

UU Identity & History

Lesson 9: How do we live our faith? Part 2: Unity's seekers of justice and care

12.11.2022

Objectives: Introduce youth to the 8th principle and UUs living out their faith in the world.

Materials: UU guest, lesson attachment.

Time allotment: Suggested for 50 minute class, followed by 20 minute closing service (end class around 9:50/11:50 to begin chapel 9:55/11:55).

1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins):

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ What is one guiding value or principle for how you live your life?
 - ▶ Brainstorm questions to ask our guest.
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.
- Ask our guest to briefly introduce themselves (name/pronouns, relationship to Unity) and let youth know they will get to interview our guest later. (*Recommended: Each youth is encouraged to ask our guest at least one question.*)

2. Silly Fun: Tree Pose (5 minutes max)

We say that Unity is a place where people lead lives of integrity, service, and joy. We say that at church we find and keep our balance. So in the spirit of yoga... who can stand on one leg the longest, in a tree pose, *with their eyes closed?!?!?*



3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

Teacher reads (two quotes):

(from UU religious educator, Edith Hunter) “Perhaps we should realize that our need is not to ‘find something to believe’ – but rather to discover that our lives indicate what we believe right now. This is the place to start.”

(a saying in UU communities) “What saves us in the end is not right knowledge but right relationships we have with one another.”

4. The 8th Principle (15 minutes)

Pass out attachment. Invite youth to take a few minutes to look over the 7 Principles.

- Can a UU community follow the 7 Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism or other forms of oppression? (*Take a few minutes with this question, considering how each principle does or does not address racism.*)

Teacher summarizes: After working with congregations on issues of racial justice for over 15 years, Paula Cole Jones – a UU director for racial and social justice – realized that a person can believe they are being a “good UU” *and following the 7 Principles* without thinking about or dealing with racism and other oppressions. What was her evidence? Most UU congregations are primarily European-American in membership, culture (especially music), and leadership, *even when they are located near diverse communities*. She realized that an **8th Principle** was needed to correct this, and with other anti-racist activists, recommended in May 2017 that an 8th Principle be adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Today, Black Lives of UU (BLUU, pronounced “blue”) continues to urge the UUA to adopt this 8th Principle that reads as follows (see attachment):

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

Questions for discussion:

- In your own words, what does this principle mean?
- What is a “Beloved Community”?

(Hint: Beloved Community is NOT a description of some affectionate, loving community. “Beloved Community” is a term first coined in the early days of the 20th century by philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, then gained popularity through the prophetic work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement. Beloved Community happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, sexual orientation backgrounds/identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and in the broader world.)

- Review the language of the Seven Principles. Notice that the language is positive and *does not describe what opposes each principle* (e.g. the 1st principle does not mention prejudice and hatred; the 5th principle does not mention censorship or suppression of free press; the 7th principle does not mention pollution and habitat destruction).
 - Does the positive language risk seeming overly sunny, optimistic, and one-sided?
 - Is it important for the 8th Principle to use critical, *oppositional* language of working to “*dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions*”?

- Some voices have argued that the 8th Principle is already entailed and included in the Seven Principles. Others argue that the historical reality of white supremacy requires the specific focus of the 8th Principle. What do you think? Take a class vote whether or not to adopt the 8th Principle.

5. Unity's prophets who live the faith (30 minutes)

As another way to reflect on our involvement—as UUs and personally—in “dismantling racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions,” we have invited a Unity member to come and be our guest for today’s class. They will share a bit about their work of justice, care, and peace in their faith journey and then have opportunity to be “interviewed” by youths.

Teachers: (1) Please facilitate by welcoming our guest and inviting them to begin sharing their spiritual autobiography and how social justice and peace work connects to their faith, and (2) beginning the interview with some opening questions, including some of the following and questions of your own:

- Why do you engage in justice work? Do you engage with justice work differently by being a person of faith, and particularly UU, from the way others may engage with it? If so, how?
- What difference does it make to be part of a *faith community* engaged in justice work?
- In what specific ways have you been challenged to grow in the way you pursue social justice, especially as a UU? What are the sources that inspire and sustain your work? What do you rely upon, trust, or draw strength from?
- Have there been moments when your UU faith and your work of justice came into conflict with each other?
- How do you decide what justice looks like when what is “just” to one side seems “unjust” to the other/when there are competing interpretations of justice (like Israel and Palestine)?
- We’ve learned about some UU prophets, like Dorothea Dix, who “spoke truth to those in power.” What does it mean to you to speak truth to those in power? We also talked about being visionary as a way to “see” into the future. What does it mean to you to be visionary?
- Is there a unique contribution or role that young people can play in works of justice and peace? What would that be?

6. **Announcement:** Next week is Christmas Family Sunday. As per our class agreements, please go to the worship service with family and/or friends. The following two Sundays are Dec. 25 and Jan. 1 and there is no RE—Happy Winter Break. We will meet again Jan. 9 for Jeopardy.

7. **Say goodbye until next time:** Extinguish the chalice, saying together: *“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”*

8. **Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.
 - leave lesson plan and all materials organized
 - wipe the whiteboard clean
 - tables and chairs neatly returned
 - nametags collected in Ziploc bag
 - leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets