

# The Faith of Unitarian Universalist Christians

Unitarian Universalist Christians are as diverse in practice and worship culture as Christianity writ large. Some gather for worship around a Communion table with pomp and pageantry. Some meet in living rooms for theological discussion and Bible study. Some belong to white-steepled parish churches on town greens where Puritan creeds are recited every Sunday and the Lord's Prayer is a standard part of worship. Others belong to congregations where the Bible is seldom read and no cross is evident. Some gladly join in saying the Apostles' Creed in an ecumenical worship service. Some express their Christianity primarily by participating in a peace march or working in a shelter for battered women. Many would do both. What Unitarian Universalist Christians have in common is their conviction that one can be both a Unitarian Universalist and a Christian, both comfortable in a non-creedal denomination and personally faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

—Rev. Thomas D. Wintle

Why am I a UU and a Christian? Because I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus fought for and died for the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. He'd take a person who other people deemed less worthy and less dignified, and he'd say—see this person? She is here. She has worth. See this homeless person? He is worthy to inherit the kingdom of God. See this gentile? She is worthy of my time. See this leper? He is worthy of my care. See this prostitute? She is a person. She is worthy of my water. See this child? She will go first. She is worthy of that honor. The last will go first, the least of these is the greatest of these. That's what Jesus' upside down kingdom looks like. Hearing and seeing the people we usually overlook, and ascribing worth to them.

I seek to know Jesus because his rallying cry was similar to the one I was brought up to understand in my Unitarian Universalist church as a child: “deeds, not creeds.” I seek to know Jesus because he did not rely on empty platitudes. Instead, Jesus acted on his conviction that God was Love—in healing the sick, eating with sinners, welcoming the stranger, feeding people, loving and forgiving those who despised him, preaching about eliminating the false differences that divide us, uniting us into one spiritual family of God with food, water, touch, spit, blood.

I seek to know Jesus because that love looked pretty dangerous. It looked like risking his own health to be with the sick. It looked like stepping outside his own religion and purity laws to befriend and defend those who didn't share the same bloodlines. It looked like visiting the prisoner (and others who most people fear). It looked like forgiving his enemies, even from the cross they hung him on.

*I seek to know Jesus so that I may live far more dangerously than I do.*

I seek to know Jesus because if this is what the light of God in the world looks like, we cannot help but stay awake.

I am a life-long Unitarian Universalist raised by atheist UU parents, a Jesus freak, and a baptized Christian.

—Rev. Robin Bartlett,  
The First Church in Sterling, MA

Becoming a Christian in my twenties, I thought I'd have to leave Unitarian Universalism, the tradition of my childhood. But I didn't want to. Theologically, I am Unitarian and Universalist, both. I believe in the unity of God, and that the essence of God is Love. And UUs are my tribe. As it has turned out, drinking from the deep well of our radical Protestant tradition, I have strengthened my faith by walking in love with Pagans, Humanists, and others in my UU church. It is good to be home.

—Rev. Jake Morrill, Oak Ridge UU Church, Oak Ridge, TN

In my Christian witness, no one's soul (or spiritual salvation) is dependent on a particular ritual, obligation, or statement of belief. There is no giant cop up in the sky dictating who will go up and who will go down. And yet I have been moved to tears by liturgical expressions of the story of Jesus and his work as a mystical teacher.

—Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, former Adult Programs Director,  
Unitarian Universalist Association

To my surprise, our free faith encouraged me to follow my heart and be led by the Spirit to a new and liberating understanding of the Christian tradition, “meeting Jesus again for the first time” as Marcus Borg put it. I am a Unitarian Universalist because of our intentional theological diversity. I am a Christian because Jesus inspires and challenges me. The rhythms of the liturgical year nourish and ground me. This tradition calls me to seek God incarnate in the stuff of this world.

—Rev. Frank Clarkson,  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Haverhill, MA

I call myself a Christian because I am a disciple of Jesus Christ—not just Jesus-that-great-guy-and-teacher-with-the-long-hair-and-sandals but Jesus the living avatar of the great God and Jesus the Christ of Easter morning. I have always said that I am a mystic at heart, and that if I had been born in pre-Christian times I would have been a devotee of the mystery religion of that time and place, perhaps the Eleusinian or Orphic rites. Christianity is the mystery religion of my time and place, and I am a devotee of it.

When we say that our living tradition draws from “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,” I think of that original community of disciples, who had a direct experience of the risen Christ that I revere and respect. It matters not at all whether I believe a dead man can be brought back to life or not, and although I used to research this question with some energy at the beginning of my Christian journey, today I have lost interest in exploring the scientific or historic whats, whens, and hows of the first Easter. Do I believe, then, in the resurrection? I believe that the original community of disciples had a direct experience of one who was truly dead, and who soon thereafter sent them out to love the world, to serve, to heal, and to overcome the forces of hatred and oppression.

And I am convicted.

—Rev. Victoria Weinstein,  
UU Congregation of Greater Lynn, Swampscott, MA

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Unitarian Universalist parents. She found Jesus in a UU church in her late twenties. Turns out he'd been there all along and she didn't know it. Robin is the Senior Pastor at the First Church in Sterling, Massachusetts, a multi-denominational, progressive Christian Church affiliated with both the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ. Robin was ordained UU, and has dual standing in both the UUA and the UCC.

## Resources

Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship [uuchristian.org](http://uuchristian.org)

*The following books and packs of this pamphlet are available from inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop, [uua.org/bookstore](http://uua.org/bookstore)*

Scotty McLennan, *Christ for Unitarian Universalists: A New Dialogue with Traditional Christianity* (Skinner House)

Kathleen Rolenz, ed. *Christian Voices in Unitarian Universalism: Contemporary Essays* (Skinner House)

Erik Walker Wikstrom, *Teacher, Guide, Companion: Rediscovering Jesus in a Secular World* (Skinner House)