

International Unitarian*Universalism: Tending the Garden

Closing Unit



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* The asterisk used in this curriculum in Unitarian*Universalism stands for “and/or” to include Unitarian, Universalist and Unitarian Universalist groups that are part of our international movement. The flower shape of the asterisk helps remind us that we are part of an ever-changing garden.

International Unitarian*Universalism: Tending the Garden

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*Please note that if you are accessing The Garden of Unitarian*Universalism from the Internet, the Small Group Worship Order of Service is a separate document and must be downloaded separately, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.*

Common Ground: Preparing for this Unit

This unit is divided into two sessions. Session 1 explores what Unitarian*Universalists around the world have in common and the future of our global movement. Session 2 is a Small Group Worship service in a covenant group format in honor of the values shared by Unitarians and Universalists everywhere.

Facilitators should look over the entire unit to be prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the unit. Decide which session(s) or parts of a session to cover, which activities to do, and how long to spend on each part.

For each session, facilitators should make copies of the readings and accompanying questions and hand them out in advance of the meeting time, or ask group members to access the material online at <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>. This gives participants time to read and reflect on the material before sharing with the group.

The group or facilitator may choose one or more activities from the list under Harvesting (p. 11) to do after discussing the readings. These activities have been designed to honor other ways of learning, to create informal ways to make connections with one another and to add variety to the group meetings.

Some groups may prefer to cover this unit in one meeting to discuss the readings first and then moving on to participate in a Small Group Worship, depending on their time frame, how the class is set up (whether it is a weekly class, a workshop or a retreat) and the interests of the group. The group may include an additional Harvesting activity between the discussion and the Small Group Worship service, or after the Small Group Worship service, or at a separate meeting time. Some groups may prefer not to do the additional activities and just do the readings and accompanying questions for reflection and discussion. We have tried to allow for flexibility.

International Unitarian*Universalism

I. COMMON GROUND

Preparing for Session 1

- ___ Make copies and hand out in advance the article, *Common Ground* (p. 6-8) and accompanying pre- and post-reading questions, or have members read the material online at <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- ___ Make copies and hand out *The Tool Shed: References and Resources* (p. 12) in advance.
- ___ Choose, or have the group choose, in advance, one or more activities from *Harvesting: Additional Activities* (p. 11) to do after your discussion or Small Group Worship service. Prepare materials needed for the chosen activities.
- ___ Invite/Remind members to bring a bit of soil, a rock, a shell, or other bit of nature that represents where they come from (their garden, so to speak) for display (Hoeing, p. 8). Have a ceramic plate in which to collect the soil and space prepared for the other offerings. Or you may wish to do this at the Small Group Worship (Session 2).
- ___ Arrive early to set up your room. Add an international flair to it by displaying artifacts from countries around the world where Unitarians and Universalists are represented.
- ___ Set up a chalice. Have matches handy.
- ___ Bring a world map or globe to display
- ___ Display a bouquet of a variety of flowers, plants and tree branches and/or a photo of a mixed bouquet.
- ___ Have world music playing in the background.
- ___ Look over the instructions for facilitating the session to be prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the session.

Facilitating Session 1

1. Welcome participants. If you have chosen to share symbols of where participants come from (soil, rocks, shells, etc), ask group members to hold on to the rock, soil, shell, etc. until a little later in the group meeting.
2. Chalice lighting: *This church does not demand all people to think alike, but to think uprightly, and get as near as possible to truth; it does not ask all people to live alike but to live holy, and get as near as possible to a life perfectly divine. May it be so. - Theodore Parker, 1841, USA (adapted).*
3. Check-In/Announcements:
Give everyone in the room an opportunity to tell their names and a high or low point of their week.
Make announcements about today's session. Choose an additional activity from *Harvesting* (p. 11) for next time, if appropriate.
4. Ask members to tell the group something about the soil, rock, shell, etc. that they brought with them and to place it next to the chalice or other space set aside for this (Hoeing, p. 8).
5. Allow members to quickly and silently reread the article and look over their notes.
6. Ask members to share their answers to the exercise, *Tilling*, p. 6. After studying parts of this curriculum and seeing the great diversity among ICUU member groups, what do they feel Unitarian*Universalists worldwide have in common?
7. Ask members whether they feel an individual could believe in the Trinity and still be a Unitarian*Universalist (Hoeing, p. 8).
8. Ask members what they think Unitarian*Universalism has to offer the world (Hoeing, p. 8).
9. Ask members to share other ideas and questions they had from the article.

10. When discussion has wound down, extinguish the chalice with this responsive reading found on p. 7-8 of the handout:

May the flame of our living tradition help us hear the call to transformation: If not us, who?... If not here, where?... If not now, when?

If not us, who will model for the world a deep respect and appreciation for diverse peoples?

If not Unitarians and Universalists, who will celebrate the worldwide affirmations of faith that nurture the human spirit?

If not on our soil, where will justice between widely differing groups be built?

If not in our congregations, where will the warmth and light of inter-group co-operation be kindled and tended?

If not now, when will we fully embrace our responsibilities to serve as models in international relationships?

If not in this moment of opportunity, when will our religious movement initiate the transformative outreach to which our principles call us?

If not us, who?...If not here, where? ...If not now, when?

Harold Rosen, (adapted by Marilyn Walker for use in this curriculum)

http://www.uua.org/families/fam_justice/rainbowmaking.html

11. Gather for an *Additional Activity* from Harvesting, p. 11 (if your group decided to do so): share an international potluck meal, design a worship service for your congregation or a sharing service for the children of your congregation, design a bulletin board display – whatever you and your group have chosen to do.

Tending the Garden of International Unitarian*Universalism

Handout: *Common Ground*



Tilling

After learning about a variety of Unitarian*Universalist traditions, the diversity of our movement is obvious. What then, in your view, holds us together?

What do you think Unitarian*Universalists worldwide have in common?



Planting

Now read the following article.

Common Ground

“If we add up the most generous estimate of memberships of adults and children of all groups in the world that identify themselves as Unitarians, Universalists or Unitarian Universalists, we get just over 350, 000 – a tiny proportion of the total world population. Given that relatively small number worldwide, we are then challenged by the fact that we don’t know each other very well – and, when we actually do get to know each other, we discover that our faith has many ways of expressing itself ...” (Rex, 2003).

Our international movement is clearly diverse. The variety of plants in our garden is astounding. We are diverse ethnically, culturally, and socially. We differ in beliefs, theology and practices. And yet we “welcome and embrace this diversity as part of our identity” (Rex, 2003).

As David Usher, British Unitarian and first president of the ICUU said, “It has long been one of the cornerstones of Unitarianism to celebrate diversity, to leave the individual free to exercise his or her own conscience in the ultimate and intimate matters of faith. What is true at the individual level remains true at the national and international level” (Usher, 1995).

In his article, *A Big Picture of Our Faith*, American minister John Rex paraphrases his colleague, the Reverend Alice Blair Wesley who noted that when we join a church, we make its history our history. In order to be at home in the church, we adopt new ancestors (Rex, 2003). Perhaps we also adopt new family members when we learn about and connect with other Unitarians and Universalists around the world.

With such great diversity, we might wonder what it is that has brought us together in the first place – what common identity do we share? The Reverend Clifford Reed of the United Kingdom suggests we are held together “by membership in a movement founded on a way of being religious rather than on a doctrinally-defined religion” (Reed, 2002).

Reed’s colleague, the Reverend John Midgley, after attending an ICUU symposium in 2001, identified several things ICUU members hold in common: the ICUU principles and purposes, the impulse to make connections, the fact that we want to be religious without being heavily dogmatic, and that we are people-centered. “It is not shared doctrines but shared values” [that hold us together] (Midgley, 2001).

It has never been the purpose of the ICUU “to standardize all the different manifestations of Unitarianism around the world. [Nor] to impose definitions of what constitutes Unitarianism or Universalism ... It is not our purpose to establish a world religion; our vision is not to create a one-size-fits-all faith. [Our] purpose is to encourage the growth and development of our faith in ways which are true to the broader values of those who are drawn to us...[to build] an interconnecting network of co-religionists working for the support of each and the strengthening of all” (Usher, 1995).

Spanish Unitarian Jaume de Marcos holds great hope for the international U*U movement:

We are changing from scattered churches and associations, separated by cultural and political borders, to a new era of mutual understanding and deeper cooperation. Many more changes will certainly come in the future. But there is nothing to be afraid of. If we accept the idea that the universe is creative and that the change produces valuable things, we will welcome this change with wonder and happiness, knowing that, by doing so, we are in harmony with something that is greater than us.

(de Marcos, 2001)

This curriculum workbook is one small effort at tending the garden of Unitarian*Universalism. We hope that those who have had the opportunity to use it come away with a broader understanding

- of the cultural context that has shaped and is shaping the religious communities of Unitarian*Universalists everywhere,
- of what it means to be a Unitarian*Universalist in the world today, and
- of the promise this global U*U movement holds for the future.

Both our differences and our commonalties are reasons for tending this unique garden and for taking care of our faith, wherever it is found growing. Ours is, in every sense of the word, an uncommon faith. May we continue to cultivate our common ground.



We close this curriculum with the following responsive reading:

May the flame of our living tradition help us hear the call to transformation: If not us, who?... If not here, where?... If not now, when?

If not us, who will model for the world a deep respect and appreciation for diverse peoples?

If not Unitarians and Universalists, who will celebrate the worldwide affirmations of faith that nurture the human spirit?

If not on our soil, where will justice between widely differing groups be built?

If not in our congregations, where will the warmth and light of inter-group cooperation be kindled and tended?

If not now, when will we fully embrace our responsibilities to serve as models in international relationships?

If not in this moment of opportunity, when will our religious movement initiate the transformative outreach to which our principles call us?

If not us, who?...If not here, where?...If not now, when?

Harold Rosen, (adapted by Marilyn Walker for use in this curriculum)

http://www.uua.org/families/fam_justice/rainbowmaking.html



Hoeing

1. Given the diversity of beliefs and practices in the international U*U movement and the value we place on freedom of conscience in matters of faith, do you feel that a person could believe in the Trinity and still be a Unitarian, a Universalist or a Unitarian Universalist? Explain.
2. What do you think Unitarian*Universalism has to offer the world?
3. Bring some soil, a rock, a shell or other bit of nature that represents where you come from (your garden, so to speak) to display at the next group meeting or at the Small Group Worship.



Harvesting

Has your group decided to do any of the *Additional Activities* from Harvesting (p. 12) following the discussion of the reading? If so, prepare any materials you might need to participate.



One Garden, Many Flowers



II. SMALL GROUP WORSHIP

Preparing for Session 2

- ___ Make copies and hand out in advance the *Small Group Worship – One Garden, Many Flowers* (p10), or have members read the material online at <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- ___ Download and copy the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship – *One Garden, Many Flowers* which is a separate file, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- ___ Choose, or have the group choose, in advance, one or more activities from *Harvesting: Additional Activities* (p. 11) to do after your Small Group Worship service, if appropriate. Prepare materials needed for the chosen activities.
- ___ Invite members to bring soil, a rock, a shell or some item of nature to represent where they come from to display at the Small Group Worship service, or have on display the items brought to the group meeting for Session 1 of this unit.
- ___ Look over the instructions for facilitating the session and the Order of Service so you are prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the session.

Facilitating Session 2

Small Group Worship is designed to be a worshipful time for self-reflection and for connecting with one another. The Small Group Worship for the ICUU is based on a covenant group format which is now being used at many international U*U meetings and conferences. (See Thandeka, 2002 in references). After creating the space and preparing the materials, simply follow the Order of Service.

Space

- ___ Arrive early to set up your room. Create a worship space that is different from how the space usually looks.
- ___ Set up a chalice. Have matches handy.
- ___ Have “world music” playing in the background.

Order of Service If you haven’t already, download, copy and have available the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>. It has been designed to be printed or photocopied front to back and folded. Read through it carefully so you can lead the service comfortably.

Songs If you are not familiar with a chosen hymn or don’t have the music for it, feel free to substitute a different hymn that fits the theme of the service.

Preliminaries This is a time to make announcements and to ask for volunteers to help with the Small Group Worship tasks. If you will be following the group worship with one of the additional activities listed in *Harvesting* (p. 11), you may want to announce your agenda and what you need from the group.

After the Service If you haven’t done so already, you may want to make plans to do one of the additional activities listed in this unit (See *Harvesting*, p. 11) following this Small Group Worship. There are many to choose from, including playing the Partners games, and designing a bulletin board display.

Handout: *Small Group Worship – ICUU*

After you have read the article and had an opportunity to reflect on the international Unitarian*Universalist movement, you are ready to share in Small Group Worship.



Small Group Worship

Your facilitator will download and have ready the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship Service – *One Garden, Many Flowers*, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>

Bring a small bit of soil, a rock, shell or other item of nature that represents where you come from for display at the service, if you haven't already done so for Session 1.

The Small Group Worship for the closing unit is based on a covenant group format that is now being used at many international U*U meetings and conferences. (See Thandeka, 2002 in references). There is no article to accompany the Small Group Worship service, only an Order of Service which is a separate file and will be downloaded and copied by the facilitator.

While participating in the Small Group Worship, listen deeply to the words of hymns, prayers and readings. Listen deeply to the words of others in your group as feelings and ideas are shared with one another.





Harvesting: *Additional Activities*

1. If you didn't do so already, have an international potluck. Ask members of the group to bring a dish from any one of the countries represented by ICUU member groups listed in Unit 1, p. 11-12.
2. Go to the ICUU website, www.icuu.net and look at the global chalice lightings. Ask your worship committee or minister to include some of these in regular services throughout the year as a reminder of our global connections.
3. Become the ICUU "representatives" for your congregation. Stay abreast of ICUU-sponsored conferences, trips, news, etc. and spread the word through your newsletter and weekly announcements.
4. Design a worship service in honor of the ICUU for ICUU Sunday or other worship time.
5. If your congregation doesn't already have a partner church, consider getting information about how to become a Partner and what being a Partner entails. Present your findings to your congregation and take the necessary steps to become a Partner Church. Partner Church Council can be found at <http://www.uua.org/uupcc/>
6. Design a sharing service or religious education material for children and youth in your congregation that focuses on the ICUU and its member groups. Don't forget the games at the PCC website <http://www.uua.org/uupcc/> designed especially for kids.
7. Have a game night to play the PCC Partners games. You'll need to prepare the games ahead of time. Set up several tables with a different game at each table. Let gamers rotate from table to table. (This was done at an ICUU meeting with the ICUU representatives and a great time was had by all!) <http://www.uua.org/uupcc/>
8. Evaluate this curriculum and your group meetings. What worked well for you? What didn't work well for you? What would you recommend be done differently in the future? What images, thoughts and feelings will you take away with you? What would you like to share with others who did not participate?
9. If you haven't done so already, make a bulletin board display about the ICUU and its member groups.
10. Your own ideas.



The Tool Shed: *References and Additional Resources*

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