

# Unitarian Universalism: An Introduction

Thank you for your interest in Unitarian Universalism. Although the primary audience for this introduction is those folks new to Unitarian Universalism (UU), UU's from other congregations will discover aspects particular to our church; it will thus serve as an introduction to our congregation. Should you have questions, please contact Sharon Scholl at [sharonscholl527@comcast.net](mailto:sharonscholl527@comcast.net).

This document will provide the information listed under the Content Links. You are encouraged to explore the topics that are new or of interest to you. To get the full picture, we hope you will ultimately peruse the entire document at your preferred pace.

Note about navigating using links: The Content Links will take you to a specific section in this document. Text within the sections may have links marked with an asterisk\*. Such links will take you to a website outside of the document (usually our church website or the Unitarian Universalist Association); that website will open in a new window. To get back to this document, close the window.

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## **Unitarian Universalism**

### *Debunking the Myths*

What's that – some new cult?

No, it's a spiritual association as old as the United States, and with roots in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Reformation.

I get it – a Christian bunch disguised under another name.

No – those are its roots, but it includes the [religious perspectives of all historic faiths](#)\* including atheists, agnostics, humanists, and earth-centered religions.

OK- sounds like a bunch of heretics.

Yes, the literal meaning of heresy is choice, and we offer spiritual choices.

That sounds typically American alright.

Where did it come from and how does it work?

## **History**

### *Our Story in Jacksonville*

Instead of making a general summary of our life together in this city, we refer you to a detailed history from our beginnings until 2017 at

[https://www.uucj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ChurchHistory.Final.10.19.16\\_JR.pdf](https://www.uucj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ChurchHistory.Final.10.19.16_JR.pdf)

Since then our church has experienced years of drama and commitment.

Drama centers on the conflict and departure of our contract minister, Phillip Baber, who came to us as director of our religious education program and was asked to assume the duties of minister upon the health crisis of Rev. Ron Hersom. Opposing opinions within our board could not be mediated, and that failure of leadership led to the loss of a successful ministry.

Not being in a position financially to call a full time minister, the Board appointed co-ministers, Roberta Feinstein and Reverend Roberta Finkelstein, who were very effective in healing some of the hard feelings that persisted after the collapse of the Baber ministry. More drama was forced into congregational relationships due to the Corona virus which effectively ended physical presence for worship services and all other meetings. The church began a lively electronic ministry which allowed most activities to be carried on by Zoom arrangement. In

the fall of 2020, the Reverend Paul Johnson was selected to be on contract as a part time minister for one year.

Commitment flourishes in some significant activities. Our church's work with ICARE consortium of religious congregations made improvements in community services such as day care facilities for people without housing and a new legal process to intervene in the arrest of young people, providing alternative restitution and guidance. We provided an annual book fair for our neighbor elementary school so each student could select three books free of cost. Our community garden attracted participants from local universities and provided several tons of fresh produce for the Arlington food bank. Our gleaners continue to visit homes with fruit trees that would otherwise go to waste, adding to the offerings at the food bank. We continue to monitor the flood status of church property in view of climate change and raised water level expected in our pond.

It is a fine story that promises a significant sequel. We hope you will choose to be a part of it.

For a history of Unitarian Universalism's route from Christianity to embracing the spirit of many beliefs see: <https://www.uua.org/beliefs/who-we-are/history/faith>

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## **Who We Are**

*A Diverse People of Multiple Spiritual Paths, All Leading to Love*

Source: <https://www.uua.org/beliefs>\* and race, gender, etc.

## **What Do Unitarian Universalists Believe?**

*Shared Principles, Not Required Creed*

So, what do Unitarian Universalists believe? According to popular opinion, the answer to that question would be either “not much” or “anything they want to”.

It is true that UU's reject the division of humankind into the saved and the damned. We don't believe God comes in three "persons" or that the evil in this world is centered in a Devil. Because of our high regard for reason and the scientific method, we deny that anyone rises from the dead, walks on water, or is born from a virgin mother. We reject beliefs that come so cheaply that they require no action on our part. We have agreed on Seven Principles to guide our choices and commitments.

## **Our Seven Principles**

### *Seven Principles Affirm and Guide Our Spiritual Paths*

Sources: <https://uucj.org/who-we-are/> The Seven Principles are below and they are also listed on the back of the Standard Order of service handed out during services.

While we do not ascribe to a particular creed or dogma, we do make a set of promises to each other, and we are thus a covenantal faith. These promises, known as the Seven Principles, are what guide our living faith and inform our behaviors throughout our lives. They define us as Unitarian Universalists:

1. The Inherent worth and dignity of every person.
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

These principles guide our actions. See [Our Seven Principles in Action](#) in the Additional Information section for examples of what types of activities UU's are involved in.

## **Unitarian Universalist Sources**

*Sources of Wisdom and Experience that Guide Our Search for Meaning*

**Source:** <https://uucj.org/who-we-are/>\*

We encourage the free and responsible search for meaning for all of our members, and acknowledge that everyone's path may be different. [The foundations that validate our beliefs] and our faith draw from the following sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

## **Our Congregational Covenant**

*UU of Jacksonville's (UUCJ) Covenants that Extend our Seven Principles*

Source: <https://uucj.org/who-we-are/>\*

In addition to the Seven Principles that define us Unitarian Universalists, our church, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville [has its own congregational covenant. These promises are extensions of our covenantal faith. They encourage us as congregational members to seek personal growth, discern life's meaning, and build relationships of fairness and love]:

- Offer our unique gifts, talents, time, energy, and financial support.
- Respect the views and needs of others, practicing tolerance, understanding, and acceptance even in disagreement, allowing loving relationship to transcend issues.
- Celebrate the diversity within our midst even when it is difficult or uncomfortable.
- Invite and welcome others in the quest for spiritual and ethical growth, recognizing each other and guests in fellowship.
- Share the ministry of our church, caring for each other through times of joy and sorrow.

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## **How is Our Church Organized?**

*UU of Jacksonville's (UUCJ) Committees', Officers', and Minister's Duties*

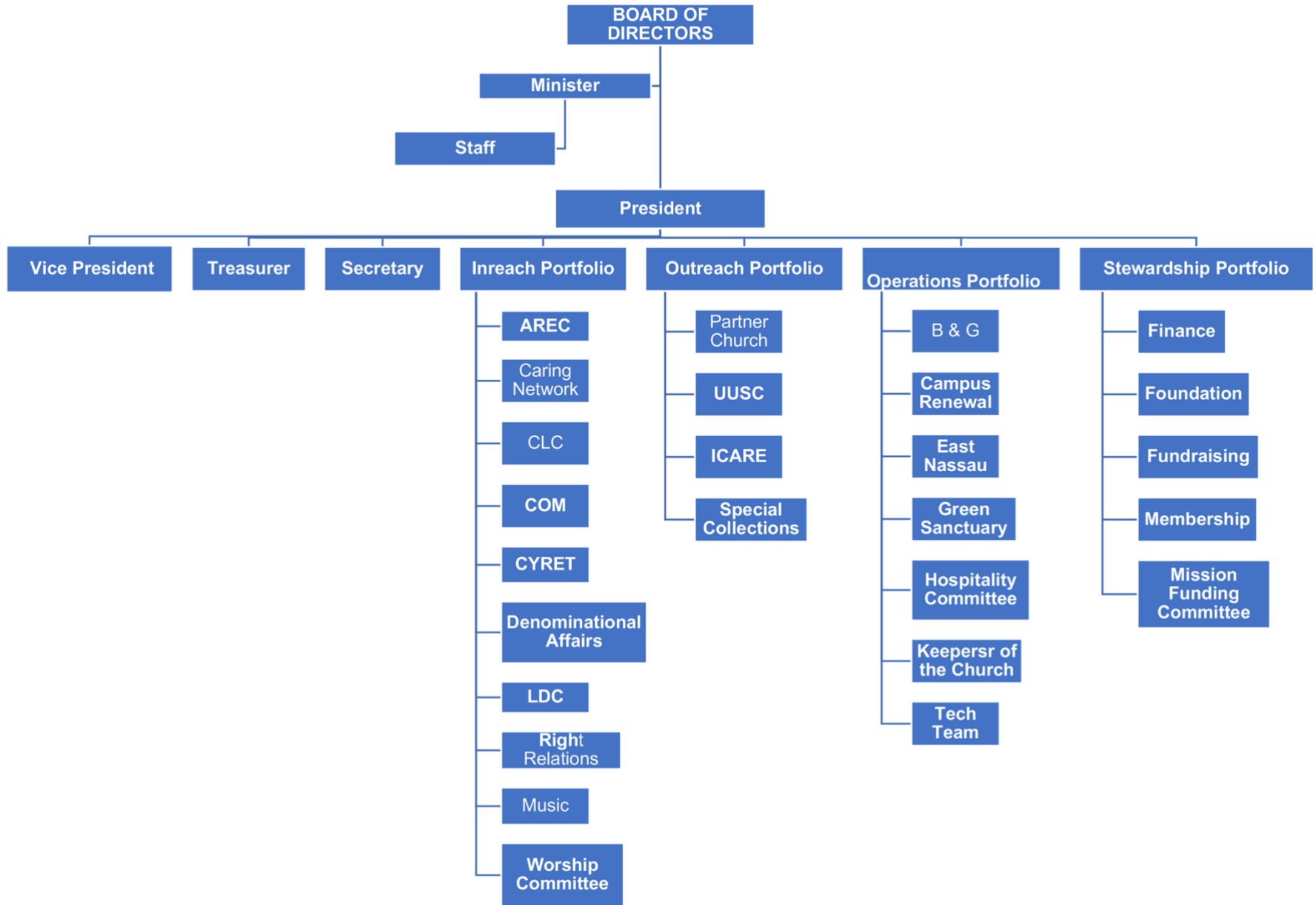
Source: <https://uucj.org/governance/>\*

Churches operate in roughly two ways. One is as a Pastoral Church. When a church is under two hundred members, the Minister can take on various duties besides Sunday preaching. S/he can visit the sick and prospective members, participate in the few necessary committees, supervise children's and adult



religious education offerings, and keep an eye on church finances. Once a church surpasses several hundred members, it functions best as a Program Church. The many projects involved in keeping the church healthy are divided among working groups (committees) that take on assigned duties under specific portfolios (Inreach, Operations, Outreach, Stewardship) that represent them on the board. This degree of independence leads to developing a variety of ideas and fostering a sense of ownership within the congregation. We are of the latter governing arrangement. In all our meetings we follow the spirit of our Principles and the strategies provided by Robert's Rules of Order. The chart on the next page outlines our organizational structure.

## UUCJ GOVERNANCE



## ***Inreach Portfolio***

### *Committees that Provide Services for Members*

**Adult Religious Education (AREC)** (classes and occasional programs)

**Children and Youth Religious Education (CYREC)** (Sunday classes, special programs)

**Caring Committee** (provide support and serve as a resource through neighborhood network coordinators)

**Congregational Life** (social gatherings)

**Right Relations Team** (settling conflicts between individual members)

**Committee on Ministry** (evaluation of minister and mediating conflicts between organized groups)

**Denominational Affairs** (managing relationships between UUCJ and other churches or UUA matters)

**Leadership Development Council** (cultivating leadership skills among members)

**Worship Services** (handling all phases of Sunday services)

**Music** (assisting our church musicians to carry out their duties)

## ***Operations Portfolio***

### *Oversee Our Physical Assets, Environmental Responsibilities, and Social Hour*

**Buildings and Grounds** (keeping the physical plant in good order)

**Campus Renewal** (seeing to the functions of building and grounds, overseeing future improvements)

**East Nassau** (assisting the development and functioning of the membership in the Fernandina Beach area)

**Hospitality Team** (coordinating the Coffee Hour after worship services)

**Green Sanctuary** (tending to all activities to protect the environment)

**Keepers of the Church** (maintaining stylistic harmony of future changes in our highly regarded architecture)

**Tech Team** (maintaining all machinery and functions of church activity)

## **Outreach Portfolio**

*Provide Community and Inter-Church Collaboration and Services*

**ICARE** (organizing our church's participation with other churches to bring about civic improvements)

**Partner Church** (promoting good relationship with our partner church in Bozod)

**Special Collections** (selecting civic organizations to receive Sunday offerings)

**UUSC** (promoting church-wide emergency assistance to disaster areas)

## **Stewardship Portfolio**

*Financial Management and Increasing Funding and Membership*

**Finance** (determining the annual budget and keeping the church solvent)

**Foundation** (supervising large financial gifts, as via death bequests)

**Fundraising** (arranging interesting occasions that request special monetary donations)

**Membership** (maintaining occasions for greeting and welcoming persons new to the church)

**Mission Funding** (appealing for donations to UUA justice and mercy initiatives)

Detailed descriptions of church operations may be found at

<https://uucj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UUCJ-PORTFOLIO-STRUCTURE-handout.pdf>

## **How Do We Finance Our Church?**

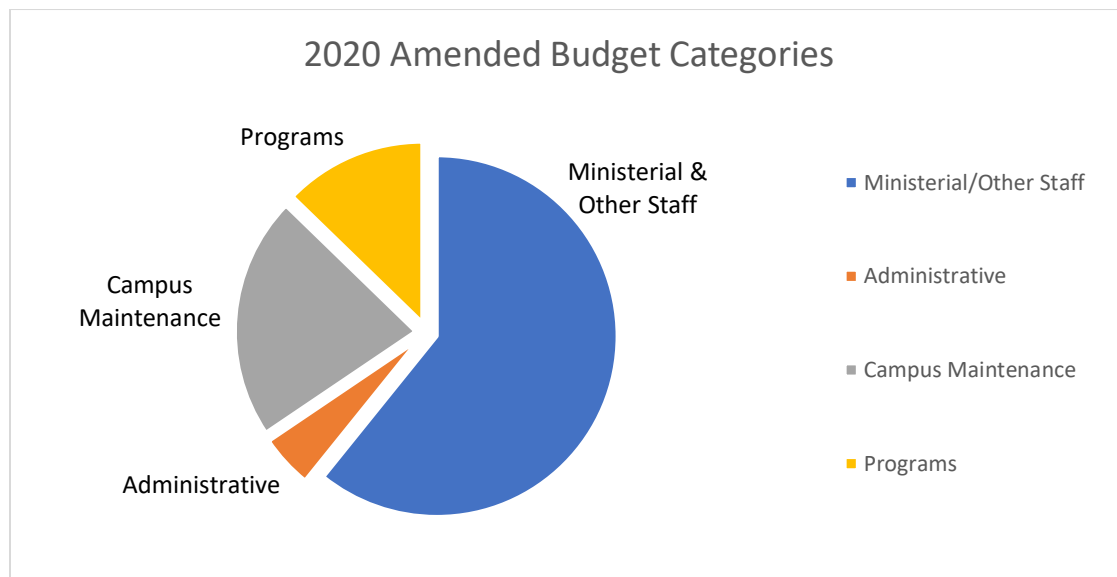
*Keeping the Process Open and Fiscally Responsible*

In late Spring or early Summer, the Board, through its Stewardship Portfolio, and in coordination with the Finance and Mission Funding Committees, develops a plan and process for implementing a pledge drive which is conducted in the fall. During the planning time, Portfolio Leaders meet with their respective

committees and help fashion the committees' financial requests to fund the programs and activities they plan to offer the incoming year. In August, the Finance Committee develops a provisional budget based on previous year's income, committees' requests, projected ministerial staffing expenses, and costs of necessary expenses, (office supplies, virtual activities, utilities, and the like). In October, the Board and Finance Committee sponsor a Budget Workshop and invite the committee leaders and church members to participate in a discussion of the proposed budget. By December we should have contacted all our members and received their pledges for whatever level of funding they will provide during the next year. After review and update, the budget is presented to the Board for approval. It is then presented to the congregation at its December Congregational meeting for adoption.

All the foregoing is simply to say that it takes money for us to exist, and the process of acquiring and delegating those funds is open business for all to see. When needed, we have an audit by professionals outside our church, just to make sure our process passes muster. A significant portion of our budget is earmarked for support of charitable groups and the environment. The bulk of activity is carried on by church members without full time professional supervision, and we trust each other to make the right decisions. We hope you will see a portrait of a vital institution.

The budget chart of general categories is as follows:



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## **So How Does this Affect You?**

*Understanding Who Does What and How You Can Be Part of It*

So, you are looking at this clutter and thinking of bureaucracy run wild. What do all these committees do that justifies their existence? Try this little game: match the issue with the committee you would refer it to.

1. You arrive at a church meeting before anyone else. The campus is deserted except for a tall geyser in the parking lot. How do you get help?
2. Two women members are in a mean-spirited controversy over choice of drapes for the Anthony Room, and this unpleasantness is spreading.
3. You want to invite a band of Ethiopian nose flute players to give a program to raise money for refugee relief. Which groups would help you with this?
4. You are elderly and ill, having lost touch with the church and missing friends there. What group would respond to your need?

All these are normal human situations, and we have responsible people to assist in their solution. That's all a committee is for.

By the way, all committee members are people just like you: members who volunteer to make a positive difference in UUCJ. Volunteering is one of the best ways to learn about our organization and to make friends. You may need to "try on" a couple of committees before you find the "right fit." Don't be shy about contacting committee Chairs or attending meetings. Once you become a member, your service will make a big difference for us all!

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## **Why Do We Worship The Way We Do?**

*Services: Inherited from the Past, Shaped by Our Present*

What is WORSHIP, anyway? Think of it as WORTH SHIP – lifting up those things that hold our deepest collective values and command our deepest loyalties.

We come to this religious association to devote ourselves anew to what is worth the best in us and to encourage others in that pursuit. We do it regularly

because we get swamped by so much else that life throws at us that we forget what really matters and need a reminder.

Why does our gathering for worship take the shape it does with the contents it has? We have our roots in the Protestant Reformation and centuries of identification as a liberal Christian body. It was only in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that Unitarian Universalism shed most of its Christian foundation and grew into a more universal faith emphasizing the spiritual journey rather than a set of uniform, mandatory beliefs and behaviors. Consequently, many of our churches have adopted a humanist approach that best resembles a philosophical society featuring lecture and debate within the congregation. Belief in a god or a powerful spirit are neither required nor precluded. Such beliefs are regarded as matters of personal faith or judgement, not in need of proof or disproof.

Currently, UUCJ's priorities represent a balance of participation between leadership and congregation, between conceptual and emotional appeal. The specific activities of our service are an inheritance from the past remodeled to serve our present direction. Different churches may emphasize different aspects of the human spiritual journey, in response to the needs of their members.

## ***Standard Order of Service***

### *Components of our Typical Worship Service*

The cornerstone of our practice is the Sunday worship service. It starts at 11AM and lasts roughly an hour. It's a key opportunity to lay down the distractions of day-to-day life and to renew our spirit. Attendance is entirely voluntary, however. No roll call is taken! And, in order to make services as accessible as possible, they are also available over the web, either with live streaming on Facebook (see <https://www.facebook.com/uujax.org>\*) or Zoom (use the Contact page at <https://uucj.org/contact-us/>\* to request a weekly mailing from us). You can also see the archived services at <https://uucj.org/sermons/>\*.

If you attend in person you may wish to sit in the sanctuary or you may prefer to view the services using the TV in the basement hospitality room. You are

encouraged to pick up a copy of the day's Standard Order of Service handed out by the greeters. The Standard Order of Service provides an outline of the service components; they are described below

### Sunday Music

Music is provided prior to service commencement. During this time, you'll encounter volunteer greeters and service assistants. It's an opportunity to be welcomed, to ask questions, and to get a copy of our Standard Order of Service for the current service. It will give you details about the speaker, upcoming events, members who are in need of comfort and support, and, of course the schedule of the day's service components. New members should take note of the back page; it lists the Seven UUA Principles, UUCJ's Spoken Affirmation, and church contact information. Once the music ends, the service will start. Please try to be seated (in any pew you'd like) at this time.

### **Welcome and Announcements**

Every gathering has to start somehow, and what better way than to state simply who we are, why we are here, and to affirm that everyone of whatever description is welcome to be here? New visitors are welcome to introduce themselves to the congregation so our members can say hello to you. Everyone is invited to greet their neighbors too! The service leader will make announcements of general interest, especially those not listed in the current Order of Service.

### **Chalice Lighting**

Lighting a chalice is a relatively recent (1960's) addition to our collective life, indicating a shift from general business and information giving to a more introspective mood. It has become the main symbol of our faith and the signal that we are up to important matters. The "flaming chalice" (in various pictorial styles) has come to symbolize our church. Quenching the chalice at the end of the service forms a symbolic end to our physical solidarity, marking our dispersion into the world with the renewed values we have affirmed.

### **Hymns (Opening and Closing Hymns)**

Singing together is a special mark of religious gatherings, an act rarely encountered in the normal course of human affairs. [Some soloist is even invited to sing our national anthem that we should all sing together.???] So this act of



solidarity is special and has special music to serve it. Our two hymnals, "Singing the Living Tradition," and "Singing the Journey," represent the whole sweep of human spirituality from ancient chants to newly composed hymns from UU musicians (see <https://www.uua.org/worship/music/hymnals/singing-living-tradition/index-hymn-titles>\* for song titles). Make it a habit to glance down at the bottom of hymns to see where the music and text originated, noting that most of the world and its cultures are represented. Note also that the hymn is part of the spiritual traditions of the world's peoples and not the commercial, mass produced songs that coat our communications systems. Refer again to the six sources of our faith to see why this is so appropriate.

### **Message for All Ages**

We've inherited this activity from traditional churches whose ministers love to haul all the children in the congregation up to the front of the church and have some kind of lesson, story, or object that can be explored at their level, and that relates to the sermon the adults will hear later. We aren't sure the children like being on display like this, but still want to make sure they are included as part of the congregation. Alternatively, the children are allowed to continue sitting with their elders for the message.

After the message, children are invited to leave adult services for age-appropriate classes or nursery care. As the children leave, the adults sing to them to celebrate their journey. From time to time, but especially during holidays, we have family-themed services that older children (not in need of nursery care) are encouraged to attend. During family-themed services, all activities are kept youth-friendly.

### **Joys and Sorrows**

As a congregation it is important to know about the major issues that concern individual lives. We are not a mindless herd bent on some collective task, heedless of the lives within our midst. Each person should be able to assume our collective interest and count on both sympathy and practical assistance, and in happy times, to celebrate together. Sure, we could spread the word in an e-blast each week, but when a person in need is right there before us, that demands our attention to a greater degree.

Of course, some members are too verbose, and some Sundays the line to speak grows longer than our patience, but somehow, we always come back to the need for such an inclusion in our services. Think about your own attitude and how you can better bring patience and concern to this activity. Conversely,

some members may be reluctant to share their personal experiences and that is perfectly acceptable. All participants in this activity are encouraged to light a candle as a symbol of shared sorrows and joys. If you are viewing services remotely, contact the Caring Network Committee, especially if you could use some help or contact.

## **Offertory**

Members are asked to make an annual pledge of funds to keep the church functioning, and could just do all this by electronic funds transfer. But it's just too emotionally cold. There's something so deeply religious about passing the plate that it allows a very present, concrete expression of our faith in this body of people and our service to the world. We are right here in this place we support, right now doing the supporting. It's a small, functional act we value and it allows us to continue operations. If you are attending services virtually you can mail your contribution; cash or check are equally welcome. You can also make an electronic transfer from your bank.

In addition to our weekly collection, we offer our members a regular opportunity to contribute to a local charitable organization that is making a positive difference. A representative from the selected charity will be able to tell you about it. It is really uplifting to hear so many stories about good works being done.

## **Reading and Meditation or Silent Prayer**

We are a "wordy" people – always have been. Our gray hymnal, "Singing the Living Tradition," has a compilation of some of the most memorable words of many people drawn from our six sources. On occasion, we may read these selections together as food for thought, enhancing the sermon or main interest for the day. Take some time next Sunday just to explore the selections, noting how varied and beautifully expressed they are. Alternatively, the service leader may recite a text not listed in the hymnal if it stimulates the imagination and requires rumination in the kind of silence we think of as sacred.

Just prior to the sermon, the congregation is asked to observe a few minutes of silence. Unitarian Universalists have such a wide range of beliefs that we can't assume to direct everyone's thoughts, hopes, earnest pleas toward some Being, internal or external. People use this interval as need demands. Silence is so rare in our contemporary world that simply the chance to sit, with no demand at all to respond to may be the greatest gift we can provide.

## **Sermon**

UU's expect something substantial in a sermon, more than a confidence builder or a bunch of personal stories, kick-off to a funds drive, or the many utilitarian purposes to which these things have been put. Our speakers are varied and include persons drawn from outside sources, members, and of course, our Minister. We believe in the "freedom of the pulpit" by which our speakers may present some hard truths or controversial positions. We also believe in the "freedom of the pew" in that all our members have the option of disagreeing with whatever is preached and making a contrary position known in whatever ways are kind and helpful. We value depth of study, evaluation of options held to the standards of our faith, and calls to our attention of civic matters that should concern us. Sermons should sustain our spiritual lives and motivate our actions to reflect our seven principles more effectively.

## **Congregational Affirmation**

Our Spoken Affirmation is printed on the back of the [Standard Order of Service](#), and begins with, "Love is the doctrine of our church." It has been part of our closing ritual for as far back as most of us can remember. Even a hint that this activity might be abandoned has been met with a solid chorus of "no way!"

This affirmation represents our congregational promise to each other. It is recited by all members as we hold hands. Our circle of held hands symbolizes the circle of human care that makes us a congregation. It is a closing statement of what we are as a people and what values we take back into the world with us.

Love is the doctrine of this church,  
The quest for truth is its sacrament,  
And service is its prayer.  
To dwell together in peace,  
To seek knowledge in freedom,  
To serve humanity in fellowship,  
To the end that all souls shall grow  
Into harmony with the divine,  
Thus do we covenant with one another.

## **After the Services: Social/Hospitality Hour**

All that singing, thinking, meditating, and listening can make a body hungry. Our Hospitality Committee knows that well. They ensure that members (and

visitors) may refresh themselves after services downstairs in the Hospitality Room with food, drink and good conversation provided by that week's hospitality team. Hospitality volunteers make conscientious efforts to respect members' dietary requirements, such as identifying typical allergens (nuts, dairy, wheat), providing vegetarian or vegan options, and paying attention to healthy eating. Best efforts respecting members' needs are appreciated. However, if you are concerned about food selections, feel free to bring a nosh that you can eat! If you aren't in the mood for socializing, feel free to walk the grounds alone or with a few companions. We have gardens, trails, sitting benches, and a labyrinth for you to explore.

## **Holiday Services and Ceremonies**

*Drawn from Traditional Religions and UU Observances*

Churches of all kinds have a "calendar year" with certain recurring observances that are marked by special worship services. Here are the main holidays and ceremonies observed at UUCJ. For a complete list of possible UU holidays and ceremonies, along with resources to observe them:

[https://www.uua.org/worship/holidays\\*](https://www.uua.org/worship/holidays*)

### **Water Ceremony: September**

Our year begins in September with a welcome back to those whose activities over the summer have taken them to other places or activities. This is our "Water Ceremony" where we bring water from wherever we have been and pour it in a common vessel that symbolizes our return to our church home. We surround the ritual with song and story, with recognition and greeting.

### **Labor Day Activities: September**

Labor Day is celebrated literally by making the cleaning and restoration of our church property an act of worship, culminated by lunch for our laboring crew. It is a Sunday of cleaning up buildings and property, restoring order and beauty to physical structures we all share. Service components are themed to celebrate the accomplishments of working peoples.

## **Thanksgiving: November**

Our Thanksgiving lunch is especially for our members who have no family nearby, and anyone who might feel lonely on this time for family reunions. It is also for anybody that just can't get enough of that holiday mood. It is a collective effort to share our food contributions as well as our lives with one another.

## **Christmas: December**

Christmas Eve service is our one specifically Christian observance and one which we hope will be familiar to visitors in town for the holidays. Though we may not accept literally the biblical accounts of Jesus, we are glad to celebrate with readings and carols one of the major prophets of world culture. The service ends with a cookie bash, a tasty overload of sugared morsels.

## **Earth Day: April**

Earth Day is a major event in our church, a celebration marked by music and the spoken word. There is an exhibit in the Social Hall of all the initiatives guided by our Green Sanctuary Committee. At this time, we focus on the Seventh Principle, "Respect for the inter-dependent web of all existence, of which we are a part." We call upon our congregation to increase its awareness of threats to the environment and to commit to actions that promote sustainability.

## **Flower Communion: May**

Flower Communion is unique to Unitarian Universalism. It was begun by the founder of the Czechoslovakian Unitarian church, Norbert Capeka, to mark the end of the church year and center on the mutual sharing that makes a congregation. The Christian alternative, the Holy Communion service, embodies the ancient mythology of the moral fall of humankind and our rescue by blood sacrifice to an angry deity. We reject this entirely and emphasize the best in humankind, our mutual regard, as expressed by the exchange of flowers, living beauty of the earth.

## **Other Holidays**

Other “themed” services at UUCJ are provided for typical holidays such as Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day.

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## **Music, Media, and Unitarian Universalism**

### *Copyright in the Context of Worship*

Music has always played an important role in the activities of all major religions. It is no less important in Unitarian Universalism. Listening to inspirational music allows us to feel connected to what is transcendent in our lives. Performing it together allows us to connect to each other on a deeper level.

Here are some FAQs regarding copyright and Unitarian Universalism. You may not like the answers. That is your prerogative. But out of respect for the law and the risk to our church of being implicated in a copyright infringement lawsuit, you are asked to comply with the [UU Copyright Policy](#)\* and additional qualified legal advice. It’s a matter of responsible membership, not personal aesthetics. The [Further Exploration Section](#) below provides more resources for copyright history and UU guidance.

***Remember, that the guidance provided here is only a summary, not a substitute for competent legal opinion. Our church and UUA leadership should be consulted regarding specific instances.***

Q: Do you have a favorite song, video, or other creative work that you’d like to share with the congregation during services? Is this OK?

A: No, if the song is commercially copyrighted. Living as we are, in a media-rich age, each of us probably has at least one song, for instance. You may have heard the song on the radio, or from commercial Internet providers of media, such as Amazon or Hulu, or you may have purchased the CD or sheet music from a commercial source. These are examples of commercial media that are “owned” (or copyrighted) by a publisher; you, or the radio/Internet, music store provider, are allowed to use that music, but only in compliance with the legal licensing agreement (terms of use) that authorized its use. Living as we do, in a litigious society that guards its legal prerogatives as to the conditions under which we can enjoy those songs, videos, and other

mass media, organizations and individuals that disregard publishers' terms of use, do so at their peril.

Q: This is a church setting. Can I claim "fair use" to justify including a copyrighted song in a service?

A: No. Our church live streams our services for the public, for off-site members, and members of the Fernandina Beach congregation. We also record services and post them at our website so others may view them at a later time. The fact that we record and/or broadcast services means that our use of commercial music is not "fair use." Unauthorized use of copyrighted media in this context constitutes copyright infringement, and the penalties for it can be stiff.

Q: Can't the church just get permission from the copyright holder for use of the media.

A: Very unlikely. It's partly just a practical matter. Commercial copyright holders are interested in big profits. They are probably going to ignore your request or charge an outrageous sum.

Q: Can't I just ask the composer or artist?

A: If the composer or artist's work is published commercially, they no longer own the copyright to the material – even if they created it. They receive royalties as compensation for surrendering their copyright ownership and for having their works published and distributed widely.

Q: So where does the music for our services come from?

A: Unitarian Universalists have a large collection of music and text that was created for the purposes of enlivening our worship services. The big plus in these resources is that each piece provides an expression of one or more values incorporated in our [Seven Principles\\*](#) and [Six Sources\\*](#).

Q: Where can I find this music?

A: Our congregation owns copies of two important hymnals, "[Singing the Living Tradition\\*](#)," which organizes music thematically and provides context for the hymns and readings, and the supplemental hymnal, "[Singing the Journey\\*](#)." Music resources are also online at [Worship Web Library\\*](#), a compilation of music created by generous composers, not for profit, but for

Unitarian Universalist services. Note that Worship Web and our hymnals have their own set of copyright guidelines.

For instance, hymn 184 from "Singing the Living Tradition," is titled, "Be Ye Lamps Unto Yourselves." The words are from the Buddha, "Be ye lamps unto yourselves; be your own confidence. Hold to the truth within yourselves as to the only lamp." The melody is from an ancient Latin hymn. Hymn 184 demonstrates wisdom from the world's religions. (For more examples of how our hymns celebrate UU beliefs, see the [Further Exploration Section](#) below.)

Music and other media that are in the [public domain](#)\* may be used in our services legally, without fear of copyright infringement. Media licensed under various [Creative Commons](#)\* options may also provide sources for service use; but it's very important to understand the terms of use for such works. They may not require monetary contributions, but they do define where and how the work can be used. Last, but not least, these media should reflect our UU principles and sources, and that determination is left to leaders who are authorities in those areas.

Q: So how does our UU Copyright Policy relate to movies and videos?

A. The same general principles apply when the movie is copyrighted. Some churches have purchased licenses that allow them to play a defined collection of movies, but the licenses restrict the circumstances under which the movies may be shown, and in no case is recording or livestreaming of the movie acceptable.

We have such easy access to video clips over the Internet that you may be tempted to think that just because they might be available for free from sources like YouTube, they are fair use; don't make the mistake of thinking all such videos are legal. Copyright holders can and do ask YouTube to remove some of the more egregious infringing materials, but may not bother complaining about all the violations. The fact that it's "up there" does not entitle you to compound a violation by showing it at services.

History shows that even non-profits can suffer devastating consequences by ignoring copyright. We do not have to like copyright law, but in this case, there are compelling reasons to observe it.

In conclusion, the mission of the church in this area is to create a real "our music," separate from commercial interests, with hymns that express our



common tradition and history. That's its purpose, and where its value is to be found. As the Rev. Natalie Fenimore explains, "Our communities of faith are trying to work counter to what is happening in the rest of the world. The learning we get (there) is not the learning we want to have in UU communities."

Further Exploration:

[Using Copyrighted Material in Worship Services](#)\* – from UUA website

[Researching Copyright for Live Streaming](#)\* – from UUA website

[A&M Records, Inc. vs Napster Inc.](#)\* – This case persuaded organizations to develop and enforce copyright policies in order to help defend themselves against infringement lawsuits; losing such a suit can subject the defendant to onerous civil or criminal penalties.

More examples from the "Singing the Living Tradition" hymnal that celebrate our shared Unitarian Universalism principles and sources:

- Hymn #157 with an excerpt from the Constitution of the United Mine Workers of America, "step by step the longest march can be won. many stones can form an arch –singly none." Voices raised against economic oppression.
- Hymn#179 from the worship traditions of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, one of many hymns from across the world. "Teach us forgiveness. Make love our end. Show us, O Spirit, how to befriend."
- Hymn #93 with a text by the famous English mystic, William Blake, extolling mercy, pity, peace, and love as primary human values. "For mercy has a human heart and pity a human face."
- Hymn#345 with text by Samuel Longfellow that extols scientific enlightenment which brings, "advancing thought and widening view."

- Hymn#366 expressing joy with the one word, “Heleluyan,” from the Muskogee (Creek) people, both words and tune are part of the culture of Native Americans.

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## **Growing, Sharing, and Connecting**

### *Beyond Sunday Worship Services*

Our congregation is diverse and interested in sharing and exploring outside of the church service. Our groups are self-directed and enjoy learning from each other. Visitors are welcome too. Some popular offerings are Healthy Eating classes, labyrinth walking, and two Sunday morning discussions: Spiritual Studies and Playing with Ideas. Other non-Sunday activities include book clubs and Women of All Ages.

And our church needs active volunteers to ensure it keeps running smoothly. That’s where committee volunteers come in! Please look for opportunities to help lessen the load by joining a committee or two.

See the Events Calendar [uucj.org/calendar](http://uucj.org/calendar)\* for an at-a-glance look at what’s available week-to-week.

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## **Additional Resources**

### **Our Seven Principles in Action**

Refer to the section, “[What Do Unitarian Universalists Believe?](#)” for a discussion of how these types of actions follow from our Seven Principles.”

#### **1-The inherent worth and dignity of every person**

We have to give up our racial/ethnic prejudices. We can’t speak disparagingly of people with different political opinion. We must oppose civic or businesses practices that disadvantage any group, though it may be economically or socially costly to us.

#### **2-Justice, equity and compassion in human relations**

We must voluntarily engage in peaceful actions that correct injustices in policing and criminal proceedings. We must at least financially support efforts to house the homeless, rescue children from sexual slavery, obtain adequate medical care for those omitted from our current system. We must be alert to human need and active in response.

### **3-Acceptance of one another; encouragement in spiritual growth**

We come to our congregation from varied previous loyalties: from Christian denominations, Jewish culture, Pagan circles, other world religions or no religious associations at all. We have varied cultural roots and varied sexual natures. What we all want in common is to grow into better human beings, to refine our inner lives and acquire better habits, healthier emotions, deeper friendships.

### **4-A free and responsible search for truth and meaning**

In this time of confusion over truth versus rumor, when “other facts” turn out to be delusions, we promise to investigate all opinions for their grounding in reality. We will seek out primary sources of information and accept only firsthand accounts. We will resist emotional appeals and question the motives of those who attempt to influence us.

### **5-The right of conscience and use of the democratic process**

We will stand by our conscience in making decisions, though ours may not be the popular choice. In our group decision making we will respect the will of the majority and either carry out their policies loyally or resign so that others may get on with their work. We will be alert to legislative and judicial practices which undermine the balance of power in civic affairs, and work with forces that seek to achieve a healthier outcome.

### **6-The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all**

From our Association as a whole to the smallest church, there are organized efforts to relieve the world's suffering. We have a neighbor church in Bozod, Romania, our members visit occasionally and to which we send funds as their need arises. Through our central relief agency we participate financially and as volunteers in relief efforts in the wake of natural disasters or armed conflicts.

### **7-Respect for the interdependent web of all existence we belong to**

Because of efforts by our Green Sanctuary Committee, we are certified by our national organization as a Green Sanctuary. This means we do not use plastic, we recycle all paper and metal, and we compost food matter as often as we can. We maintain a community garden which contributes the bulk of fresh produce to our local food bank. A group of gleaners picks fruit and vegetables from trees and fields to benefit that food supply.

Being a Unitarian Universalist has nothing to do with whatever metaphysical speculations you want to hold and everything to do with what good you can do in this world. These are costly beliefs. They take effort in terms of inner struggle and outward labor. We all appreciate meaningful sermons, inspiring music, and friendly associates, but that's only the beginning. We are a "shoulder to the wheel" church that welcomes whatever push you can give.

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