

ZOOM: GRADE 7 - BUILDING BRIDGES
WORKSHOP 1: TREASURE EVERYWHERE
WORKSHOP 2: UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM: THE JOURNEY STARTS AT HOME

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Welcome the youth & light a virtual chalice.

Show them the words to say as you light it: ON SLIDE

We light this chalice in celebration of Unitarian Universalism and the sustaining faiths of all people of the world. May the flame represent the fire of our commitment to understand all faithful people and build bridges that connect us as one human family.

Invite participants to introduce themselves.

INTRODUCE PROGRAM (5 MINUTES)

Introduce the program with these words, or your own:

Our program this year is Building Bridges. It is a program to build bridges of understanding and connection among people. We will seek to build bridges among all of us who are here, among people in our congregation and our Unitarian Universalist faith, and between ourselves and people in our wider world. We undertake this in a manner that is in keeping with our shared Unitarian Universalist values: by a dedicated, respectful exploration of many of the world's religions. We will learn about many practices and beliefs. We will have opportunities to engage with other religious people: attend their worship services, meet with their religious leaders, and talk to youth about what they treasure about their religion.

The word "religion" is commonly thought to derive from the Latin word religare (ray-lih-GAR-ay), meaning to fasten, tie, or bind. In other words, religion connects. Religion can be seen as connecting people to each other, and, more profoundly, religion connects people to something beyond themselves—to the sacred, to the inexplicable, to a force of spirit people may call God, the Divine, Spirit, Mystery, Love, Oneness, or another name.

COVENANT (10 MINUTES)

Before you move to the next activity, ask participants to brainstorm a group covenant for these zoom sessions. **Record their ideas on a google document that everyone can see.**

ACTIVITY: WHAT IS RELIGION FOR? (10 MINUTES)

Ask:

Did you know that religion is present in every human society ever documented? What else does a human society always have?

Point out that human societies in every place and time have had language, music, a social order with rules for how to live and behave, and religion.

Right now, we are going to start exploring why human societies seem to need religion.

Go to google document with following at top: "What is religion for?"

Ask the group to give you their thoughts. (If you need to prompt, ask “What human needs are met by religion?”)

Responses should include:

- Connecting with something bigger than ourselves
 - When do people feel that urge or need for connection? Why do you suppose they feel that? Do they feel it more when things are good or bad?
- Marking a change or transition (birth, becoming an adult, marriage, death)
 - Why change? (Change can be a cause for celebration, or concern, or sometimes both)
- Establishing a sense of belonging
 - Why do you need this?
- Finding meaning and purpose in life
 - Religion exists because human beings are meaning makers. We have a drive to understand the world around us and for our presence here to mean something.
- Answering big questions
 - Why do we need to do this? Religion springs from the human heart. When the earliest human beings felt a longing to know why they were here, where they came from and what happened when they died, what life meant and what their lives meant, religion was born.
- Knowing right from wrong

Religion does, indeed, bind together: It binds meaning to events; it binds a community to a sense of purpose, which makes us each feel we belong. It binds us to something bigger than just ourselves.

SCHEDULE (5 MINUTES)

Here are the religions we will explore in this program.... **SHOW SLIDE**

7th Grade

- Unitarian Universalism
- Indigenous Religion
- Hinduism
- Judaism
- Eastern Religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, and Confucianism
- Christianity
- Islam
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8th Grade

- New Religions of the 1800s: Baha'i, Seventh-Day Adventists, Church of Christ Scientist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Evangelical Christianity
- Quakers
- African Methodist Episcopal
- Humanism, Agnosticism, & Atheism
- Cults
- Neo-Paganism

ACTIVITY: UU ORIGINS - 20MINUTES

Have Guest come and talk about UU history & big themes

INTRODUCE TIMELINE & MAP (5 MINUTES) - SHOW SLIDE

Show Religions Time Line and the world map. As they discuss religions, they will add to the timeline:

- As the year proceeds, the group will explore many faiths. Some of them emerged so long ago that there is no way to know when they began (indicate far left of timeline). We will look at faiths that emerged through recorded history, coming all the way (move along time line toward present day) to religions that were born within the lifetimes of your parents and grandparents.
- Faiths have emerged at various places in the world (point to Asia, Europe, Oceania, North America), and we will be looking at that, too.
- Remember we talked about religion growing out of human experience to fulfill human need?
 - We will explore many religions this year. How would you expect their origins to be distributed along this timeline? Would they be evenly distributed across human history, or spread out? How else could they be distributed? [Reflect youth's answers verbally and by indicating on the timeline.]
 - How would you expect the religions' origins to be distributed on the world map? [Reflect their answers verbally and by indicating on the map.] This will be exciting to watch unfold as we go through the year, and to discover together. We will be able to see religion emerging in response to human need, on the map and on the timeline. When there is enormous change happening in the world, there is movement in religion, too.

Ask participants if they remember when Unitarianism started and when Universalism started? The date the Unitarian Universalist Association was created by merger? After youth respond, affirm these dates: Unitarianism, late 1700s; Universalism, 1700s; UUA merger 1961.

Show the timeline with those three dates on it.

Invite a volunteer to locate the United States on a map. Point out other places Unitarianism is practiced: Transylvania, Canada, India, Europe, and the Philippines.

WRAP UP:

Dismiss the group and tell them what they will be exploring next.

SOURCE:

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This program and additional resources are available on the UUA.org web site at www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith..

