wills's own list of "Enlightenment values" left out one of them: religious emotions. Daniel E. Ritchie, director of the humanities program at Bethel University, pointed out this oversight in his letter-to-the-editor.(71) The actual American Enlightenment, Ritchie argued, "was neither antireligious nor anticlerical." Nor was it "a triumph of conservative religious belief over reason and facts." Political liberty and religious practice were inseparable, Ritchie insisted.

After correcting Wills's record of Enlightenment values, Ritchie then offered liberals advice from the heart—"the heart of an evangelical university with a strongly pro-Bush student body." Liberals, Ritchie said, need to take religion to heart. In Ritchie's words: "America's elites must... come to understand American religion, past and

present, more deeply. Until they do, they will continue to create the polarization they lament."

Conservative historian Gertrude Himmelfarb also makes a similar point when calling attention to the lost (to liberals) emotions that form the foundation of the liberal Enlightenment faith in reason. In her book, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenment*,(72) Himmelfarb not only shows fellow conservatives the feelings liberals lost sight of, but also stakes out this lost emotional terrain as conservative turf. Do not turn away from the "driving force of the eighteenth-century British Enlightenment" because it is a foundation of American liberalism, Himmelfarb pleads to her colleagues. Just add what the liberals usually leave out: the social emotions, which she calls the "social virtues" and the "social affections." This traditional emotional ground of liberal faith is now conservative terrain.(73)

American liberal theology, with insights from affective neuroscience and its related fields, can now reclaim and update knowledge of its own lost affective terrain. By so doing, it will have an affective vocabulary, one that can speak to affective states such as anxiety, rage, fear, and terror common to Americans who come from distinct and often conflicting religious traditions, without dismissing or demeaning the religious creeds and beliefs linked to them.(74) By affirming this common affective ground, persons from disparate religious traditions might have a place to stand together because their foundational affective worries, wishes, desires, and fears have been acknowledged rather than demeaned or set aside.

Second, collective power. American liberal theology will gain the ability to gather its diversity together for coordinated, collective projects. This will happen as religious studies scholars, theologians, ethicists, and theorists from disparate fields of study along with clergy and other ecclesiastical and organizational leaders note what they already have in common: shared interests in affective experiences. This kind of "affect theology," as constructive theologian Jennifer Jesse rightly notes, "could effectively help bridge the gap between the academy and the church—a gap that poses a significant roadblock to any future designs in the liberal traditions." (75) Insights from affective neuroscience and its related fields enhance the ability to see this shared affective ground.

Consider the possibilities when scholars as diverse as the three listed below are brought together to talk about that which already links their diverse interests: studies on affective experiences.

1. William A. Graham, who is Dean of Harvard Divinity School, Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, and John Lord O'Brian Professor of Divinity, lifts up what he calls "the affective realm of religious life" and the "sensual" aspects of religious life" in his work. To this end, Graham explains his intended use of the

term "sensual." The importance of his insight is worth quoting at length:

I use the word not so much to refer in a technical way to the five senses, but rather to suggest that seeing, hearing, and touching in particular are essential elements in religious life as we can observe it . . . A sacred text can be read laboriously in silent study, chanted or sung in unthinking repetition, copied or illuminated in loving devotion, imaginatively depicted in art or drama, solemnly processed in ritual pageantry, or devoutly touched in hope of luck and blessing. In each instance, in very diverse and not always predictable but still very real ways, such contact with scripture can elicit in reader, hearer, onlooker, or worshiper diverse responses: a surge of joy or sorrow; a feeling of belonging or even of alienation; a sense of guidance or consolation (or the want of either); or a feeling of intimacy with the awesome distance from the divine. These kinds of religious responses are important to an adequate understanding of what it means to encounter a text as scripture. Such aspects are difficult, perhaps finally impossible, for the scholar to get at in any systematic way, but to ignore them entirely is to omit a substantial portion of their reality. Ideally, our knowledge of the textual history, doctrinal interpretation, ritual and devotional use, and political and social roles of a scriptural book should be joined to an awareness of these sensual elements in the response of the faithful to their sacred text. Only in this way can our understanding of scripture as a relational phenomenon begin to be adequate.(76)

Graham is talking about affect—that surge of joy or sorrow; that feeling of belonging or even of alienation; that sense of guidance or consolation (or the want of either); that feeling of intimacy. Graham calls these affective states experiences beyond words. They are the affective foundation for faith. And because, as Graham puts it, "every historical tradition is unique," these affective displays prompted by "multisensory, and sometimes synaesthetic experience of communal worship . . . will present different problems and require different formulation of common questions.(77) These different formulations delineate diverse perspectives on the same affective phenomena: the affective foundation of the religious claims.

2. Emilie M. Townes, who is President of the American Academy of Religion, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of African American Religion and Theology at Yale Divinity School, focuses on affective care.(78) Townes uses the term "an ethic of care" to describe the kinds of liberative feelings that produce the work of care and she shows her readers how to link the practices and principles theologically through praxis. Attention to these feelings

entails affective study. Townes affirms the importance of social context for this work in her book *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and AWomanist Ethic of Care.*(79) She does this within the affective context of care.

The centrality of emotion in her work on ethics is made dramatically evident in the opening paragraphs of her Introduction to *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation and Transformation.* The power of her story requires direct quote rather than summary. And so she begins:

As I sit writing the introduction to this anthology, I do so in my mother's hospital room waiting for her to return from surgery. There is a myriad of emotions welling up, but the one that I find returning again and again is hope . . .

I am hopeful that Mom's surgery will go well and that the test results will come back negative. This will be good news for our family. Yet this hope that I have is indescribably ultimate. I can point to it, I can even walk around in it and be comforted by it, but I cannot convey to you the reader how it is holding me in a place of calm, of peace.

Such is the hope that the contributors to this anthology try to describe. It is often yoked, as we have done, with notions of salvation and transformation.(80)

Townes's recognition of the way in which emotions get linked to religious notions of salvation and transformation lies at the heart and soul of the liberal theological project. This tradition begins with shifting affective states (emotions) and reflects upon them through the theological lens of the doctrinal claims and pious feelings linked to them.

3. John Cobb Jr., who is professor emeritus at the Claremont School of Theology and the Claremont Graduate University, and who is also one of the preeminent theologians of our era, a founder to process studies and a foremost scholar in transdisciplinary process thought,(81) suggests that Alfred North Whitehead's system could be thought of as a "philosophy of emotion.(82)

As Cobb notes, based on more than 50 years of evaluating, using, and emending the work of Whitehead, both he and Whitehead affirm that the major events they analyze as constituent processes within human experience have locus points within the human brain.(83) Moreover, as Cobb suggests, all of the various types of feelings from both the mental and physical poles of experience are accompanied by an "emotional tone," which Whitehead called the "subjective forms" of the "prehensions that are the experiences of the entities in question.(84) Nevertheless, as Cobb notes, there is a chasm between the human brain and conscious human perception, which must be explored. Can insights from affective neuroscience help fill this

gap? As Cobb noted in response to this query, the use of affective neuroscience:

... is a whole new field that goes a long way to bridge the gap between the objective and the subjective and to provide the kind of information that can give life to general ideas. I like the idea of using "affect" to designate the most elemental "emotions," since the latter word connotes something that is hard to generalize to purely bodily events. I think "affect" comes close to what Whitehead means by "subjective form." (85)

Much more work, Cobb concludes, is needed to test how well the translations from Whitehead to affective neuroscience will work. "But there can be here a genuinely helpful conversation partner." This work goes on now.(86)

Thanks to affective neuroscience and its related fields, American liberal theology now has a place to stand in order to discern and affirm the common ground of fields as distinct as the three examples presented above.(87) As made evident by these three examples, the respective interests in affective studies link the history of religions, womanist ethics, and process studies to a common ground, which is the affective foundation of liberal theology. This universal foundation within human experience can now finally function as it was designed to function in liberal theology from its inception: as the "historical and theoretical touchstone for all progressive theologies" and their future.(88)

Such collective work can create multidisciplinary links to the disciplinary divisions within the American liberal theological tradition and within its divinity schools and religious studies departments. This collective work can give American liberal theology its designs as a multidimensional field of study rather than a field defined increasingly by individual interests.(89)

The future designs of American liberal theology begin here. Indeed, they have already begun.

ENDNOTES

Special thanks to Dr. Bernadette Brooten and the Rev. Constance L. Grant for their critical reviews, extraordinarily helpful comments, and editorial advice regarding earlier drafts of this manuscript.

(1) Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Freedom*, trans. Albert L. Blackwell (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992,) 131.

(2) The origin of the foundation problem in liberal religion is described as Schleiermacher's misbegotten attempt to define "the real essence of religion." Wayne Proudfoot highlights this standard view of Schleiermacher's project in *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Schleiermacher failed in his attempt because as Proudfoot puts it, "There is no such

essence to capture" (179). Schleiermacher, Proudfoot insists, confused experience with description:

Schleiermacher's insistence on the immediacy of religious experience is descriptively accurate, but it is theoretically inadequate... The experience seems to the subject to be immediate and noninferential, but it is not independent of concepts, beliefs, and practices. This confusion between the phenomenological and theoretical senses of immediate is central to Schleiermacher's program and is important for understanding contemporary religious thought and the study of religion (3).

(3) Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

(4) Luis Lugo, Sandra Stencel, John Green, Gregory Smith, Dan Cox, Allison Pond, Tracy Miller, Elizabeth Podrebarac, Michelle Ralston, Hilary Ramp, Andrew Kohut, Paul Taylor, and Scott Keeter, U.S Religious Landscape Survey, Religious Beliefs and Practices: Diverse and Politically Relevant. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. <http://religions.pewforum.org/>, 22 (accessed February 25, 2008).

(5) Friedrich Schleiermacher, Author's Preface to the Second Edition, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and James Stuart Stewart (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1928. Reprint, with a forward by B. A. Gerrish, 1999), xiii-xiv; *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsatzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt* (1830-31), ed. Rolf Schafer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 3-4. The German edition is subsequently referred to as KGA 1.13 in this essay.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid. Proposition 3.4.

(8) As Terrence Tice and Edwina Lawler have persuasively argued, "Schleiermacher deserves to be regarded with [Wilhelm] von Humboldt as the co-founder of the University of Berlin." Not only did Schleiermacher establish "the theology faculty—which he claimed must be as rigorously scientific in its work as any other while, like law, serving "positive" aims [he also] served in a series of relatively ancillary but powerful positions over all of these years—roughly 1807 to 1816" in the creation of this university. Schleiermacher's own induction into the University of Berlin occurred on May 10, 1810. Terrence Tice with Edwina Lawler, Preface to *Friedrich Schleiermacher's text, Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German Sense with an Appendix Regarding a University Soon to be Established* (Lewiston, PA: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), ii. Thomas Albert Howard, in his remarkable book, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), makes a similar point when noting that

Schleiermacher's "models of university and theology helped establish the institutional conditions for renewed legitimization and 'scientification' ... of theology in the nineteenth century—though the process provoked strong reactions from those less sanguine about the marriage of theology and science" (133).

(9) Thandeka, "Schleiermacher's Affekt Theology," *The International Journal of Practical Theology*, Vol. 9 (2005), 197-216.

(10) Karl Barth made this point forcefully when questioning the appropriateness of a theology as an academic science in a secular university, in his 1922 address, "The Word of God and the Task of Religion," stating: It is the paradoxical but undeniable truth that as a science like other sciences theology has no right to its place: for it becomes then a wholly unnecessary duplication of the disciplines of knowledge belonging to the other faculties. Only when a theological faculty undertakes to say, or at least points out the need for saying, what the others ... dare not say, or dare not say aloud, only when it keeps reminding them that a chaos, though wonderful, is not a cosmos, only when it is a question mark and an exclamation point at the outmost edge of scientific possibility—or rather, in contrast to the philosophical faculty, beyond the outermost edge—only then is there a reason for it." "Das Wort Gottes als Aufgabe der Theologie," in Karl Barth, *Vortrage und kleinere Arbeiten, 1922-1925*, 155-57. This passage is cited and translated by Howard, in his book Protestant Theology, 412-13.

(11) Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr. Lucke*, trans. James Duke and Francis Fiorenza (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 57. Emphasis added. See also Thandeka, *The Embodied Self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Solution to Kant's Problem of the Empirical Self* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 8-9.

(12) Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre*, 34-35.

(13) Ibid., 36.

(14) Ulrich Barth, *Christentum und Selbstbewußtsein* (Gottingen: Vandenhock Ruprecht, 1983), 7-27.

(15) This paragraph is taken from the present author's book, *The Embodied Self*, 9.

(16) Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern Autotheology* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1984), 16.

(17) Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton, "General Introduction," in *Feminism and Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

(18) Ibid. As the authors note, this conclusion was reached by Valerie Saiving Goldstein in her article, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *Journal of Religion* 40 (April 1960), 100-12.

(19) Soskice and Lipton, 6.

(20) Gary Dorrien, "Introduction," *The Making of American Liberal Theology: 1950-2005* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1-8.

(21) Ibid.

(22) Ibid., 529. See Carter Heyward, "We're Here, We're Queer: Teaching Sex in Seminary," in *Body and Soul: Rethinking Sexuality as Justice-Love*, ed. Marvin M. Ellison and Sylvia Thorson-Smith (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003) 78-96, quote, 93.

(23) Louis Joughin, ed., "The 1915 Declaration of Principles," in *Academic Freedom and Tenure: A Handbook for the American Association of University Professors* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 162. Cited by Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Religion On Our Campuses: A Professor's Guide to Communities, Conflicts, and Promising Conversations* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 114.

(24) Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535*, Chapters 1-4, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 26: 120. Luther, for example, in his Lectures on Galatians, defined conscience as the bride of Christ designed by God:

Let [the Christian] permit the Law to rule his body and its members but not his conscience. For that queen and bride must not be polluted by the Law but must be kept pure for Christ, her one and only husband; as Paul says elsewhere (2 Cor. 11:2): "I betrothed you to one husband." Therefore let the conscience have its bridal chamber, not deep in the valley but high on the mountain. Here let only Christ lie and reign, Christ, who does not terrify sinners and afflict them, but who comforts them, forgives their sins, and saves them.

Calvin also defined conscience as a divinely constructed mean between man and God. Defining conscience in the Institutes, Calvin writes:

... it first behooves us to comprehend what conscience is: we must seek the definition from the derivative of the word. For just as when through the mind and understanding men grasp a knowledge of things, and from this are said "to know," this is the source of the word "knowledge," so also when they have a sense of divine judgment, as a witness joined to them, which does not allow them to hide their sins from being accused before the Judge's tribunal, this sense is called "conscience." For it is a certain mean between God and man, because it does not allow man to suppress within himself what he knows, but pursues him to the point of convicting him. This is what Paul understands when he teaches that conscience also testifies to men, where their thought either accuses or excuses them in God's judgment (Rom. 2:15-16). A simple knowledge could reside, so to

speak, closed up in man. Therefore this awareness which hales man before God's judgment is a sort of guardian appointed for man to note and spy out all his secrets that nothing may remain buried in darkness.

John Calvin, Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed., The Library of Christian Classics vol. XX (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.19.2. See Randall C. Zachman's *The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) for a lucid analysis of the respective differences in the use of conscience by these two Reformers. For further elucidation of this overall problem see the present author's essay, "Schleiermacher's Affekt Theology," 206ff.

(25) Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 15-37.

(26) See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über den Umfang des Begriffs der Kunst in Bezug auf die Theorie derselben* [On the Scope of the Concept of Art in Relation to its Theory], in Friedrich Schleiermachers *Sammtliche Werke* III.3, 181-224, especially 183. For further elaboration, also see the present author's essay "Schleiermacher, Feminisms, and Liberation Theologies: A Key," *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Marina (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 289ff.

(27) Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 12ff.
Schleiermacher, On Freedom, 33ff.

(28) As neurologist Antonio Damasio notes in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (San Diego: Harcourt Inc., 1999), the pervasive affective states give our lives and thoughts definition and color. They are our body's native tongue and are observable as "body postures, the shape and design of our movements, and even the tone of our voices and the prosody in our speech as we communicate thoughts that may have little to do with the background emotions" (286). Schleiermacher made a similar distinction between the background feeling and the foreground immediate affective shifts in subjective self-awareness.

(29) For details see the present author's essay, "Schleiermacher's Affekt Theology," 211. As noted in this essay: "Schleiermacher's creation of his own theory of *Affekt*, as (Gunter) Scholtz points out, was different from that of his era's regnant theories (such as that of Hegel) because Schleiermacher identified *Affekt* as the means by which human subjectivity changed into artistic activity. A sheerly mental depiction of this transition point, Scholtz notes, was for Schleiermacher vacuous. (See Gunter Scholtz, *Schleiermachers Musikphilosophie* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1981], 93.) Tones, from this standpoint, are expressions of the natural world astir within us. As Scholtz observes, the sounds become the harmonics, and our affections become the

rhythmic movements of our own impassioned nature. The structures of the natural world (e.g., sounds) and human feelings meet. "Schleiermacher brought these two sides together in his work: artistic feeling and the natural world." See Gunter Scholtz, *Ethik und Hermeneutik: Schleiermachers Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 217. For Schleiermacher, the essence of art was thus the feeling of movement within the self transformed into measure and rule. Sound (as well as physical gesture), Schleiermacher argued, is a natural expression of any internal movement of excited human affections." See Schleiermacher, *Über den Umfang*, 192-93.

(30) Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, propositions 3.4 and 11.1-2; Thandeka, "Schleiermacher's Affekt Theology," 205-7.

(31) Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, proposition 3.4.

(32) Ibid., proposition 172.1.

(33) Ibid., propositions 3.0, 3.1 and 3.4. Schleiermacher used the term "affect" and its related terms "being affected," "affection," a "moment of affection," and "affected" (Affiziertsein, Affektion, Affectionsmoment, afficiert) to refer to the physical, empirical condition of the individual's emotive, spiritual life. For further detail see Thandeka, "Schleiermacher, Feminism, and Liberation Theologies," 290ff. Karl Bernecker, in his book, *Kritische Darstellung der Geschichte des Affektbegriffes: Von Descartes bis zur Gegenwart*, traces the first appearances of the term *Affekt* (from the Latin root *affectus*) in the German language in the seventeenth century. As Bernecker notes, the terms *affect* (*Affekt*) and the movement of the disposition (*Gemutsbewegung*) of a person very quickly became equivalent terms. The German term *Affekt* was used to describe the spiritual condition (vestige) of a person. This term, however, was almost never used to describe the physical condition of a person (*körperliche Befinden*). Schleiermacher broke this rule. See Karl Bernecker, *Kritische Darstellung der Geschichte des Affektbegriffes (Von Descartes bis zur Gegenwart)*, Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der philosophischen Fakultaet der Koeniglichen Universitat Greifswald (Berlin: Druck von Otto Godemann, 1915), 1-3. The present author became aware of this text by Bernecker through a reference to it by Gunter Scholtz in his book *Schleiermachers Musikphilosophie*, 72n.

(34) Ibid., proposition 3.4. Thandeka, "Schleiermacher's Affekt Theology," 205.

(35) For a fuller discussion, see the present author's essay, "Schleiermacher's Affekt Theology."

(36) Schleiermacher, for example, studied affect in his analysis of music. See Scholtz's groundbreaking book *Schleiermachers Musikphilosophie* for a fine investigation of Schleiermacher's work on music. See

also Thandeka, "Schleiermacher, feminism, and liberation theologies," 288. As noted in this latter text, during Schleiermacher's era, "the hope was pervasive that music would regenerate the listener's sentiments, moods, feelings, and dispositions. The art and science of the use of music to stir the affections was called "the doctrine of human affections" (*Affektenlehre*). The term *Affektenlehre* was coined by the German composer Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), who believed that different major and minor scales evoked different affective states within the listener. The basic claim of this doctrine was that music was resonant and thus stirred and altered dispositions. See Julie Ann Sadie, "Johann Mattheson," *Companion to Baroque Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 171-72, and George J. Buelow, "Johann Mattheson and the Invention of the *Affektenlehre*," *New Mattheson Studies*, ed. George J. Buelow and Hans Joachim Marx (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 393-407.

(37) Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, ed. Terrence N. Tice (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press).

(38) Gerhard Spiegler, *The Eternal Covenant: Schleiermacher's Experiment in Cultural Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 2.

(39) As noted above regarding Schleiermacher's comment to his friend Dr. Lucke, *On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr. Lucke*, 57.

(40) Jaak Panksepp, "The Core Emotional Systems of the Mammalian Brain: The Fundamental Substrates of Human Emotions," in *About a Body: Working with the Embodied Mind in Psychotherapy*, ed. Jenn Corrigall (New York: Routledge, 2006), 17.

(41) Ibid., 17-19.

(42) Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, 42-43.

(43) Ibid., 42.

(44) The recent turn by neuroscientists to the subcortical, affective foundations of human consciousness is now challenging, as Panksepp notes, the typical scientific and academic valuation of rationality over emotionality. Accordingly, Panksepp believes we are now "on the verge of an 'affective revolution' that will be as important as the preceding 'cognitive revolution' in the development of a scientific psychology in the next few decades." *Affective Neuroscience*, 348 (note 51).

(45) Douglas F. Watt, "Social Bonds and the Nature of Empathy," *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12, (August-October 2005): 188-212.

(46) Jaak Panksepp, "On the Embodied Neural Nature of Core Emotional Affects," *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12, (December 2005): 161-164; Panksepp, "The Core Emotional Systems of the Brain," 18.

(47) Panksepp, "On the Embodied Neural Nature of Core Emotional Affects," 169.

(48) Ibid., 101.

(49) Ibid., 169-170, passim.

(50) Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, 135.

(51) Ibid., 247-49.

(52) Ibid., 247-48. One example illustrates the enormous import of this work for future American social policy, specifically, its major strategy for handling drug addiction. The link between the activation of brain chemistries that enables social bonding and supportive social interactions led Panksepp to hypothesize that one reason certain people become addicts and are addicted to drugs like morphine and heroine is that these drugs artificially induce feelings of gratification similar to the feelings that their brains would have naturally activated by socially nurturing environments. Through drug use, people are thus able to "pharmacologically induce the positive feeling of connectedness that others derive from social interactions Indeed, opiate addiction in humans is most common in environments where social isolation and alienation are endemic These social problems are more understandable in light of the fact that positive social emotions and social bonds are, to some extent, mediated by opioid-based, naturally occurring addictive processes within the brain" (255). If this hypothesized link between addiction and social environment is borne out, an enormous shadow will be cast over the billions of dollars the American government spends on destroying drugs in other countries rather than improving neighborhoods in this country.

(53) This use of the term contagion in the above text to refer to Schleiermacher's notion, in *The Christian Faith*, proposition 6.2, of the way in which consciousness of kind passes over into living imitation or reproduction (*in lebendige Nachbildung*) is based on Douglas F. Watt's important essay, "Toward a Neuroscience of Empathy: Integrating Affective and Cognitive Perspectives," *Neuro-Psychoanalysis* 9 (2007): 130ff. In this essay, Watt discusses emotional contagion as a neurological process entailed in empathy.

(54) *The Christian Faith*, proposition 6.2

(55) Jaak Panksepp, "The Emotional Antecedents to the Evolution of Music and Language," 9-10. *Musicae Scientiae*, in press. Page numbers from the original manuscript sent to the present author by Panksepp.

(56) John E. Gedo, *Psychoanalysis as Biological Science: A Comprehensive Theory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 97. Writes Gedo:

Affectivity provides a cybernetic system of intrapsychic communication. In infancy, while executive control resides in the mother's mind, the cyberspace loop must be completed through

the caretaker's ability to read the baby's affective signals and by affective attunement within the dyad. One of the caretaker's vital tasks is to teach the child the appropriate measures that will regulate affective intensities. Control of this kind is lacking in major affective disorders.

(57) D. W. Winnicott, *Physiotherapy and Human Relations*, in *D. W. Winnicott: Psycho-Analytic Explorations*, ed. Clare Winnicott, Ray Shepherd, Madeleine Davis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 566.

(58) Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, propositions 3.3 and 5.1.

(59) Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, 310.

(60) Ibid., 309.

(61) Ibid., 178. Panksepp also cites here the work of S. Gallagher and J. Shear, *Models of the Self* (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 1999).

(62) Panksepp, "On the Embodied Neural Nature of Core Emotional Affects," 178.

(63) Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (San Diego: A Harvest Book Harcourt, Inc., 1999), 156.

(64) Ibid., 231.

(65) Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, 310, 320.

(66) Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799), ed. Gunter Meckenstock (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), p. 90. English translation by Richard Crouter, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 113.

(67) The use of the term pious in this paragraph is intended to denote, strictly speaking, the emotional content of a faith state, i.e., the way in which an affective state has been emotionally tempered by religious feeling.

(68) Luis Lugo, et al., "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey," 22.

(69) Garry Wills, "The Day the Enlightenment Went Out," *New York Times* (November 4, 2004), A25. This example is taken from the article "Ministering to Anxiety: Take Abortion, for Example," written by the present author for *Tikkun Magazine: A Bimonthly Jewish and Interfaith Critique of Politics, Culture Society* (May/June 2005), 20.

(70) Quoting Wills: "America, the first real democracy in history, was a product of Enlightenment values—critical intelligence, tolerance, respect for evidence, a regard for the secular sciences. Though the founders differed on many things, they shared these values of what was then modernity. They addressed 'a candid world,' as they

wrote in the Declaration of Independence, out of a decent respect for the opinions of mankind. Respect for evidence seems not to pertain any more, when a poll taken just before the elections showed that 75 percent of Mr. Bush's supporters believe Iraq either worked closely with Al Qaeda or was directly involved in the attacks of 9/11."

(71) Daniel E. Ritchie, "Did Belief Win Out Over Reason?" *New York Times*, Letter to the Editor, November 9, 2004

(72) Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenment* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).

(73) Ibid., 19.

(74) The present author's analysis of the way President George W. Bush, in the 2004 presidential election campaign, mined religious emotions for his own vested political purposes, is an example of the new role American liberal theology can play in the analysis of Christian politics in America. See Thandeka, "The Confidence Man," *Tikkun Magazine* (May/June 2004), 14-15.

(75) Jennifer Jesse, personal correspondence, May 13, 2008.

(76) William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 6-7.

(77) Ibid., 163.

(78) For more details, see Thandeka, "Feminist, Inc.: North American Feminist Theologies and Globalization," *The Oxford Handbook on Feminist Theology and Globalization*, Eds. Sheila Briggs and Mary McClintock Fulkerson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

(79) Emilie M. Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care*. (New York, NY: Continuum, 2001), 154.

(80) Emilie M. Townes, "Introduction: Creating Ruminations of the Spirit," in *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation and Transformation*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), xi.

(81) As the program brochure, *John B. Cobb, Jr.: Celebrating the Legacy*, rightly noted for the February 15, 2008, fundraiser to create an endowed chair in Process Studies at the Claremont School of Theology: "Process theology is the most influential school of liberal progressive theology on the American scene, and its international influence is growing."

(82) Personal e-mail correspondence to the present author from John B. Cobb Jr., March 10, 2008.

(83) John B., Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*,

Second Edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 6 — 9.

(84) Ibid., 9.

(85) John B. Cobb Jr. Personal correspondence, January 29, 2008.

(86) The November 2008 panel, entitled "Affect: A Link Between Religious Studies and Affective Neuroscience," with panelists John B. Cobb Jr., Philip Clayton, William R. Graham, affective and social neuroscientist Michael L. Spezio, and Thandeka, was presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago. The panel was co-sponsored by the Cognitive Science of Religion consultation and the Science,

Technology, and Religion Group. Moderator was Nina P. Azari.

(87) The possibilities are vast. Consider the claim by postmodern feminist scholar Amy Hollywood, who is Elizabeth H. Monard Professor of Christian Studies at Harvard Divinity School. According to Hollywood, "bodily affect" is being studied anew as "a potent site for philosophical reflection and for its disruption," and with it "the recognition that transcendence occurs only through the body." *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 19, 278.

(88) Dorrien, 6.

(89) Dorrien, 529ff.

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Contemporary Liberal Theology

American Journal of Theology and Philosophy, January 2009.

Dorrien, Gary, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity, 1950-2005* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

Grodzins, Dean, ed., *A Language of Reverence*, (Chicago: Meadville Lombard Press, 2004).

Affective Neuroscience

Panksepp, Jaak, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions*, USA, (Oxford University Press, 2004).

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