

RE PAGES

Understanding our world through proactive exploration:

The UU sources

By Julianne McCall - EUU Director of RE



Nature affords an endless source of interactive beauty and fascination to which we may relate goodness, purity, simplicity, and the connection of all things.

Our lives are nothing short of miracles, with a healthy dose of mystery to ensure a fascinating journey through our years and decades of being conscious of it all. How we understand the world around us and our place in it has proven to be extremely complicated throughout human history, and the process by which we approach such questions differs for every individual. As Unitarian Universalists, our fourth principle guides us "to promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning," so the responsibility is placed on ourselves to proactively and respectfully seek or build the path that fits our character and goals.



UUs gather insight from wisdom gathered by many different religions. (Religious texts image credit:juxtaposed-religion-bookshelf-2.jpg)

To help answer the "big questions" about, for example, our significance in the universe and ways in which we can reach our personal potential, rather than strictly follow a single written text, as most religions do all over the planet, UUs have proposed a set of six categories of sources, written below, from which we develop a sense of understanding, growth, and connection.

- 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.

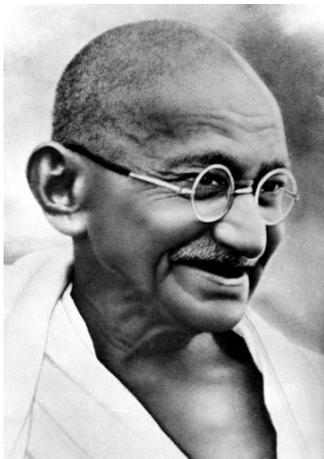
As you advance into your teen years, through young adulthood, and beyond (maturity notwithstanding), different sources may speak to you differently than before. After all, our brains continue to actively grow into our mid-twenties, and furthermore, there is an incredible amount of dynamic change that continues to occur to accommodate new memories, facilitate skill development, and organize our evolving perspective as we experience more and more of the world.

What is truth, anyway? We can all agree that $1+2=3$, but are all answers so absolute? While mathematics and other sciences work tirelessly to determine facts and establish models to explain all sorts of phenomena, our relationship to those physical laws and biological systems which constantly surround us is exponentially more complex. You have a set of beliefs right now, whether they are founded on people you know, stories you've read, or direct observation or feelings from your own experiences. But, what about someone who doesn't live anywhere near your country and hasn't been exposed to similar books, your religion, or familiar people you could

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share similar ideas and hopes with him or her, even without identical circumstances? Do we even need to agree on everything we believe to work together toward progress?

Participants of the RE program during the Fall Retreat will delight in such questions as we spend the time together learning about the UU sources by playing games, engaging in fun group activities and creative crafts, and sending our imaginations soaring with dreams of "what if?" With the backdrop of inspiration from nature, courageous leaders, and different religious and cultural practices, we'll explore why we think the way we do and how we can mindfully use these sources of UUism to pursue lifelong growth. Stories from the exciting biographies of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Susan B. Anthony, among others, will illuminate various paths of responding to a proactive call to effect change in one's lifetime.



In addition to merely talking about experiencing the world, the participants at this season's retreat are in for a surprise with a unique experience awaiting their arrival in Cologne!



Make sure to bring appropriate clothes and shoes for an outdoor adventure!

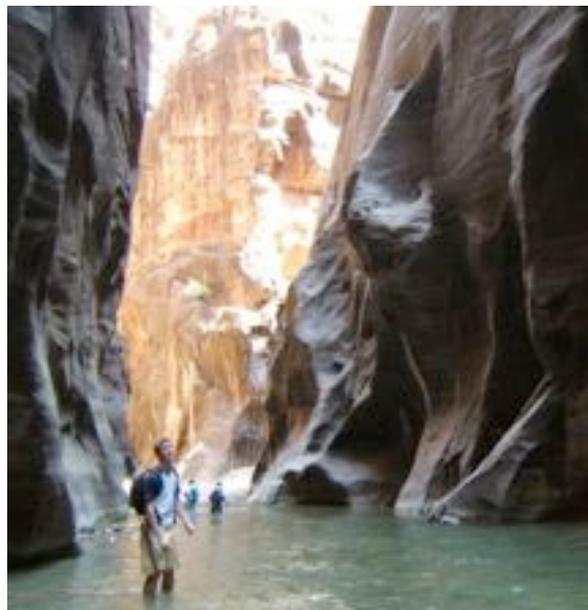


Inspirational leaders from around the world make the best role models for living one's principles. Pictured here are Mahatma Gandhi from India, Nelson Mandela from South Africa, and Susan B. Anthony from the USA. image credits:

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_-4sOUBnZmaw/TR9BrBLUrPI/AAAAAAABi8/ZNxEODV5rs/s1600/Gandhi_smiling_R.jpg,
http://www.nationnews.com/images/cached/inc/uploads/articles/Nelson_Mandela-450x350.jpg,
http://patriotweek.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/susan_b_anthony.jpg

This module on UU identity will conclude the four-topic cycle by which the RE Committee has traditionally coordinated the biannual retreat curricula, the three other study themes being our Judeo-Christian roots, Earth-based spirituality, and World Religions. Under the caring supervision of Karen Frey, Julianne McCall, and another lucky teacher, children and youth will examine how they develop their beliefs and how their understanding of the world contributes to shaping their behavior and approach to their roles in family, school, and community settings.

The primary goal is to cultivate a path toward empowerment over one's own perspective using the ageless tools granted by UUism. By doing so, we hope to bring the youth and children closer to realizing in themselves how magnificent this life of theirs truly is. We cannot wait to have everyone together in October!



Private photos from Julianne McCall

