

Welcome to Our Community

Welcome to This Community

Faith communities can help us make the most of the precious time we have to live, hold us with love, and call us to our best selves. Perhaps you are reading this pamphlet because you are intrigued by Unitarian Universalism and wonder if you can find a religious home here. Unitarian Universalists affirm the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We revel in mystery and ultimate questions and welcome spiritual curiosity. We have among us both atheists and people who believe in God, people who call God by many different names, people of multiple faith perspectives, and people exploring a life of faith for the first time.

Unitarian Universalism understands that we have much to learn from one another. People of all ages, racial or ethnic backgrounds, sexual and affectional orientations, gender identities, socio-economic classes, and abilities are valuable members of our communities. We are all enriched when the horizons of our lives are expanded by the perspective someone with different experiences can offer. In our communities, we strive to always affirm our common humanity and find beauty in the gifts and challenges of our differences. Whoever you are, you have gifts to offer.

What Holds This Community Together?

On any given Sunday or at any UU community, you may find yourself surrounded by myriad beliefs. Some among us identify as mystical humanists and find the deepest sources of their beliefs in the mystery of the natural world. Others call upon the life and example of Jesus for ethical teachings that help them chart a course through their days. Still others find their spiritual core in the ancient wisdom of Judaism. Many Unitarian Universalists find that Buddhism, with its emphasis on freedom from attachments in the material world, is a welcome antidote to the consumerism of our times. We are blessed to have among us people who identify strongly with Hindu, Muslim, and Native American traditions and belief systems. But with all this diversity, Unitarian Universalist communities affirm a common set of Principles and their members promise to help each other live them out:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible 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
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

Of course, we're only human. Our Principles represent our ideals, and sometimes we fall short in practice. Yet our promises ensure that we always strive to come back into caring and respectful relationship, speaking the truth to each other in love, admitting our errors, and looking past our grievances to each others' basic worth and value.

Unitarian Universalists are united by a conviction that beliefs and values must be expressed in

action or they are empty. We are committed to raising our voices against injustice, standing on the side of love, and acting together in community as change agents.

What Is the Origin of Unitarian Universalism?

Unitarian Universalism was born of the marriage of two religious traditions, each with a storied and lengthy history. Both Unitarianism and Universalism came out of the Protestant Reformation. Unitarianism dates back to the sixteenth century. That time was characterized by intense debates, and Unitarians—perhaps most strongly embodied by Spaniard Michael Servetus (1511-1553)—argued that the notion of the Trinity was neither Biblical nor theologically sound. Early Unitarians contended that God was One—Unitarian as opposed to Trinitarian.

Universalism was founded in response to Calvinist doctrine in the eighteenth century. Calvin espoused a theology that claimed only an elect few were chosen at birth to be saved. Early Universalist preachers offered a different message—that all people are loved by God and carry within them a divine spark. The Universalist Church was officially founded in 1793. One of the first proponents of this new faith, John Murray (1741-1815), came to the United States from England in 1770 and preached the kindness and everlasting love of God. Universalists were firm believers in the goodness of human beings. They believed all people have the potential to live good and fulfilling lives, and that religious tradition and community play an important and unique role in encouraging us to live from the core of goodness within.

Unitarian Universalists continue to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We continue to see the Holy by any name as a loving and abiding presence. Contemporary Unitarian Universalism has expanded our founders' vision to include the wisdom that uplifts love and possibility in all of the world's major faith traditions and in secular sources of inspiration:

1. 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 that create and uphold life
2. 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
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves
5. 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
6. 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.

How Can Unitarian Universalism Change My Life?

Becoming part of a spiritual community is a significant decision. For most of us, a number of other things are competing for our time and attention. Perhaps you crave continual conversation with others who are deeply engaged in the big questions of life. Perhaps you want to help make the world better with people who share your values and you know that we are stronger together than we are alone. Perhaps you want a place to share your unique gifts with others and learn from what they have to share with you, enriching and challenging each other. Perhaps you sense that a loving community makes life's challenges easier and life's joys richer. Whatever draws you into our midst, please know that you are

welcome.

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For Further Reading

Available at uua.org/bookstore

John A. Buehrens. *Universalists and Unitarians in America: A People's History* (Skinner House)

John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church. *A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism* (Beacon)

Patricia Frevert, ed. *Welcome: A Unitarian Universalist Primer* (Skinner House)

Peter Morales, ed. *Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide* (Skinner House)