

UU Identity & History

Lesson 2: What is Unitarian?

2.07.2021

Objectives: Exploring early Unitarian theology and history through the 16th century.

Materials: Teachers should download lesson plan and attachments onto their desktop.

Time allotment: Suggested for 60 minute online class.

1. Zoom Welcome (as youth arrive into the breakout classroom)

- Teachers and youth are expected to log on to zoom at 11:15am (15 min before class begins at 11:30am) so that everyone can be organized into correct breakout classrooms. We want to make sure there is an attentive adult in each breakout classroom with youth.
- Greet youth and ask everyone to correct their display name as needed. Ask everyone to select “gallery view” to see everyone else.
- Staff will attend to attendance.

2. Zoom Icebreaker: Show and Tell (5 minutes, begin while waiting for everyone to arrive)

Invite each youth to get *a pet, a plant, or a picture* that is important to them. Have them share, one at a time, about what they chose and why.

3. Chalice Lighting

Light a chalice at your home, invite youth to light their own chalices and say together: “*We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith, the light of truth and the warmth of love.*”

Teacher reads: (from UU minister, Forrest Church) “*Unitarianism proclaims that we spring from a common source; Universalism, that we share a common destiny.*”

4. Brief Check-in (5 minutes)

Continue weekly ritual/check-in (e.g. sharing a joy or sorrow so that everyone feels present in class).

5. How Did We Get Here? (10 minutes)

Teacher talks: Last week we talked about the seven UU principles. These seven principles are generally agreed upon by contemporary Unitarian Universalists.

Unitarians and Universalists did not always agree on these principles. In fact, Unitarians and Universalists were historically two separate movements until their merger in 1961 to form the Unitarian Universalist Association.

- Both started as Christian denominations.
- While most of the principles appeared in one form or another in the original 1961 statement, the modern form was adopted in the 1984/85 General Assemblies, which included the Seventh Principle—“Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”
- Both evolved to include influences from other religions as well as humanism. UUs now live out the principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from six sources:

Screen share lesson attachment 2a (Sources of Our Living Tradition). Have a different youth read each source aloud.

6. What is Unitarian? (15 minutes)

Teacher talks: So, what is a Unitarian? To answer this question, we have to dig up our roots in Christianity (our fourth source) where Unitarian Christians had to decide what they really believed at several critical moments in Western religious history.

- **Screen share** lesson attachment 2b (Our Religious Family Tree).

Teacher summarizes: Unitarians are actually related to Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, Muslims, and many others. Our family tree is called the Abrahamic family tree, a group of historically *monotheistic* faiths that trace their history back to one historic figure, Abraham, and his relationship with God.

- Ask youth to identify what branch Unitarian and Universalism are listed on the attachment (*Hint: Reformed*).
- Invite youth to point out other traditions they know.
- End screen share.

Questions for discussion:

- What does the word monotheistic mean? (*Hint: MONO means “one” and THEISTIC means “God.” The God that Jews and Christians call Yahweh, and Muslims call Allah, refers to the **one** God they worshipped.*)
- What do you know about Christian beliefs or history?
- How many of you have friends who attend a Christian church? Unless those churches are in Transylvania, your friends very likely attend a **trinitarian** Christian church. Trinitarians and Unitarians had a big argument about Jesus in the fourth century. Unitarians lost that argument but their differing beliefs did not go away.

7. Interactive Timeline (25 minutes)

- (a) **Screen share** lesson attachment 2c (Interactive Timeline: Images).
- (b) Invite group to title each image (be creative, and also concise and accurate). Write the title below each image and assign the image to a youth (some youth might be assigned to two images, teachers can also be assigned).
- (c) **Teacher shares:** I will read a historical event from early Church history—the first sixteen centuries. The group should discuss which image matches the description, the person who is assigned that image should make the final decision before a teacher confirms the choice.
- (d) Read aloud each historical event from lesson attachment 2d (Timeline of Events) and give time for the group to guess (*continue to screen share attachment 2c*).
- (e) If the group’s guess is correct say, “ding, ding, ding.” If it’s incorrect, give the group another try before telling them the answer.
- (f) Once finished, ask youth to share what surprised them or what they learned.

8. Announcement: Next Sunday, there is no RE class because of Presidents’ Day Weekend.

9. Extinguish the chalice, saying together: *“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”*

10. Leave zoom breakout classroom: wait until all youth have left, click “Leave” then “Leave Meeting.”