



What Does It Mean to Be a UU?

By Jill Austin

One of the posts I frequently make to the UUFM Facebook page says, “Unitarian Universalists ---- MINDS THAT THINK, HEARTS THAT LOVE, and HANDS THAT ARE READY TO SERVE.” This religion calls us as individuals to figure out our truth and then to live it. Following are some ideas from Unitarian Universalist ministers about what it means to be UU.

Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed describes religious community this way: “There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice. It is the church that assures us that we are not struggling for justice on our own, but as members of a larger community. The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done. Together, our vision widens and our strength is renewed.” According to Rev. Paul Rasor, this religion is an invitation – not a mandate. He says UU calls us to “live with ambiguity -- to engage in dialogue, to be open to change, and to take commitment seriously.” For, he says, “this is a faith without certainty.” Here, my truth may be different from yours, but what we have to say about our individual theologies adds to the mosaic of our UU tradition. However different our theologies may be, we are all bound by the history of Unitarian Universalism and the brave and interesting people who came before us. This is a life affirming religion. We are here now, to live, to be responsible – to do something to help others. As Rev. Tom Owen-Towle explains it, “our religion posits a relentless encounter with a shifting reality.” A bumper sticker that says “I’ve found it” that might work for some churches does not work for Unitarian Universalism – Our bumper sticker might say something like: “I have found something valuable, for now.”



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Reverend Doug Kraft said that Unitarian Universalism is not about having a “rock to hold on-to.” Rather, he said, it is “about learning to swim in the river.” – He suggests that UU churches are about exploring and experiencing and navigating the twists and turns of life and are not churches where we climb out on the rock to sit and be safe. James Luther Adams, said, “Church is a place where you get to practice what it means to be human.” He said, “The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to foresee the consequences of human behavior (both individual and institutional), with the intention of making history in place of being merely pushed around by it.” Adams suggested that members of UU congregations have a responsibility to see potential issues of need BEFORE they occur and to do something to make them right.

Rev. Doug Muder said this about the UU principles, “I don’t think about the principles as beliefs at all. I think of them as visions.” He says the seven principles are really more a challenging spiritual path than they are beliefs. Muder said, “Let me be blunt about this: none of those things (from the principles) exist.” He said, “The Hubble telescope is never going to snap a picture of the interdependent web. Neither worth nor dignity nor the right of conscience is ever going to be observed under a microscope. What we are really doing when we affirm and promote the First, Fifth, and Seventh Principles (and all the others) is committing ourselves to imagine those visions into existence.” When we see or feel what might be related to these principles, we want others to see this, too --- so these principles can become reality and not just a vision.

My take on all of this reading is that as UUs, we should do four things:

1. Find our truth and live it (today) – live “on purpose”
2. Strive to be our best self
3. Build community (in our congregation and out of it)
4. Make the world a better place

Early in my time at UUFM (2007), several members completed a course and discussion on “building your own theology.” This was a very valuable experience for me. It helped me to see where my religious values had developed, what they were in the past, how they were “lost” to me, and what I had put in their place. The exercise also helped me to really see the message of Unitarian Universalism through quotes like those above. During that time, I did build my own theology as a Unitarian Universalist. If you want to try it, below is the grid we used to think through who we were back then in our past religion and the type of person we wanted to become. (I can send you a word version of the chart if you like, just ask.)

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What does it mean to be a UU? (continued from page 2)

Age	Human Nature	Nature of Ultimate Reality	My Role in History and Evolution	Ethical Behavior	Meanings We Create for Ourselves

You can set as many rows as you like and divide time into whatever increments make sense for you. I divided my chart into nine different time frames. For example, my first category was ages 1 – 5 and a later category was ages 19 – 23. We spent about three months (one hour each Sunday) in discussions. I wrote in the course notes for one of the earlier discussions, “My religion is forming, new, interesting, and life affirming.” I don’t remember the context of that writing, but I still agree with the sentiment! The last “human nature” statement I made on my grid was “Good people must work to keep goodness in the world.” Another statement, I still think is essential for me. Another exercise we completed was a timeline for our life; this included major life events that shaped us in some way. Then we

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What does it mean to you to be UU? This is an important question and worthy of consideration. This process allows us to become more conscious, more mindful as we build a theology through what has been learned from life experiences.



11th Annual UUFM Retreat

Make plans to join us September 28-29 for the 11th annual UUFM Retreat at the Youth Incorporated Ranch in La Vergne. This year's theme is "Connections."

Retreat Schedule

Friday, September 28

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Check in
6:00 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.	Chalice Lighting and Reading
6:15 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.	Dinner (potluck)
7:15 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.	Ice breaker game
7:45 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Bingo for Books
8:30 p.m.	Extinguishing the Chalice
8:30 p.m.	Campfire and singing around the fire
8:30 p.m. – until	Activities in the cafeteria (board games, jigsaw puzzles, cards, UU trivia, knitting, do your own thing – bring musical instruments to play and sing!!)

Saturday, September 29

8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.	Breakfast (Men's Group will cook pancakes for everyone !!!)
9:30 a.m. – 9:35 a.m.	Lighting the Chalice
9:35 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	UUFM: Making Connections: Within UUFM, with Local Community, and with Other UU's – discussion and project*
10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	UUFM: Making Connections: Team Building Game*
11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Break and snack
11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Connections Sing-Along*
12:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Small group activities
	Time 1: Science activity
	Time 2: nature walk, board games/card games, or meditation activity*
3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Wrap-up – How We Continue Making Connections
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	All help clean the area
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Check out

Things to Bring:

Food to share for a potluck on Friday night!!

Book to share for bingo game

Camping items – personal items, sleeping bag, pillow, etc. – bring a flashlight!!

Games, cards, etc. to share with others during activity time in the cafeteria

Musical instruments to play

*Childcare and child activities are available at these times.

SEPTEMBER SERVICES

2	Water Communion
9	Rabbi Rami Shapiro: "Rosh HaShanah, the Birthday of Humanity, and the Reason We are Here"
16	Rev. Denise Gyauch: "Learning to be Ourselves"
23	Music Sunday: "Peace"
30	Doug Traversa: "When Karma comes Calling"

SEPTEMBER MUSIC

2	1007: There's a River Flowin' in My Soul 1064: Blue Boat Home
9	313: O What a Piece of Work We Are 128: For All That is Our Life
16	1011: Return Again 354: We Laugh, We Cry
23	159: This is My Song 161: Peace! The Perfect Word
30	TBD

SEPTEMBER UUFM EVENTS

4	UUFM Humanists—Newk's (Memorial)
13	Board Meeting—Kimbro home
12	Men's Group—See Blake Becker
18	Women's Group—6:00 pm Tai Spice (Rutherford Blvd)
28-29	UUFM Annual Retreat at Youth Ranch, Inc.



Announcement

Are you interested in learning more about what it means to be UU? Do you want a richer and deeper understanding of the values of this religion? Or, do you want some guides to living this religion more fully? Are you thinking about religious words like "faith" or "grace" and what those traditional religious words can mean to a person who is UU? UUFM is exploring having a group that meets during the week to talk about these issues. We may alternate topic discussions with book discussions. Our goal for these discussions is to deepen our personal understanding and commitment to our UU values. Talk with Jill Austin or Allie Becker if you have an interest in learning more or providing input. We will also have a Second Hour soon to discuss this program.

UUFM FELLOWSHIP OF MURFREESBORO

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Murfreesboro, Tennessee (UUFM) is a liberal religious society associated with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). UUFM is a member of the Southern Region and the Mid-South District.

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POEM

WHETHER THE GOAT IS A METAPHOR

By Jane Miller

We go on talking and digging a pit in the earth
to spit-roast a kid,
since anyone working in a lively rhythm is not attached
to the story.
In saving her, he saves himself.
It's getting late.
The story of the boy is that
by drinking water from a hoof he's turned into a goat.
If we separate magic from life,
we get art. His sister, long story short,
gets thrown into a river with a stone around her neck.
His weeping stirs the neighbors with a silken net
to scoop her out. He turns three somersaults
of joy and lands on two feet as a boy again.
How, in heaven's name, will be dinner be served, and when?
Separate art from life, we get nothing.
We go on talking and digging.
I've got a million and ten things to do.
Of the multitude of things, it is emptiness
that's necessary now, now that you've had time
to wash and dress. As a form
of enlightenment, the most unsuspecting guest
is your enemy in armor, or invisible,
who will clap you on the back
when you choke on a bone at the banquet.