

Unitarianism in Transylvania

The Oak Tree



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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.

Unitarianism in Transylvania: The Oak Tree

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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 for Session 3 is a separate document and must be downloaded separately, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.*

Unitarianism in Transylvania: Preparing for this Unit

This unit is divided into three sessions. Session 1 covers the history and context of Unitarianism in Transylvania. Session 2 covers beliefs and practices of Transylvanian Unitarians. Session 3 is a Small Group Worship service based on a traditional Transylvanian Sunday service.

Facilitators should look over the entire unit to be prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the unit and to 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.

In addition, for Sessions 1 and 2, the group or facilitator may choose one or more activities from the list under Harvesting (p. 19) 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 more than one session at a group meeting, depending on the 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. 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.

Unitarianism in Transylvania

I. HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Preparing for Session 1

- ___ Make copies and hand out in advance the article, *A Story of Strength and Endurance* (p. 5-8) 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. 20-21).
- ___ Choose, or have the group choose, in advance, one or more activities from *Harvesting: Additional Activities* (p. 19) to do after your discussion. Prepare materials needed for the chosen activities.
- ___ Invite members to bring items from Transylvania to display.
- ___ Arrive early to set up your room.
- ___ Set up a chalice. Have matches handy.
- ___ Bring a map or globe on which you can locate Transylvania.
- ___ Display an oak branch, oak leaves and/or a photo of a beautiful oak tree.
- ___ Have Hungarian folk music or music by Béla Bartók or another Hungarian composer, playing in the background. (Bartók was a Unitarian.)
- ___ Make copies of handouts for the next session you plan to cover.
- ___ 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 and invite those with items to display to put them out on a table, perhaps next to the chalice.
2. Chalice lighting:
We kindle our chalice flame as a symbol of the light in every heart. – Anonymous
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 and upcoming sessions as needed. Choose an activity from *Harvesting* (p. 19) for next time, if appropriate. Distribute handouts for the next session you plan to cover.
4. Allow members to quickly and silently reread the article and look over their notes.
5. Locate Transylvania on a map or globe. Ask members what they knew about Transylvania before they read the article (Tilling, p. 5).
6. Ask members to share their ideas and questions from the article.
7. Ask members to share what surprised them about the history of Unitarianism in Transylvania (Hoeing, p. 7).
8. When discussion has wound down, extinguish the chalice:
Go in peace and be makers of peace. – Anonymous
9. Gather for your *Additional Activity* from *Harvesting* (p. 19) – Bible study, map exploration, playing the Partner Church game, cooking, dancing, painting banners, listening to the travel experiences of others – whatever you and your group have chosen to do.

The Oak Tree: Unitarianism in Transylvania

Handout: *A Story of Strength and Endurance*



Tilling

Before reading the following article, locate Transylvania, Romania on a map or globe. Write down what you know about Transylvania, its geography, history and culture.



Planting

Now read the article about the history and context of Transylvanian Unitarianism. As you read, write down ideas and questions in the margins for possible discussion later.

A Story of Strength and Endurance

A logical first place to start a tour of the Garden of Unitarian*Universalism is with a look at Unitarianism in Transylvania. The responsible search for truth and meaning, for freedom in matters of faith has been planted far and wide, but the seed planted in Transylvania has endured for over four hundred years. Like an oak tree, it has grown deep roots and a sturdy trunk with strong branches. New branches form, old branches put on new growth. Transylvanian Unitarianism has weathered many storms and, in spite of often unfavorable conditions, continues to grow in strength and beauty.

Transylvania is located in central Europe between Hungary and the Carpathian Mountains. It is a mostly rural area in the northeast corner of Romania. ‘Transylvania’ means ‘the land beyond (or through) the forest.’ The Reverend Harold Babcock describes Transylvania as “a land of rolling green hills and beautiful valleys, of small, red clay tile-roofed villages and walled, medieval cities. The beautiful, snow-capped Carpathian Mountains loom in the distance. It is a poor place economically, but rich in the beauty of its land and in its friendly and hospitable people” (2001).

For more than a thousand years, though ethnically diverse, Transylvania was part of an autonomous Hungarian region. (For historical maps of Transylvania, see the online text of E. M. Wilbur’s *Our Unitarian Heritage* at <http://online.skism.edu/ouh/book.html>). Although the region is now part of Romania, 30 to 40 percent of Transylvania’s population is Hungarian. In Romania overall, only about seven percent of the population is Hungarian (about 2 million out of a population of more than 22 million); 89 percent of the population is Romanian; Roma (Gypsy), Germans (Saxons), Ukrainians, Russians and Turks make up the remaining four percent.

After Hungary’s defeat as part of the Axis powers in World War I, the Treaty of Trianon called for Hungary’s partition, and in 1920 Transylvania became part of the modern nation of Romania. Following the treaty, the Hungarian, German, Roma, Jewish and other non-Romanian ethnic groups of Transylvania became the subjects of systematic “non-violent” cleansing. “Romania has mostly managed to avoid the ethnic violence of other Balkan nations;” (Babcock, 2001) however, other methods of controlling or destroying the Hungarians and their culture have

been used. Forced relocation of Romanians into Transylvania and Hungarians out of Transylvania to tip the ethnic balance in that region was one method. A process of literally destroying villages that were predominantly Hungarian was another method. Bözödújfalú, a town near the village of Korispatak was flooded by the construction of a dam a few miles away. The dam was not designed to make electricity; it was designed to make a resort lake and flood out several Hungarian villages. "It is chilling to see, when the water level is low, the spire of a church reaching heavenward from the depths of the lake" (McAllister, 1998). A former resident of the destroyed village placed a memorial plaque to the community that used to live there. The plaque reads, "Here Jews and Christians, Unitarians and Catholics, Hungarians and Romanians lived together in harmony."

"Because most of the positions of power in Romania are held by Romanians, life can be challenging for the Hungarian minority. Even in remote villages, the local police officer is almost always a Romanian, though practically everyone else in the village is Hungarian and speaks Hungarian" (Babcock, 2001). As recently as 1990 in the town of Tîrgu Mûres, Hungarians who were protesting for greater use of the Hungarian language in schools and on printed government materials, were attacked by Romanian extremists who support the use of violence against minorities (Willis, 2001). Five people died and over 250 were wounded.

However the Hungarians of Transylvania "are survivors. In the last century alone, they survived World War I, the annexation of their country by Romania, the rise of Nazism and World War II, and the fall of the Iron Curtain. They endured the terrible years of Soviet Communism, culminating in the 1989 overthrow and execution of the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, one of whose goals had been to eradicate ethnic Hungarian culture in Romania" (Babcock, 2001).

Ceausescu prohibited the teaching of Hungarian in schools and all public use of the Hungarian language and of Hungarian names for cities and towns. He shut down Hungarian newspapers. He forbade Hungarians from giving their children Hungarian names at baptism and the wearing of traditional Hungarian dress. He moved hundreds of thousands of Moldavian and Wallachian farm and factory laborers into Transylvania, while forcibly relocating Hungarians from their homeland to other parts of Romania (Kaplan, 1993).

This repression was directed at Hungarian Unitarians as well. For many years, the Unitarian Theological School in Kolosvar (called Cluj-Napoca in Romanian) was allowed only one new ministerial student per year so that many village churches were without ministers. Opportunities to study or publish books were almost entirely eliminated. The Unitarian Church in Brasov was not allowed to put a sign on the exterior of its building unless they paid a \$3,000 tax, which they could not afford. "We Unitarians are among those who are seen as aliens in our own country, enemies of the dominant Romanians and a scourge in society. Our Unitarian ancestors were the first people in the world to proclaim religious tolerance and freedom of conscience as law ... when John Sigismund was king of Transylvania in 1568, he had the power to force Unitarianism on to others; instead, he offered them the right of choice. Yet today, his descendants are the targets of ethnic cleansing and religious intolerance in our own land. After 433 years of proclaiming it as a law, we still wait for tolerance" (Gyero, 2001).

"Among the Hungarian population in Romania, three religions have been traditionally practiced: Roman Catholicism, Protestant Reformed Calvinism (sometimes referred to as Presbyterianism), and Unitarianism. Only Unitarianism is indigenous" (Babcock, 2001). There are presently about 80,000 Unitarians in Transylvania. Hungarian Unitarians are a double

minority in Romania by being both Hungarian and Unitarian. The small German minority in Romania practices Lutheranism. Most Romanians are Eastern Orthodox. There are some Roma (Gypsy) Unitarians and a handful of Romanian Unitarians, mainly through ethnically-mixed marriages.

Hungarians in Romania would like to preserve their native language and cultural values. “Not surprisingly, the Hungarians stick together regardless of their religious affiliations.” (Babcock, 2001). Several Unitarian Church buildings are shared with Reformed congregations. The Unitarian seminary in the Transylvanian city of Kolosvar is a joint venture with the Reformed Church (Babcock, 2001).

Unitarianism in Transylvania traces its roots directly to the Protestant Reformation of the 1500’s (for a detailed history of Unitarianism in Transylvania, see Wilbur, 1925 or Howe, 1997). The first use of the name “Unitarian” occurs around 1600 in Transylvania. The greatest hero of Transylvanian Unitarianism is the reformer Dávid Ferenc (pronounced Da-veed Ferenc), also known as Francis Dávid, who lived from 1510 to 1579.

“A brilliant and charismatic leader, Dávid is most famous for his role in the 1568 Diet of Torda, which resulted in the great Edict of Torda, the first known declaration of religious toleration, and a document which allowed the ‘heretical’ Unitarians to practice their religion as one of the so-called ‘four received faiths’ of Transylvania” (Babcock, 2001).

Dávid was originally a Catholic who thought his way through to Protestantism and eventually to the unitarian (as opposed to trinitarian) point of view. “It was his eloquent statements for the Oneness of God which convinced the Transylvanian king, Zsigmond János (John Sigismund), to adopt a Unitarian perspective, and to subsequently issue an Edict of Religious Toleration, which gave Transylvanians the freedom to practice religion as they chose to – Catholic, Protestant, or Unitarian. This proclamation for religious freedom was radical for its time and place and, sadly, lasted only as long as John Sigismund was king” (McAllister, 1998). After Sigismund died, Francis Dávid was imprisoned as a heretic and died in captivity in a cave-jail.

Unitarianism did not end, however. Even though Unitarianism became illegal, the tree that had been planted, and those who tended it, were too strong to die out. “We would like others to understand and honor our traditions and our struggle to stay alive for such a long time under such horrific conditions” (Székely, 2003).

“The history of Unitarianism in Transylvania is one of both advances and setbacks, but mostly of remarkable survival. It has survived numerous political and religious upheavals, and even a long period when any ‘innovation’ in its practice was strictly forbidden by the ruling authorities. It is perhaps this latter factor which gives Transylvanian Unitarianism its character and feel. There is something ancient and solid about Transylvanian Unitarianism which is both profound and comforting” (Babcock, 2001).



Hoeing

What surprised you about the history and culture of Transylvania? Be prepared to share your thoughts with the group.



Harvesting

Has your group decided to do any of the *Additional Activities* from Harvesting (p. 19) following the discussion of the reading? If so, prepare any materials you might need.



Unitarianism in Transylvania

II. BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Preparing for Session 2

- ___ Make copies of and hand out in advance the article, *A Life-Centered Movement* (p. 10-14), and accompanying pre- and post-reading questions, or have members read the material online at <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- ___ Make copies of and hand out *The Tool Shed: References and Resources* (p. 20-21) in advance, if your group hasn't received it already.
- ___ Choose, or have the group choose, in advance, one or more activities from *Harvesting: Additional Activities* (p. 19) to do after your discussion. Prepare materials needed for the chosen activities.
- ___ Invite members to bring items from Transylvania to display.
- ___ Arrive early to set up your room.
- ___ Set up a chalice. Have matches handy.
- ___ Bring a map or globe depicting Transylvania.
- ___ Display an oak branch, oak leaves and/or a photo of a beautiful oak tree.
- ___ Have Hungarian folk music or music by Béla Bartók, or other Hungarian composer, playing in the background. (Bartók was a Unitarian).
- ___ Make copies of handouts for the next session you plan to cover.
- ___ Look over the instructions for facilitating the session so you are prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the session.

Facilitating Session 2

1. Welcome participants and invite those with items to display to put them out on a table, perhaps next to the chalice.
2. Chalice lighting:
We kindle our chalice flame as a symbol of the light in every heart. – Anonymous
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 and upcoming sessions as needed. Choose an *Additional Activity* from *Harvesting* (p. 19) for next time, if appropriate. If you are doing the Small Group Worship service, you will probably not have time for an additional activity next session. Distribute handouts for the next session you plan to cover.
4. Allow members to quickly and silently reread the article and look over their notes.
5. Ask members how they defined Christian before they read the article (Tilling, p. 10).
6. Ask members whether and how their definition of Christian changed after reading the article (Hoening, p. 13).
7. Ask members to compare their Unitarian*Universalist church or fellowship with a Transylvanian Unitarian church (Hoening, p. 13).
8. Ask members to share other ideas and questions they had from the article.
9. When discussion has wound down, extinguish the chalice:
Go in peace and be makers of peace. - Anonymous
10. Gather for an *Additional Activity* – Bible study, map exploration, playing the Partner Church game, cooking, dancing, painting banners, listening to the travel experiences of others – whatever you and your group have chosen to do.

The Oak Tree: Unitarianism in Transylvania

Handout: *A Life-Centered Movement*



Tilling

Transylvanian Unitarians identify themselves as Christian Unitarians. How would you define Christian? What beliefs must a Christian hold?



Planting

Read the following article about beliefs and practices of Transylvanian Unitarians. As you read, make notes in the margins of thoughts or questions that you might like to discuss later.

A Life-Centered Movement

Theologically, Unitarianism in Transylvania is theistic. “It is a Protestant, non-dogmatic, Christian denomination, and a liberal and progressive religious community. Transylvanian Unitarians do not believe in the Trinity of God; God is one, both in essence and in person. But above all, God is Love. We think that the purpose of our life is this: with Love of God and neighbors, with free will and unselfish duty we must create happiness for all creatures on Earth” (Rezi, 2001).

“We are theist and we consider ourselves Christian because we consider Jesus as our teacher, master, and prophet. We would like to live as he taught us. Once Jesus was asked what is the main teaching of religion? He replied, ‘Love God, and love your neighbor’” (Székely, 2003).

Transylvanian Unitarians believe that Jesus was human, and a prophet of God. The idea that Jesus died on the cross as a divine sacrifice finds no place in Transylvanian Unitarian belief; Jesus was a leader and a wise teacher, not a savior. Hungarian Unitarians believe that Jesus’s teachings about love, compassion and justice are more important than all ideas and dogmas about his life (Rezi, 2001).

When you visit a Transylvanian Unitarian church you will not see any crosses or pictures of Jesus because the tradition is clear that Jesus was not God. “Egy Az Isten” (pronounced edge oz eeshten) - God is One - is carved over almost every door. The religious symbol is not the Flaming Chalice, though because of the international connections through the Partner Church Program and the International Council of Unitarian and Universalists, many, if not most, Transylvanian Hungarians recognize the Flaming Chalice as a Unitarian symbol. The symbol for Hungarian Unitarians, both in Transylvania and in Hungary, is the dove and the serpent, reminding people to be wise as the serpent and gentle as the dove. It is a symbol far older than the Flaming Chalice. (To learn more about the symbol, see Unit 2: Unitarianism in Hungary).

The Bible is held in great reverence as a source of truth and a guide to human beings. To Transylvanian Unitarians, it is an inspiration from which ethical and spiritual encouragement can be drawn. It is not accepted blindly or literally, but under the guidance of reason and conscience.

For Unitarians everywhere religion is a matter of deeds, not creeds. Transylvanian Unitarians are no exception. “The real purpose of religion is not to prepare people for another life, but to inspire them to live this life as it ought to be lived. This is why Transylvanian Unitarianism is a life-centered religious movement” (Rezi, 2001).

Worship is very important to Transylvanian Unitarians.

For us in Transylvania, worship is the reality, the act of being religious, and we consider worship to be the most important part of our religious life... Our Unitarianism is theistic Unitarianism, based not on the dogmas of Christianity, but on the values. The values of Christianity provide the main features of our worship. This means that in our worship the main purpose is to open up the spirit towards the divine and to create some connectedness with the transcendent; while at the same time being connected with fellow worshippers, worshipping together with us.

For us worship is not simply joyful, happy, tolerant, (and) easy-going...when we think about holy and divine things, we tend to be serious. This is the seriousness of compassion and of being in love. So for us worship is to celebrate and to feel this celebration as something which lifts us beyond ourselves and connects us to our higher self and to the higher reality.

The structure of our worship is focused. So we have prayers said by the minister and we have many hymns. Our tradition is the European Christian tradition where worship is led by the minister, but in our new liturgy, being Unitarians, we try to involve members of the congregation more with saying certain prayers together, and by allowing them space to participate. Since we are the heirs of the rationalist and humanist heritage, the sermon remains the main part of our worship pointing us towards the divine and the transcendent.

In my conviction, worship is a unique opportunity for everyone to find himself, to find the ‘other’ person, to find the divine, and through the divine to find the spirit of life. So that’s why, when I’m leading worship, when I’m taking part in worship, even when I’m joyful, even when I’m laughing, or whatever I’m doing, I feel the seriousness of worship.

(Kovacs, 2001)

Preaching in the church is predominantly practical rather than doctrinal. Study and practices are based on the Protestant Bible, the Transylvanian Unitarian hymnbook and other books deemed useful. The hymnbook includes hymns from the 16th century through the ages to recent times. Folk songs may be sung at special church occasions. The order of service is usually an introductory hymn, a second hymn, a prayer, recitation of the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father, a third hymn, a Bible reading (related to the sermon), the sermon, a silent prayer, a closing prayer, and a blessing. Services other than Sundays and holidays include baptisms (christenings), confirmation, Lord’s Supper (communion), wedding ceremonies and funeral services. All of these serve to strengthen the spiritual, moral and religious life of Transylvanian Unitarians.

Most Unitarians in Transylvania are Unitarian because they were born into Unitarian families, but it is through baptism that they become publicly recognized as members of the

Unitarian Church. “Baptism does not make anyone a Christian. Baptism is merely a solemn expression on the part of parents and godparents that they appreciate their Christian Unitarian faith and want their children to grow up and live in that faith too” (Rezi, 2001).

At ages 14 to 16, Unitarian youth are confirmed in the church. Through confirmation they become independent members of the church and assume responsibility before God for their deeds and faithfulness. Preparing for confirmation can be a one to two year process. It involves, among other things, learning the church catechism. (See Hungarian Catechism at <http://www.unitarius.hu/english/catechism.html>) The Unitarian catechism is not a set of binding beliefs, or dogma, but a study of the Bible and Unitarian history and how these can guide their lives. The process of confirmation serves to strengthen their faith.

The Lord’s Supper, or communion, is the liturgy through which Jesus’s life, work and death are remembered. It is celebrated with bread and wine four times a year: at Easter, Pentecost, on Thanksgiving Day (the last Sunday of September), and on Christmas Sunday. The ritual is done in memory of Jesus and the Last Supper. Emphasis is on remembering Jesus’s words to his community and on following his example in our own lives by creating a compassionate human community. It is a powerful and moving ritual, but is not viewed as a sacrament.

In the Transylvanian Unitarian catechism there is a short credo that is often recited at the closing of special services such as a funeral service:

I believe in One God, the creator of life, our caring Father.
I believe in Jesus, the best child of God, our true teacher.
I believe in the holy spirit.
I believe in the vocation of the Unitarian Church.
I believe in forgiveness and in eternal life.

Transylvanian Unitarianism is Christian but not trinitarian. God, Jesus and holy spirit are separate entities. Jesus was the son of God as we are all children of God. Holy spirit is the divine in each of us and in the world. Transylvanian Unitarians have hope that there is ‘life eternal’ but “stop short of expressing definite knowledge of the *what* or *where* of such existence. For many it [eternal life] is a positive belief that Life itself is eternal and that the soul is immortal” (Rezi, 2001).

Unitarians in Transylvania are called to worship by the ringing of the church bell. They come together in community every Sunday and for holidays and special events. The holidays they celebrate remind us once again of the oak. Religious holidays are old and well-rooted. They are connected mostly with Jesus’s life and are celebrated at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Services for these holidays are held for three days. The week before Easter, beginning on Palm Sunday, is called Faith Strengthening Week. During this week, there may be a church service every evening with a guest minister who may even be from a different denomination.

Other holiday celebrations are more like the branches and leaves of the oak, new growth. Not as old as the religious holidays but special and nurtured just the same. These holidays include January 24, in honor of religious freedom; March 15, in remembrance of the Hungarian revolution of 1848-49; Thanksgiving; Day of the Dead on November 1; November 15, the memorial day of Francis Dávid’s death; the last day of the old year and the first day of the new year, Mothers’ Day (the first Sunday of May) and, one of the newest leaves, Partner Church Sunday (the third Sunday of March).

Ministers from all denominations, including the Unitarian church, are allowed to offer religious education in the public schools for students in each grade during the school week. At the church, there is religious education on Saturdays. Some churches have Sunday school too. Again, the old co-exists with the new. Children learn stories from the Bible; they learn about Jesus's life and teachings. They hear the story of Francis Dávid and other prominent Unitarians in Transylvania. They also learn about the life of other famous Unitarians worldwide and about historical and international figures who, with their lives and work, enriched humankind, people such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Albert Schweitzer. Stories of the lives of the founders of other religions are also included in their lessons. Children are taught in traditional ways but also in new ways modeled on North American religious education programs. Children sometimes perform in church on holidays: reciting poems, singing songs, performing short dramas.

There is great change happening in the church, but it is not change that cuts away at the solid tree that is Transylvanian Unitarianism. Rather, new branches and leaves are forming. In 1990, women entered the seminary and many young ministers graduated. Partnerships between Transylvanian and British and North American churches have been very successful and brought new ideas and practices. Lay-persons have been invited to join the church leadership. Conferences and leadership trainings are being held. There is a Women's Association, men's choirs, mixed choirs and a thriving youth movement (Székely, 2003).

Transylvanian Unitarianism is moving forward, open to change and innovation. The Reverend Dr. Rezi Elek describes Unitarianism as "a religious movement which has demonstrated the ability to absorb and synthesize new ideas and insights." He feels that "the power of Unitarianism is and will be its openness to change" (2001). But Unitarians in Transylvania are also protective of their deep-rooted religious traditions and with good reason. As the Reverend Harold Babcock states, "There is much to be learned from Transylvanian Unitarians, not least of which is the powerful and courageous depth of their convictions which has allowed them to survive through the good times and the bad for over four hundred years, but also the great poetry and passion of their faith. Religion is their life; it informs their lives on a daily basis" (2001).

Transylvanian Unitarians describe themselves as life-centered. They value life and an action-oriented faith. They "welcome new knowledge of every kind, combat superstition and ignorance, foster the spread of wisdom and understanding, and seek always to weave a web of human brotherhood the world over, with the threads of love, truth, and sincerity. Unitarianism, at its best, is 'religion-in-life,' an expression of the divine possibilities of life here and now – and further" (Rezi, 2001). Unitarianism in Transylvania has old, strong roots, a sturdy trunk, flexible branches and supple, new leaves.



Hoeing

Does Transylvanian (Hungarian) Christian Unitarianism fit your original definition of Christian?
How is it the same? How is it different?

How does your Unitarian*Universalist church, fellowship or group compare with a Transylvanian Unitarian church?



Harvesting

Has your group decided to do any of the *Additional Activities* from Harvesting (p. 19) following the discussion of the reading? If so, prepare any materials you might need.



Unitarianism in Transylvania

III. SMALL GROUP WORSHIP

Preparing for Session 3

- ___ Make copies and hand out in advance the article, *The Bells are Calling Us to Worship* (p. 17-18) and accompanying pre- and post-reading questions, or have members read the material online at <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- ___ Make a copy for yourself of the sermon on p. 22 for use in the Small Group Worship.
- ___ Make copies and hand out *The Tool Shed: References and Resources* (p. 20-21) in advance, if your group doesn't already have it.
- ___ Make copies of handouts for the next session you plan to cover. These will be for distribution when you meet for the Small Group Worship.
- ___ Download and copy the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship – Unitarianism in Transylvania, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- ___ Bring the list of *Additional Activities* (Harvesting) from the next unit to be studied, if appropriate.
- ___ Invite members to bring items from Transylvania to display at the Small Group Worship service.
- ___ Look over the instructions for facilitating the session and the Order of Service to be prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the session.

Facilitating Session 3

Small Group Worship is designed to be a worshipful time for participants to experience a service based on a traditional Transylvanian service. It is a time for both self-reflection and for connecting with one another. 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. Consider setting the room up with a pulpit for the facilitator with participants facing the pulpit. Men and women might be seated on different sides of the room as is traditional in a Transylvanian church.
- ___ Set up a chalice. Have matches handy.
- ___ Display an oak branch, oak leaves and/or a photo of a beautiful oak tree.
- ___ Photos of Transylvanian villages and Unitarian churches might also be used and are available at <http://www.unitarius.hu>
- ___ Have Hungarian folk music or music by Béla Bartók or another Hungarian composer, playing in the background. (Bartók was a Unitarian.)

Order of Service If you haven't already, download, copy and have available the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship. It has been designed to be printed or photocopied front to back and folded. Read through it carefully so you can lead it 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 has a similar theme.

Readings Although it may not be traditional to do so, consider doing the readings as responsive readings. Or ask a member of the group to read aloud.

Sermon (page 22) Read the sermon at the appropriate time during the service. Do not hand it out for members to read. Although it is not part of a Transylvanian service to discuss a sermon during the service, as part of Small Group Worship, we use this activity to help members

make deep connections with one another. Members may choose to share their thoughts or remain silent.

Check-In/Announcements In a Transylvanian church this would be a time to make announcements concerning congregational life. We are extending this part for members to share what is happening in their lives right now as well as to set aside a time for you, the facilitator, to make announcements regarding the next group meeting or plans for after the Small Group Worship service or for providing handouts for the next session.

Unitarianism in Transylvania

Handout: *The Bells are Calling Us to Worship*

After you have read the articles and reflected on Unitarianism in Transylvania, you are ready to share in Small Group Worship.



Small Group Worship

The order of service for this small group worship honoring Transylvanian Unitarians follows the order of service of a typical Sunday service in a Transylvanian Unitarian church. To prepare for the Small Group Worship, first read *The Bells are Calling Us to Worship*.

Bring an item from Transylvania if you have one, for display at the service.

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

The Bells are Calling Us to Worship

The outline for the Small Group Worship is based on the Transylvanian Unitarian liturgy described below. Your facilitator will download and have ready the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship.

- A. The time of the service:** Sunday morning services ordinarily begin at 11:00 AM. Church bells call worshippers to gather, beginning at 10:00 AM and ring at half hour intervals prior to the start of the service. This call to worship varies from village to village and bells may be rung on the quarter hour instead.
- B. The liturgy of the service:** Members may enter the church until the end of the third bell ringing and sit in the pews. When the bell ringing stops, the minister enters the sanctuary and sits in the minister's pew; the congregation remains seated or stands up, as local custom requires.
 1. Members stand to sing the first hymn.
 2. Members sit while singing the main song. Everybody sings.
 3. At the end of the song, the minister goes to the pulpit. Members stand while the minister says a prayer which may be five to six minutes in length.
 4. This is followed by the Lord's Prayer. It is said by the minister, although members may chose to recite the prayer with the minister.
 5. Members stand to sing another hymn, the middle song.
 6. The minister will introduce a reading from the Bible: "Believers gathered to worship, sisters and brothers, dear friends! The main idea of my sermon is from [for example], the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5, verse 10." The minister may read the text twice.

7. The sermon will be based on the reading and will be approximately 20-25 minutes long.
8. Members stand for a closing prayer which may last about two minutes. The prayer is said in an encouraging, stimulating, urging style. After the prayer, members sit down.
9. The minister then introduces time for silent prayer or meditation, for example, “God is Spirit and those who worship, must worship in Spirit and truth (John 4,24); let us hear the voice of the spirit, and pray in silence, deeply inside.” A minute of silence is ended by the minister saying, “Amen.”
10. Announcements about congregational life are given: what kind of services happened last week, what happened in the life of the congregation and what is coming up.
11. The minister gives a benediction asking God’s blessing on the congregation, for example, “May the love and blessing of God, be and remain with all of us for ever. Amen.” The minister comes down from the pulpit and sits in the pew.
12. Members sit while singing a closing song.
13. Members leave the church sanctuary following local customs; usually the minister leaves first, and at the entrance of the church greets the members and shakes their hands.

Resource: Leta, S. (2000). *Liturgy*. Petrosani Unitarian Church homepage. Retrieved February 4, 2004 from <http://www.fortunecity.com/victorian/rodin/727/petrosani/13e.htm>





Harvesting: Additional Activities

Below are activities that you might want to do later as a group or at home with family and friends.

1. God is One (*Edgy Az Isten*) is carved or painted on many Transylvanian Unitarian churches. Design, make and display a banner that illustrates your personal or church theology.
2. Francis Dávid moved from Catholicism to Lutheranism to Calvinism to finally emerge as a Unitarian. Read his story in *Credo International: Voices of Religious Liberalism from Around the World* by Don McEvoy. (2003). Del Mar, CA: Humanity Press, p. 23-26. Draw, write about or simply describe your religious journey and share it with the group. If the group is large you may want to divide into smaller groups to share your stories.
3. Learn more about Béla Bartók at <http://www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/belabartok.html> This site includes MIDI files of some of his music. Listen to some of his music. Find out whether anyone in your group is a musician and is willing to perform some Bartók, or listen to recordings together.
4. Play the Partner Church Game focusing on Transylvania. This can be downloaded from the Partner Church website at <http://www.uua.org/uupcc/> Although originally designed for children, adults enjoy playing it too.
5. Cook Hungarian food. There are many recipes on the Internet. You can find some at <http://www.geocities.com/NapaValley/4887/>
6. Learn some Hungarian folkdances. Listen to Hungarian folk music. MIDI files of Hungarian folk songs are available at <http://w3.enternet.hu/sandor64/songs/songs.htm>
7. If members of your group have lived in, traveled in or had personal experience with Transylvania, set aside time when they can share what they know with the group.
8. (For use after Session 2: Beliefs and Practices) Design a service for your congregation that is similar to a Transylvanian Unitarian service. Which hymns will be sung? Which prayers will be said? On what story or reading from the Bible will you base a sermon? See the Partner Church Council website for ideas for services: <http://www.uua.org/uupcc/>
9. (For use after Session 3: Small Group Worship) Draw a line, imaginary or real. Label one end “Completely Comfortable”, the other “Not at all Comfortable”. Ask members to place themselves anywhere along the continuum to answer the question: How comfortable did you feel with the content of the Small Group Worship service? Why?
10. Your own ideas.



The Tool Shed: *References and Additional Resources*

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Unitarian Universalist Historical Society. (April 24, 2003). Retrieved January 20, 2004 from <http://www.uua.org/uuhs/index.html> and <http://www.uua.org/uuhs/UUresources/UUresources.html#FUU>

Facilitators should download and have ready the Order of Service for Transylvanian Unitarianism Small Group Worship, which is a separate file.

<http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>



Sermon (*For use by the facilitator*)

Transylvanian Unitarianism

by the Rev. Dr. Elek Rezi, 2002

“...First of all, Unitarianism in Transylvania theologically is entirely Christian.

We consider that the one purpose of real religion is not to prepare people for another life, but to inspire them to live this life as it ought to be lived. We consider that religion is a matter of deeds, not creeds.

We believe in the existence of one God. This statement is based on Jesus’s teaching expressed firmly in his discussion with the lawyers, “The Lord our God is the only Lord” (Mark 12:29). God is eternal. There is no beginning or end to the life of God. While people have held many views about God, God has never changed, God is Spirit (pneuma) (John 1 4:24), and the invisible reality of the universe. Transylvanian Unitarians do not believe in the Trinity of God; God is one both in essence and person. But above all, God is LOVE. (1 John 4:16). The world is God’s creation; that is why in the world of God everything has its place, ways and duties. That is why we must protect our world and do our best to make it more beautiful, more full of gratitude and richer.

We believe that human beings are the noblest creation of God. God has blessed them with certain talents, virtues and values. These are:

Faith, which keeps us in relationship with God, and which is the fundamental aspect of peace in our hearts.

Reason, which is the ability to gather knowledge to think and to form opinions about God, ourselves, our neighbours and the world (universe).

Conscience, which is the spiritual talent which guides our actions, and encourages us for good, but restrains us from evil.

Free will, which is that spiritual gift by which we can make choices in our life, but which requires our responsibility.

Love, which is the most precious of the values that we have. It works in us to three directions: Love to God, Love to human beings, and love to the world or universe. We think that the purpose of our life is this: with Love of God and neighbours, with free will and unselfish duty we must create happiness for all creatures on the earth.”

The full text of this talk by the Reverend Dr. Elek Rezi can be found in Hill, A., J. McAllister, and C. Reed (eds). (2002). “A Global Conversation: Unitarian/Universalism at the Dawn of the 21st Century.” Prague: International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. pp. 59-71.

