

Practicing Our Values

In my last newsletter article, I shared my thoughts on how we can begin to embrace and live out our new UU Values that were voted on at General Assembly in June. I thought about doing this in three steps:

Step 1: Get to know them. Take the time to really read and look at them.

Step 2: Fully Embrace Them. This means absorbing what they say and mean – not memorizing them but reflecting on them.

Step 3: Use them. As I go about my day, where do these values pop up? Are my words and actions guided by these values? Am I open to change and adapting the way I approach things and my relationships?

In considering these steps, I am planning out the curricula that we will use for our young people during the year to guide them in Step 1: Get to know them.

We are fortunate to have religious educators in our UU faith who are creative curriculum writers and are willing to share their talents – often at no cost to others. While our youngest continue with their story-based curriculum that Ann Gadzikowski has created, our elementary ages will begin the year with a Jetpig Cooperative Challenge program written by Sara Krakauer. You may recall that “Jetpig” is an acronym to help remember the new Values.

We are also hoping to re-start a middle school program this year, and if we have 1-2 more volunteers to help in this endeavor, then the group will start the year with *UU Values Challenge*, written by Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg. This curriculum is written with neurodiversity in mind and should be engaging for the youth.

Our youth group this year has five high school seniors! They will be continuing the coming-of-age program they started last year and hopefully will plan a wonderful worship service next spring. We will also gauge interest in a possible trip in 2025, which has historically been to Boston and seeing sites connected to our UU heritage. They might also consider going to General Assembly or on a Civil Rights tour.

I haven't forgotten about the adults at UCE! This year, Rev. Eileen, Dan Solomon, Bob Mesle and I have been planning a unique program we are calling “Meeting Our Interfaith Neighbors”. Beginning in October, we will have a 3-week introduction to the program where those interested can explore some preliminary background and learn about the schedule and how it will be structured. Look for more details later this month.

As you probably know, the start of a new church year is a joyful and busy time! As you think about how you wish to share your time and talents, consider some of these opportunities in faith formation:

- Be part of the Family Ministry Team or Adult Faith Formation Team to create ways for people to connect within and across generations.
- Be a co-facilitator with a small group of young people, such as nursery/preschool, elementary ages, middle school, or high school youth.
- Share your passion with young people and families, such as a hobby or skill.

- Invite families or young people to join an event your UCE team/committee is hosting.
- Participate in adult programs to make new connections, learn, and grow.

Lastly, here are a few events coming up that you can join:

- Nature hike at Emily Oaks Nature Center – August 16 at 6:30p
- UCE Potluck with Rev. Sharon Dittmar – August 23 at 6p
- Orientation for Volunteers and Parents – learn about what's happening in Faith Formation for young people on September 14, 10-11:30a

I hope you join me in another wonderful and exciting year in Faith Formation at UCE!

In Faith,

Kathy

Values and Covenant

As Unitarian Universalists, we covenant, congregation-to-congregation and through our Association, to support and assist one another in our ministries. We draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love.

Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:



Interdependence

We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it. We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships.

Pluralism

We celebrate that we are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience, and theology. We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love, curiosity, and respect.

Justice

We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive. We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression. We support the use of inclusive democratic processes to make decisions within our congregations, our Association, and society at large.

Transformation

We adapt to the changing world. We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.

Generosity

We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope. We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.

Equity

We declare that every person has the right to flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness. We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.

Inspirations

Direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder are primary sources of Unitarian Universalist inspiration. These experiences open our hearts, renew our spirits, and transform our lives. We draw upon, and are inspired by, sacred, secular, and scientific understandings that help us make meaning and live into our values. These sources ground us and sustain us in ordinary, difficult, and joyous times. We respect the histories, contexts, and cultures in which these sources were created and are currently practiced. Grateful for the experiences that move us, aware of the religious ancestries we inherit, and enlivened by the diversity which enriches our faith, we are called to ever deepen and expand our wisdom.

Inclusion

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an Association of congregations that truly welcome all persons who share our values. We commit to being an Association of congregations that empowers and enhances everyone's participation, especially those with historically marginalized identities.

Freedom of belief

Congregational freedom and the individual's right of conscience are central to our Unitarian Universalist heritage. Congregations may establish statements of purpose, covenants, and bonds of union so long as they do not require that members adhere to a particular creed.

I can start step 3 right here! As I work with various groups, teams, and committees, I will ensure that the things I help coordinate will connect to our values and/or inspirations. For example:

Family Friday Nature Hike – August 16 at 6:30p at [Emily Oaks Nature Center](#)

All ages are invited to meet in front of the nature center at 6:30p for a nature hike and to hang out at the playground. There are picnic tables for those who wish to come early and enjoy a picnic supper before the hike.

This certainly connects to our value of Interdependence, as well as Generosity – gratitude and hope and connection are all found in nature. It also connects to our Inspiration of mystery and wonder.

As you begin planning gatherings and events for this fall, use our new values to help discern where to focus your time, talent, treasures, and energies. Perhaps even challenge yourself to create opportunities that connect to the values that don't have an obvious connection to your usual activities. Just think how transforming this could be!

In Faith,

Kathy