

Faith Development for All Ages—Annual Congregational Meeting

Following are materials I curated from the UUA’s [Tapestry of Faith](#) program that may deepen your understanding of the place that our annual congregational meeting—and participation in it—holds in our tradition. The focus is on our Fifth Principle (see pg. 2). Some are age-specific (although they can be used with whatever ages you wish), some are multigenerational, they are good before or after the meeting, or any other time. This is about the way we “do church.”

Let me know if you have questions or are interested in additional resources. I am somewhat wonky in all things covenant- and governance-related, and I’d love to talk with you.

Blessings.

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The Seven Principles are a covenant between our congregations and the Unitarian Universalist Association. They grew out of the grassroots of our communities, were affirmed democratically, and are part of who we are. As Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove explains, “The Principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities.” We use two versions, including one that is a children’s song.

<i>We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:</i>	<i>The Rainbow Principles from “It’s Music Time with Miss Mindy” by Mindy Simmons</i>
1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;	1. RED Stands for respecting other people
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;	2. ORANGE Offering fair and kind treatment
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;	3. YELLOW Puts the yearning in your learning
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;	4. GREEN Grow in your search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;	5. BLUE Believe in what you are achieving
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;	6. INDIGO Insist on freedom, love, and peace
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.	7. VIOLET Value the web that does not cease

You might also be interested in the following from UU World Magazine:

[Shared Values](#)

[How the UUA’s Principles and Purposes were shaped and how they’ve shaped Unitarian Universalism.](#)

[Who says Unitarian Universalism’s Principles are easy?](#)

[The UU Principles are demanding enough to make me whine.](#)

This bookmark is available from the [UUA bookstore](#), or ask me and I'll give you one!

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to 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

PreK

Based on [Chalice Children](#)

RAINBOWS EVERYWHERE

Since we use The Rainbow Principle's Song by Mindy Simmons (see pg. 2) to teach the Seven Principles to our children, now is a good time to start talking about—and making!—rainbows. Use paint or tissue paper, or use a [Google search](#) to come up with more ways than you can count.

While making your rainbows, play The Rainbow Principles Song. You can [purchase the CD online](#), or if you are unable to do so, please let me know.

RUBY BRIDGES, SURROUNDED BY LOVE



Use the coloring page (pg. 9) to point out how it depicts the surrounding love of Ruby's parents. Also, you might note that Ruby surrounded others with love when she prayed for them even though those people did not show love to Ruby. Encourage your child(ren) to color the picture as you read the story. But first...

Ask them how they felt when they first went to a new school or a new place. Affirm that even when they are new, they can make a difference. Tell them you will share a true story about a brave little girl who went someplace new, even when she was not sure others wanted her there.

Ruby Bridges, Surrounded by Love

By Janeen K. Grohsmeyer *

When Ruby Bridges was six years old and in the first grade, just like many other children, she went to a new school. Ruby's school was called William Frantz Elementary School. It was in the City of New Orleans in the state of Louisiana.

And, just like other children, Ruby was nervous about the first day of school. She knew everything was going to be different: a new building, new teachers, new rules, new things to learn, new children to play with, and (she hoped) new friends.

But, unlike other children, Ruby didn't go to school by walking or riding in her parents' car or in a school bus. Ruby went to school in a police car, followed by people from her neighborhood to help keep her safe. Ruby walked to the front door of her school surrounded by four tall men who had guns and wore armbands with the words "U.S. Marshal" on their sleeves.

Because Ruby wasn't just like the other children at William Frantz Elementary School. She was the only African American child in the entire school, and some people didn't think she should be there.

You see, Ruby started first grade in 1960, about sixty years ago. Back then, in some parts of the United States, children with different skin colors went to different schools. There were schools for children with dark skin, and there with schools for children with light skin. That was called segregation.

Some people liked segregation, but many people knew it wasn't fair. The schools for white children always had more books, better buildings, and lots more of everything than the schools for black children. Because of that, our government made a law that said all children—no matter what their skin color—can go to the same schools. That is called integration.

The parents at William Frantz Elementary School who liked segregation did not like integration. Because Ruby had dark skin, they thought she didn't belong at the school. They kept their children home from school, away from her. Ruby was the only student in her class. She didn't have anyone to play with or to talk to, except for her teacher, all day long.

And every day, those people who didn't like integration would go to Ruby's school, and they would yell horrible, mean things at her. Some called her names. One woman threatened to poison her. Sometimes they would even throw rocks or eggs or tomatoes, trying to keep her away from the school.

Yet every day, Ruby Bridges would go to that school. She would get dressed and eat breakfast and get ready for school, and then her mother would say, "I'm proud of you," and her father would say, "You're my brave little girl," and they would all say, "I love you" to each other.

Every day, her neighbors would surround the police car that Ruby was riding in, and the four U.S. Marshals would surround her as she walked through that crowd of angry people, to help keep her safe.

And every day, Ruby would say a prayer—but not for herself. Ruby prayed for the angry people who yelled at her, asking God to forgive them and to change their minds. When Ruby Bridges was surrounded by hate, she surrounded everyone with love.

After a while, it worked.

The next year, when Ruby Bridges was seven years old and starting the second grade, the angry crowd of people wasn't there. She didn't have to ride in a police car. There were no U.S. Marshals surrounding her. White people did not keep their children home from William Frantz Elementary School, even though Ruby was there.

When Ruby went to her classroom on that first day of second grade, there were twenty other children. Some of them had dark skin, like her. Some of them would be her friends. Integration had happened, and William Frantz Elementary School was a school for all children.

Fifty years ago, Ruby Bridges helped to integrate a school, and integration helped make our country more fair for everyone. Today, Ruby Bridges is all grown-up, and she travels to schools all over the country, telling her story and teaching people to respect and appreciate each other.

Each of us can be like Ruby. We can all surround each other with love.

* You might be interested in Janeen K. Grohsmeyer's book [*A Lamp in Every Corner: A Unitarian Universalist Storybook*](#).

Process the story with these questions...

- What do you think about Ruby Bridges? Do you think she was brave?
- What about her white teacher, Barbara? She was the only person willing to teach an African American child in the all-white school.
- What did you think about Ruby praying for the angry people who yelled at her and threatened her? Do you think that would be hard to do?
- The story is called "Ruby Bridges, Surrounded by Love." Why do you think it is called that? Do you think Ruby was surrounded by love? When was she and when was she not?
- As a Unitarian Universalist, what would you do to this situation? If you were a white child in that school, would you have gone to class, even if others didn't? Would you have gone to support Ruby?

Affirm that Unitarian Universalists work for things to be more fair. When others are not treated fairly we support them. Ruby acted bravely to get justice for herself and to give others a voice and a choice about which schools they would attend. Ruby acted with courage and love. Her teacher, Barbara, also showed courage and love in supporting Ruby.

What's in your Bucket?

Materials for Activity

- A small plastic bucket, such as a sand pail

Preparation for Activity

- Gather participants in a seated circle.
- Keep the bucket within your reach.

Description of Activity

This activity gives participants an opportunity to think about what they have to offer to the world. Show participants the bucket you have brought and ask them what they think might be inside. Allow some guesses. Then, tell them it is a bucket of gifts but not the kind you open. Tell them a few of your gifts as examples: loving children, playing the piano, making people smile. You might mime putting your gifts in the bucket.

Ask the following discussion questions:

- What are some of the gifts or talents that people in the room have?
- What kinds of gifts or talents might we bring to church in a bucket?
- What kinds of things might we take home with us?
- Do you feel you have a full bucket when you come to our congregation?
- When you go home?
- What kinds of things fill our bucket when we gather?

Affirm for participants the gifts they have to offer. Tell them they fill their buckets and each others', when we come together as Unitarian Universalists.

Including All Participants

Suggest examples of gifts to participants if they have trouble thinking of their own.



"Ruby Bridges," Love Surrounds Us; illustration, Nancy Devard

2nd-3rd Grades

From [Signs of Our Faith](#)

OUR CONGREGATION'S GOVERNANCE

This activity calls for the participation of two Board members (who may have served in the past or may be current Board members). This will require some coordination—such as getting two people to volunteer, gathering the materials needed, and, perhaps, in setting up a Zoom session—all of which I will be happy to facilitate. Please just let me know.

Materials for Activity

- Visual aids, such as a list of the congregation's board members and their roles, copies of board agendas, or photos of board members

Preparation for Activity

- Invite two congregational board members as guests. Seek diversity in age, ethnicity, gender, and length of service. It would be nice if one is an officer and the other an at-large member. Ask them to prepare a short (no more than five minutes) presentation on the congregation's board and what it does, with a focus on decision making and one or two examples the children will understand. Offer the guests these questions as a guide:
 - How did you come to be a member of the board? Did you need to be elected, or did you simply say "yes?"
 - How is taking part in the governance of the congregation a sign of your UU faith?
 - What does the board do?
 - What are the roles on the board?
 - What happens at board meetings?
 - When is board work hard?
 - What kinds of decisions does the board make? Can you give an example?
 - How does the board make decisions?
 - How do our UU values inform the board's decision-making process?

- Who and what else helps the board to govern? What other ways does the congregation make group decisions?

Description of Activity

Children talk to board members about congregational governance.

Say that any group of people will find itself having to make decisions if they want to do anything. Ask the group what they know about how the congregation makes decisions. Affirm that different groups within the congregation might have decisions to make, and they might make them in different ways. If your congregation has staff, tell the group what kind of decisions the staff makes and how-for example, who chooses the hymns that will be sung in worship? Who decides what will be posted on congregational bulletin boards? Who decides what the snacks will be at coffee hour?

Introduce the guests and explain that they are members of the board of trustees or directors (use your congregation's language), which makes decisions for the entire congregation. Invite the guests to give their presentation, using any visuals you or they brought. Encourage the children to ask questions.

THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

Read or tell the story.

Phoebe Hanaford Gets the Vote



Young Phebe Coffin stood on a box in the barn, playing preacher to the group of friends she had gathered. Of course, in the 1830s, when Phebe was a child, women ministers were unusual, if there were any at all. Women couldn't vote, didn't have the right to own property, and couldn't attend most universities. But Phebe was raised in a Quaker family that believed in equality for men and women, and her cousin, Lucretia Mott, was a famous advocate for women's rights. So perhaps it's not too surprising that the highly intelligent Phebe grew up expecting to make her voice heard. At 13 she started to get her writing published, and at 16 she became a teacher.

When she was 20, Phebe married a Baptist doctor named Joseph Hanaford, and became a Baptist herself. She started writing books to help support her family, which included two children. Eventually she wrote a total of 14 books, many of which were quite popular. But over time Phebe decided she couldn't accept Baptist beliefs, and she became a Universalist.

At her father's request, Phebe preached a couple of times at the schoolhouse on the island of Nantucket where she had once been a teacher. But it came as a surprise and a rather scary honor when she was asked to fill in preaching for her hero, the Universalist minister Olympia Brown, who was the first woman to be ordained as a minister in the U.S.

With Olympia's encouragement, Phebe became a Universalist minister herself. She eventually left her husband, who wouldn't follow her to Connecticut, when she was called to serve as a minister there. After separating from her husband, Phebe fell in love with a woman named Ellen Miles, and they lived together for over 40 years, until Ellen died.

While Phebe was serving as a busy and successful minister, she was also very active in working for women's rights. Her church in Jersey City, New Jersey decided to fire her after her first three years of ministry, even though the church had doubled in size. The church leaders said it was because she was spending too much time working on women's issues, but Phebe's letters make it clear that the church

was also upset by her relationship with Ellen Miles, who they called "the minister's wife." They insisted that Phebe give up both her work for women's rights and her relationship with Ellen. In response, Phebe, and the people in the church who supported her, set up a church in a hall across the street, and she preached there for several years.

Phebe continued in active ministry until she retired in 1891, and she spoke at conventions for women's rights around the country, doing everything in her power to bring women the right to vote. It says something about both her gifts as a speaker and her importance to the women's movement that she was asked to conduct the funeral services for both Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the two most famous leaders of the movement.

Even after she retired from ministry, Phebe remained active and interested political issues. Before she died, at the age of 92, Phebe had the joy of being one of the few women's suffrage leaders of her generation who lived see the passage of the 19th Amendment. After more than 60 years of work, Phebe finally won the right to vote.

Process the story...

Then, ask participants to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Say something like:

Can you imagine spending more than 60 years trying to change something in the world? Of course, Phebe Hanaford was only one of many, many people, men and women, who worked for decades to win women the right to vote. You could think of each thing that each of these people did-every time they made plans at a meeting, or went to a march for women's suffrage, or spoke up about what they thought was right-as being like small drops of water. A single drop of water doesn't make much difference. But if enough drops trickle in, over enough time, then you have a river's worth of water that can change a whole landscape.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- What in your life have you worked at the longest?
- Why do you think you have devoted such a long time to this particular activity?
- What kept you going when you felt discouraged?
- What rewards have you gotten from working at your activity so long?

Soap Carving

Materials for Activity

- Tarp for collecting soap shavings
- One bar of soap per person
- Pencils to share
- Table knives, screwdrivers, orange sticks, nails, popsicle sticks and/or other soap-carving tools

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you are comfortable guiding participants to carve soap. Watch [a YouTube video](#) which demonstrates how to carve a fish from soap. Visit [this Wiki page](#) for soap carving instructions with pictures.
- Spread a large tarp on the floor and/or worktables so you can collect and discard soap shavings when you are done.
- Set carving implements where everyone can reach them easily.

Description of Activity

Tell the group:

Trying to take off too much at once will cause the bar of soap to break. Carving soap requires patience and persistence. Let's see how much of these "water power" qualities we have.

Make sure that participants' hands are dry before they touch their bar of soap; water will make the soap slippery and difficult to handle. Distribute bars of soap and invite the group to each think of an object or shape to carve. Encourage participants to come up with a plan before they start carving. Suggest that a fish or turtle shape tends to work well, as does a sun or a face.

Invite the children to use a pencil to lightly carve the desired shape into the surface of their bar of soap, and then use tools such as a table knife or screwdriver to gently carve the soap.

This activity lends itself to conversation. Use some discussion questions from above to help the group continue processing the story, "Phebe Hanaford Gets the Vote." Or, invite participants to think about other social justice movements besides the women's suffrage movement in which people showed great persistence. For instance, during the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, protesters walked to work and school every day for over a year before they won the right to sit anywhere on the bus they chose.

UNIVERSAL RIGHTS

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the UU Principles (pg. 2)
- Copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (pg. 16)

Preparation for Activity

- Become familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Provide copies of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Description of Activity

Youth compare the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights with UU's Principles.

Say that the word "universal" makes some people think first of conditions on earth instead of conditions in heaven. In fact, in 1948, the United Nations (UN) issued something called the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." This document says everybody on earth has the same very basic rights. Today the United Nations and many individuals, including many UUs, are still trying hard to make sure that everybody is treated justly and equally. The world still has a long way to go before this becomes true, but at least many people feel called to keep trying.

Now the class will compare two posters (or handouts), one that shows the Declaration of Human Rights and one that shows the UU Principles.

Ask the youth to go to the posters and look at them carefully. How are they alike? How are they different? Do you think that the people who wrote the UU Principles thought about what the UN Declaration said?

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the full text of which appears in the following pages. Following this historic act, the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

PREAMBLE

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion,

national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10.

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11.

(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offense on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offense, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offense was committed.

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14.

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15.

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16.

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17.

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his

religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21.

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22.

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23.

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25.

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26.

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education

shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27.

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28.

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29.

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of

morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30.

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

CONGREGATIONAL DECISIONS

Materials for Activity

- Minutes from meetings of the congregation's governing board or the entire congregation.
- Index cards of two different colors.

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain the minutes from several meetings of the congregation's governing body. Highlight material pertaining to votes on actions the congregation will take. Make copies for the youth to share.
- **Obtain minutes from a recent meeting of the entire congregation, and make copies for the youth to share. (See pg. 23)**
- Obtain a schedule of upcoming meetings of the governing body and/or the entire congregation, and obtain agendas for these meetings. Make copies for the youth to share. (See pg. 25)
- Familiarize yourself with how your congregation decides on actions it will take.

Description of Activity

Youth examine decisions made by the congregation's governing body.

Ask the youth if they know who makes decisions for the actions of the congregation. The answer is probably a combination of congregational members and the congregation's governing body. Discuss the following, adapted for the process, policies, and specific recent actions of your congregation, to make sure participants understand how decisions are made:

- Some decisions are made by the entire voting congregation. These may include election of board members and committee chairs, the budget, decisions about public witness statements, decisions related to a congregational building, and calling a new minister or other staff decisions. Who gets to vote? [Members] How do you become a member? How many voting members are in the congregation? Can non-members speak at congregational meetings? What other rules govern the congregational meeting? [May include how far in advance

meetings must be announced, number of meetings required in a year, etc...] Who reports to the congregation at meetings?

- Some decisions are made by the congregation's governing body. What is that body's name [e.g., Board of Trustees] and composition? How are its members chosen? Are there youth and/or young adults on the governing body? What kind of decisions does this body make (versus the full congregation)? Are their meetings open? Are the minutes from the meetings available to everyone? Who reports to this body?

Ask if anyone has attended any congregational and/or board meeting recently. If so, what was it like? Can they remember any decisions that were made? Were the decisions voted upon?

Distribute the meeting minutes you have assembled. If decisions were made and the group is interested, ask them to vote on whether they think the best decision was made by holding up index cards, where one color means "Yes" and the second color means "No." Pick decisions where you can impartially supply background the youth need to make informed decisions. Can youth imagine what emotions came into play as decisions were made? What about the reasoning involved?

Say that voting members make the best decisions for the congregation they can make at the time. Sometimes, in hindsight, they may wish they had decided differently. Yet, we believe the democratic process is usually the best tool for making decisions that affect us all. Ask if there is evidence that UUs believe this. [Hint: Look at the seven Principles.]

Ask if any one else makes decisions in the congregation. Committees, staff, volunteers, and individual members make decisions all the time. Are the youth involved in any congregational decision making?

Variation

Plan for the youth to attend a congregational or board meeting together. Before the meeting, gather the group to discuss the agenda and any decisions that may come up for a vote. If any youth are members, they might decide to speak at the meeting and share from the group's discussion. If non-members can speak at meetings, urge youth to do so about any decision they feel strongly affects them.

**FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF NASHVILLE
MINUTES OF THE MID YEAR CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
JANUARY 26, 2020**

The meeting was called to order by Hal Potts at 12:30 pm and Chalice Lighting was led by Doug Pasto-Crosby and Opening Words were read by Reverend Gail Seavey.

Certification of a quorum was held with 80 members present and the current board members were recognized. Minutes from the June 2019 annual meeting were approved.

Worship Committee Ordination and Vote- Rachel Rogers presented the following motion: **MOTION-** Whereas Unitarian Universalist congregations have the sole power to ordain UU clergy, and whereas First UU member Mary Early-Zald has completed all of the requirements and is pending preliminary fellowship with the UUA, the Worship Committee moves that the congregation ordain Mary Early-Zald in May 2020, exact date to be determined. The motion carried unanimously.

Financial Report and Vote- Treasurer Steve Jones gave an overview of financial activities since the annual meeting in June 2019. The following motions are recommended actions : **MOTION-** to authorize the Treasurer to write off loans to the operating reserves and adjust our operating reserve balance to a true balance. The motion carried unanimously. **MOTION-** to authorize the Board of Directors to refinance our current mortgage balance (plus additional funds for capital improvements) at current interest rates using a 15 year amortization with a five year balloon payment, such that our monthly payment is lowered to approximately \$1,200. The motion carried with a majority with 6 votes opposed.

Nominating Committee Report and Vote- Chas Sisk offered the report and introduced the current member of the committee: Susan Warner, chair, Pat Lynch, Chas Sisk, Carol Copple, Kathy Hiller and Valerie Martin. Chas then offered a MOTION to approve the following nominations: Gaines Mann-Endowment Trust; Chris Martin- Safe Congregation Panel; Kim Hackett- Nominating Committee. The motion carried unanimously. Chas announced opportunities for leadership in June 2020 are for Treasurer and two openings for the Nominating Committee. Chas then thanked the over 200 members and friends who volunteer in all kinds of positions in our church this year.

Installation of Elected Positions- Reverend Seavey then led the congregation in a responsive reading for the installation of the three elected church members named above.

Developmental Minister Task Force Update- Gail Sphar, member of the task force introduced the members of the task force: Dariel Mayer, chair, David Dickinson, Colin Guerrette, Gail Sphar, Vickie Tataryn and Chelsea Henry, board liaison. Gail then reviewed the work of the task force which was appointed by the board and outlined their timeline. The task force is charged with the hire of a Developmental Minister to begin work August 1, 2020. She noted the importance of the congregation understanding this is a hired position, not a called minister. This means the board will make the hire based on the task force recommendation.

Building For Our Future Task Force (BFF)- Mike Bolds, chair of the task force, reported that letters of invitation have been sent out to 13 architects asking them to submit letters of interest in the FUUN building project. So far five firms has expressed interest.

Governance Task Force (GTF) Update- Sharon Ruiz, board liaison for the task force, posed the questions the task force is examining of how does FUUN best govern and what forms of governance will enable FUUN to prosper, meet the needs of the congregation, and fulfill its mission/vision? The charge for Year 1 (of a three year plan) for the task force is contained in the meeting packet which outlines the responsibilities along with an estimated time frame for the deliverables.

Stewardship Committee Report- Bob Day, chair of the committee, reviewed the financial goals for the 2020-2021 Stewardship Campaign set by the board and identified the positions/programs that would need to be improved or modified as stated in the board packet. The Stewardship Committee has met with Barry Finkelstein, the UUA consultant hired by the BFF. Barry made recommendations regarding the campaign goal and recommended a “**Best**” goal of \$734,000; a “**Good**” of \$685,000; and a “**Better**” of \$712,000. Community conversations will be scheduled to look at budget goals in advance of the Stewardship Campaign Kick-Off on March 1, 2020. Bob encouraged members to attend one of the conversations.

Endowment Trust Report- Laurie Samuels, chair of the Trust introduced the other members of the board: Gaines Mann, Candy Toler, Linda D’Errico, and Vickie Tataryn. Laurie reported the trust as \$28,000 to distribute. Two-fifths of the money will go to the board which will leave \$17,000 to be distributed in the form of grants. Members are encouraged to contact the trust for information on the grant process.

The meeting concluded and the chalice was extinguished by Doug Pasto-Crosby and closing words were read by Reverend Seavey. Hal Potts adjourned the meeting at 1:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Melinda Fish Secretary

AGENDA
 First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville
 Annual Congregational Meeting
 June 14, 2020
 10:00 am following worship service

Chalice Lighting.....Doug Pasto-Crosby
 Opening Words.....Gail Seavey
 Certification of Quorum.....Board Members
 Call to Order.....Hal Potts
 Review Agenda..... Hal Potts
 Approval of Minutes of January 26 Mid-year Meeting..... Hal Potts
 Introduce Board Members & Board Report.....Hal Potts
 Recognition of Retiring Elected Leaders.....Gail Seavey
 Rules for Online Voting.....Hal Potts
 Nominating Committee Report and Vote on slate.....Susan Warner
 Installation of Elected Positions.....Gail Seavey
 Financial Report & Budget vote.....Steve Jones, Allison Thompson
 Endowment Trust Report and Bylaws change vote.....Laurie Samuels
 Building for Our Future Update.....Mike Bolds
 Governance Task Force Update.....Jessica Himmelreich
 Greetings from Rev Dowgiert.....Diane Dowgiert
 Recognition of 2020 GA delegates.....Hal Potts
 Virginia Grantham Service Award.....Ann Morse
 Recognition of Rev Gail Seavey.....Hal Potts
 Chalice Extinguishing.....Doug Pasto-Crosby
 Closing Words.....Gail Seavey
 Adjourn.....Hal Potts

Adult

From [New UU](#)

MEMBERSHIP, A CONVERSATION

We have talked about covenant (pgs. 28-29) as the basis of Unitarian Universalist congregations. We covenant, or promise, to respect and support one another despite our differences. Membership is an expression of covenant-an agreement to work together with others for the benefit of the congregation.

Distribute the handout (pg. 27). Ask volunteers to read the handout aloud, one bullet point at a time. After each bullet point, ask for questions or comments. You may wish to illustrate the points with your own examples.

Rights and Responsibilities of Membership

Because we are a democratic community, members are collectively vested with responsibility for the congregation. Members may vote at any congregational meeting, be elected to the governing board, and participate in any activities of the congregation.

Because we are a covenanted congregation, members have certain responsibilities to the congregation and to one another. They are best fulfilled by:

- Regular attendance at worship. Weekly worship cements the bonds of community, and keeps our attention directed to our highest values, while nurturing our spirits.
- Voting at congregational meetings. Responsible participation includes imagining the needs of the entire congregation, rather than focusing only on one's own needs or desires. Consider how issues affect all members of the congregation, as well as potential members and others in the world outside the congregation.
- Making financial contributions. Not only does this provide for the support of the congregation, but it also serves as a spiritual discipline. Many Unitarian Universalists aim for a modern tithe—that is, giving 5 percent of income to the congregation, and another 5 percent to other organizations and causes that represent their values.
- Contributing time and talent. Congregations work because their members find ways to give of themselves, whether through singing, financial management, educating children, sharing their passion for social justice, organizing, cooking, greeting—the list of tasks goes on. Finding ways to give back that nurture your own soul helps to avoid resentment and supports your own growth.
- Spiritual growth and development. Working deliberately at your own spiritual development is a gift to the congregation and to the larger world.

Covenant as Promise

A covenant is not a contract, nor is it merely “rules;” it is a voluntary relationship. The idea of a covenant has biblical origins and traditionally includes the understanding that the relationship is sacred or blessed.

The focus of a covenant is on the promises one person or group of people make to another person or group of people about how they will support one another and what shared values they will uphold together. Thus, when a covenant is broken or violated, the parties involved focus on restoring relationship through reconciliation and forgiveness. Most Unitarian Universalists would agree with Jewish philosopher and theologian Martin Buber, who is credited with describing humanity as promise-making, promise-breaking, and promise-restoring. Covenant, or sacred promise, is at the heart of our free faith.

Congregational Polity Based on Covenant

The idea of congregational self-governance developed on this continent because the Puritans who arrived from Europe wanted to have responsibility for their own churches, not to have bishops dictate their practices. The church structures the colonists knew best were hierarchical; they were familiar with the Episcopal structure, where bishops and archbishops have the final word, and with the Presbyterian structure, a form of representative democracy where a body of elected representatives holds authority over the churches. They rejected hierarchical forms and adopted a different structure, the congregational system of governance, which requires each church or congregation to be independently governed and to make its own decisions in such major areas as:

- Defining membership requirements
- Electing leadership, including calling and dismissing ministers
- Purchase or sale of property.

In the matter of governance, Unitarian Universalist congregations today are directly descended from the Puritan churches that were self-governing. Each congregation has title to its property. No official in a religious hierarchy may close a Unitarian Universalist congregation, or fire its minister. No authority outside the congregation can define membership or dictate the annual budget of the congregation. Only the members of the congregation can make such determinations. This structure of self-government is called congregational polity.

While members cannot be consulted on every decision, they do vote on the most important issues. One of the important decisions is the election of leaders, generally a governing board and the call of the minister(s). Implicit in our congregational covenants is a promise to trust leaders to make decisions within particular realms, and to ask when they need guidance. For example, ministers generally have responsibility for worship-related concerns, though some issues such as adding an

extra worship service may require a congregational vote, or certainly, input. A religious educator or Religious Education Committee may create a Coming of Age program for youth, but the congregation will determine when a youth may become a member of the congregation.

Membership means that you are able to help make the important decisions. The members collectively own the congregation and are vested with the power of governance. Elected lay leaders and called ministers are accountable to the congregation.

Relationships between congregations are mutual relationships of equals, regardless of the congregations' size or influence. Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant to form the Unitarian Universalist Association of congregations, coming together for mutual benefit. Together, we can do what would be difficult for any but the very largest congregations alone, such as:

- Create religious education curricula for all ages
- Develop hymnbooks and other worship resources
- Accredite ministers and other religious professionals
- Assist congregations in searching for ministers and other religious professionals
- Support the education of both lay people and religious professionals
- Help determine best practices in religious life
- Take action to support or oppose national social issues
- Publish books (Skinner House Press and Beacon Press)
- Create brochures and pamphlets to promote Unitarian Universalism
- Help in cases of trauma or crisis, such as natural disasters
- Develop relations with Unitarians and Universalists around the world
- Interact with other faith communities
- Serve as a nexus of electronic communication for Unitarian Universalists with shared interests.

Unitarian Universalist congregations also participate in Regions, geographic groupings of congregations which work together to promote Unitarian Universalism and to support one another. Clusters are smaller groups of congregations within a Region.

A Family Project

From [Faithful Journeys](#)

GET INVOLVED

The following comes from an elementary curriculum, but the story and the project are good for all ages. Make it a project with your family, however you define family.

This story introduces marriage equality as a contemporary justice issue and presents Unitarian Universalists organizing to act on our fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle, the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

Valentines for the Governor

by Joanna Solins

Have you ever stopped to think about all the different people you love, and all the different people who love you? There are many kinds of love, and many ways to show you love someone.

Valentine's Day is a holiday that celebrates love. People often give each other cards on Valentine's Day to show they care. Receiving a valentine can make someone feel special and appreciated, especially when it's a homemade valentine. Think about the people you would give a valentine to. Would you make one for your parents or grandparents? What about your cousins, your friends, or your neighbors? What about ... your state governor?

On Valentine's Day in 2005, thousands of Unitarian Universalists in California sent valentines to their governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Do you think they sent him valentines because they loved him? No. They sent him valentines because they wanted to teach him something about love.

You see, California had a law about who was allowed to get married, and who was not. The law said if a man and a woman loved each other, they were allowed to show their love and become a family by getting married. But if two men loved each other, or two women loved each other, the law said they could not get married.

We are Unitarian Universalists. We value *all* love. When a law says some people's love is better, or more important, than other people's love, we believe that is hurtful and unfair. Telling two women, or two men, who love each other, they cannot get married also means the laws won't protect them as a family. The law says their community does not have to help

them share their life plans, their money, or even their children the same way other couples can.

That's why UU congregations in California decided to get involved and speak out about the law. They wanted to tell the governor how important marriage equality was to them. If he understood that, they thought he would support marriage equality, too.

The California congregations could have made lots of phone calls to the governor's office or written emails to the governor. But that was not enough. They wanted to do something big, something colorful — something that would grab the governor's attention.

In the days leading up to Valentine's Day, people in almost every UU congregation in California made valentines for Governor Schwarzenegger. Children and adults alike cut out paper hearts in red, pink, and all colors of the rainbow. They glued on ribbons and lace, sequins and feathers. They wrote messages of love, acceptance, and justice, because that's what marriage equality is all about.

"Dear Governor," wrote one woman from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, "Roses are red, violets are blue; all people deserve the same rights as you!"

Reverend Nada Velimirovic, from Oakland, California, made a giant valentine the governor could not miss — it was almost as tall as you are! "Please stand on the side of love!" it requested, in capital letters inside a huge pink heart.

At the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara, people set up tables to make valentines during coffee hour. Members of all ages showed each other how to cut hearts out of folded paper. They made each other's cards fancy with curly ribbons and other decorations. The young people and older people working together felt joyful and hopeful as they decorated their valentines. They talked about different kinds of love and how important it is for communities to support all kinds of families, to help love hold them together. They hoped their valentine message would convince the governor.

The Santa Barbara congregation mailed their valentines to the UU Legislative Ministry in Sacramento, the capital of California. So did dozens of other congregations — 3,800 valentines in all! The valentines were collected in huge, bags made of see-through gauze — the same material that is used to make a bride's wedding veil. Everyone could see all the special cards Governor Schwarzenegger was getting. The bags stuffed with valentines were brought directly to the governor's office. Imagine thousands of valentines, all going through the metal detector at the State Capitol Building! It was a bold, beautiful statement for love.

Later that year, when Governor Schwarzenegger had the chance to support marriage equality, he did not. But don't let that make you think the valentines weren't important. Sometimes it

takes a while to change someone's mind. The governor did not forget the valentines. A couple of years later, he decided he agreed with many Californians that the marriage laws were not fair. Maybe next time, he will be ready stand on the side of love.

The Valentine's Day action also helped Unitarian Universalists become leaders in the campaign for marriage equality in California. The children and adults who made valentines for the governor showed everyone how our congregations work together for justice. Even though UUs' numbers are small in California, compared to other religions, some of us were invited to a meeting where the governor explained his point of view about equal marriage. Then, we led a group of people from different religions to take the marriage equality campaign into California 's courts.

It was all because of our valentines. After that, Governor Schwarzenegger, his advisors and everyone working for marriage equality in California knew how Unitarian Universalists can unite in faithful action and use the democratic process to push for fairness.

Unitarian Universalists have not given up the fight for marriage equality. The journey may be long and difficult, but we must keep acting for love and justice. We hope we can persuade leaders like Governor Schwarzenegger to make our laws more fair. We know we have to keep trying.

When you have finished the story, guide a brief discussion with these questions:

- I wonder, have you ever had a time when you thought a rule was unfair?
- What can you do if you think something is unfair?
- I wonder, what does it mean when Unitarian Universalists say we believe in the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process? When the UUs in California made valentines for their governor, what did their consciences have to do with it? How did the UUs in the story use the democratic process?

What do you do next? Pick a holiday and send some cards to your Mayor, your local Representative, your Governor, your state Representative and Senators, the U.S. President, just for starters!

Wish a Happy, or Merry, or Joyous...	With a message about
Juneteenth, MLK's Birthday	Black Lives Matter, Nashville Community Oversight Board
Independence Day, Veteran's Day, Memorial Day	Voter Rights
Earth Day	Climate Change
New Year	International Relations and Participation
Labor Day, Columbus Day	Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Thanksgiving	Indigenous People's Rights
Valentine's Day	LGBTQIA+ Rights and Protections