



New UU Orientation for Children and Youth

Adapted by Joan McDonald for use by
First Unitarian Church of Des Moines

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Age Level: K-12

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Three-Hour Orientation Course

produced for use at the

First Universalist Society in Franklin
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INTRODUCTION

To introduce children and youth to Unitarian Universalism in the same manner that we introduce adults to it. The orientation is organized similarly to adult orientations, but deals with issues on a child and youth level.

This orientation course is designed to meet the needs of children and youth (K-12). It is not intended to be a course to teach the Principles and Purposes nor is it intended to give a history of Unitarian Universalism. It is, however, intended to give a brief overview of what it means to be Unitarian Universalist.

- Whereas, the adults might discuss what churches and belief systems they have encountered; the children and youth will discuss who we are as individuals and the importance of finding our individuality.
- Whereas, the adults might discuss the inner workings of the church; the children and youth will learn why a democratic process is important.
- Whereas, the adults might discuss Unitarian Universalism history and theology; the children and youth might discuss what is true and right.
- Whereas, the adults might discuss how we express what we believe; the children and youth might discuss the need for a peaceful, fair and free world through an activity.

Adapting

It is expected that you will adapt this orientation to fit your church and your group of children/youth. The story is a bit long for young children but works well for older children and youth. Shorten the story when you tell it to younger kids.

Needed

- Chalice, Candle and Matches or Lighter
- Handouts - Bookmarks with "We Believe" Principles or 7 Principles found at the UUA Bookstore
- Signs or Cards for Role Play Characters
- Doodle Page
- Markers

Logistics

- Have the children sit in a circle so that everyone can see everyone else. This works well for most of the activities in this orientation.

NEW UU ORIENTATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Overview

The 3-hour orientation is broken into four portions:

- Who Are You?
- Who Are We?
- What Is True and Right
- We Need a Truthful, Fair and Free World

Who Are You?

This part of our orientation will explore who we are as individuals. Before we can become part of a group, we must know who we are. Each of us has a set of values that we live by. In the same way, each group has a set of values that it operates by. Unitarian Universalists have Principles and Purposes.

PLEASE NOTE: Since this is an orientation that is run several times a year, the age range may be large. Therefore, the explanations may need to be on different levels to meet the needs of the children and youth.

Since many of the children and youth may not already know each other introductions will be necessary.

Activity

Chalice lighting

Leader: Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

People: *We gather in community to celebrate the glories and mysteries of this great gift.*

Leader: So let us kindle now the flame of our liberal religious heritage.

People: *In its glow, may our reason and our passion lead us to be true to ourselves, true to each other and true to what we can together become.*

INTRODUCTIONS:

- SHARE YOUR NAME.
- ARE YOU NEW TO DES MOINES? IF YES, WHERE HAVE YOU LIVED BEFORE?
- HAVE YOU ATTENDED OTHER CHURCHES BEFORE? AND IF YES, WHAT CHURCH/S? AND WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT IT?

Who Are We?

Tour of Your Church

Take the children on a tour of your church. Open all the doors to all the closets. Look in the bathrooms. Look in the kitchen. Check out all the nooks and crannies, including the RE Office and the Minister's Office.

NOTE: You can make this a scavenger hunt for pieces of the 7 principles, if you hide clues in some of the spaces.

Discussion

- Unitarian Universalists do not have a creed or a belief system that each person must agree to. However, we do have seven Principles and Purposes that we have agreed on as a denomination. Unitarian Universalists try to live their life by these.
- Explain how your Religious Education program is set up (Classes are divided into grades (Preschool, kindergarten, first, second and third, fourth and fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth and high school; Teachers are recruited by the DLRE, recruiting committee and parents; Opportunities for Children/Youth to do: Family chalice lighting, fun events like the Halloween party, holiday workshop; intergenerational services; family picnics, youth group for high school students, etc.
- Ask the children and youth to share what it is about this church that has gotten their family to come here. (Remember to tell the children and youth that it is always okay to pass. No one is ever asked to share at this church when sharing would be uncomfortable.)
- Ask the children and youth to share a time when they felt comfortable expressing who they were as an individual.
- Ask the children and youth to share a time when they felt uncomfortable expressing who they were as an individual.
- Ask the children and youth to share what they hope to find at this church.
- Explain how the church makes decisions (church polity) and give an example of how the children and youth at this church have made decisions using the Democratic Process. Show the children a covenant that was made for their classes.
- Discuss anything that needs to be clarified about your church and your children's or youth's Religious Education Program and how the children and/or youth can participate.

Role-Play Activity

- Assign each child or youth a part: *President of the Board, Minister of the Church, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, RE Teacher, Membership Coordinator, church member* and others, as needed. (Make sure each child or youth has working knowledge of what that person does in your church. To help the children and youth recognize the role each one is playing, make cards or signs with the role for the children/youth to hold...you can also add an explanation of the role, as well.)
- Introduce a PROBLEM that must be solved.

PROBLEM EXAMPLE

The church has just spent a lot of money renovating the church and building an addition but the church keeps growing. Classrooms are getting full and we have to turn away families who want to come to church at 10:30 am for religious education. What do we do?

- Ask the children to play their parts and find a solution.
- After the exercise has gone on for a few minutes or they come to a solution, discuss how it felt, what they could do to make it work better, etc.

What Is True and Right?

Although as adults, we often see *truth* and *right* as concrete. Children often see these as abstract and fluid. In other words, one child might see *truth* or the *right* decision for one situation yet a different *truth* or *right* decision for a similar situation. This is due to maturity levels.

Activity 2: True and False

Go round the class asking each child to say something true about themselves. Begin yourself, to offer an example, for instance: "I am thirty five years old and I drive a blue car". Then go round and ask each child to say something false about themselves. Begin yourself, to offer an example, for instance: "I am seven feet tall and right now I am fast asleep".

Discussion Questions

1. Was it more fun saying what was true or what was false? Why?
2. Was it easy to think of something false to say? Why or why not?
3. When you said something false about yourself, were you lying?
4. If that wasn't a "real lie" can you give an example of something that would be a "real lie"?
5. What makes something a "real lie"? Are there different types of lies?

Story

The World's Best Question

The Queen had a headache, so her lady-in-waiting sent for the royal doctor. He hurried to the throne room and had a peep inside the Queen's head. He scratched his chin and frowned, thinking hard. Finally he smiled and explained what the problem was: the Queen's brain was full. There wasn't any more room in it.

The Queen demanded to know what it was full of, so the royal doctor had another look. This time, as he gazed at the royal brain, he pursed his lips and raised his eyebrows. "Your Majesty," he said timidly, "your head is full of answers; so full, in fact, that there's no room for anything else!"

The Queen became furious—like some people do when they find out that something is wrong with them. And just like those people, she got angry with the person who could help her: the royal doctor. She was just about to have him thrown into the darkest of her dungeons - you can see what a head full of answers can do - when he shouted quickly, "Your Majesty, do not fear. There is a cure!"

The Queen calmed down slightly - as most people do if they hear news like this - and asked the royal doctor what the cure was. "You must fill your mind with questions," said the royal doctor. "You see, every question will remove at least one of the answers that are in your brain. The better the question, the more answers it will get rid of. In fact, if you find the world's best question, it will get rid of all of the answers in one go. You'll feel better immediately!"

"And what is the world's best question?" screamed the Queen, who was starting to feel her anger rising again. The doctor, who had been feeling rather pleased with himself, hung his head and mumbled, "I'm not sure."

A few minutes later, after the doctor had been securely locked up in the deepest, darkest dungeon and the Queen had stopped yelling, she issued a challenge.

"Search the land far and wide, and deep and high, to find the world's best question. Whoever brings it here and tells it to me shall have riches beyond their wildest dreams."

When all the brave and adventurous men and women in the land heard this challenge, they set out to find the question. Some of them sought out wise old wizards, others went after clever philosophers and others spoke to thoughtful teachers. Still more consulted magic oracles and professors of thinking from important universities.

The Queen had set a limit on the search for the world's best question: all those with an answer had to present themselves to the royal court by the next full

moon. When this time came, every person who had a suggestion gathered in the throne room and stood before her.

One by one they stepped forward and told the Queen their questions, and one by one the answers in her head disappeared. However, it was a very slow process and the Queen became impatient. Even really good questions got rid of only a few answers and eased her pain just a little. No one had managed to find the world's best question.

The Queen was nearly out of space for more people in her not-so-deep-or-dark dungeons when a small boy pushed his way to the front of the remaining group. He climbed up onto the arm of the Queen's throne, leant over, and whispered something in her ear.

Immediately the Queen smiled and kissed the top of the boy's head—all the answers left in her head had completely vanished. She was cured!

The thing that everyone wanted to know, including all those people released from the dungeons—especially the royal doctor - was what the boy had said to the Queen.

What is the world's best question?

Notes: About the story

Keep track of the number of questions that are asked and how many of them are answered. The more questions that are answered, broadly speaking, the better the quality of the thinking that is taking place. This is because questions activate thinking: they engage the mind and give people an opportunity to respond in diverse ways.

There are many potential solutions that the boy may have whispered in the Queen's ear. However, finding a single, final answer is less important than the process of thinking up and evaluating the possibilities. The act of looking for the world's best question yields a long list of very interesting and very useful choices.

Using the story

1. What is the world's best question?
2. How did the brave men and women in the kingdom try to find the world's best question?
3. What would have happened if the world's best question had not been found?
4. What three questions would you like to ask the Queen?
5. What else, other than answers, might have filled up the Queen's mind?
6. What makes one question more or less useful than another?
7. Where and when else is it useful to ask lots of different questions?

UUism and Our Principles

Ask the children/youth if there are certain rules or ways to live. If we were creating our own rules in how we behave together (how we should act toward one another) what would they be? (create a list)

As a denomination, we have agreed on some common PRINCIPLES that we will try to live our lives by.

We Believe:

- ◆ Each and every person is important;
- ◆ All people should be treated fairly and kindly;
- ◆ We should accept one another and keep on learning together;
- ◆ Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life;
- ◆ All persons should have a vote about the things that concern them;
- ◆ In working for a peaceful, fair, and free world; and
- ◆ In caring for our planet earth, the home we share with all living things.

Activity: Doodle Pages (found on last page)

Ask group members to complete the drawings on the following “Doodle” page with quick sketches. Then have each person describe their drawings.

Do you think that there is a right and wrong way to complete the drawings?

Were there similarities? Differences?

How did the sketches start to reveal each person?

Working on the doodles is a lot like being a Unitarian Universalist. We don't instruct people about what their beliefs should be; instead we encourage each person to explore, learn, think about, and share their ideas throughout their life.

Closing

Extinguish the chalice:

Leader: I extinguish the symbolic flame of this gathering. May we carry its light into the world.

People: *Let us go from this place, open to life, expecting to love and prepared to serve.*

		
		
		