

Additional Resources

Evaluating Curriculum and Resources

- "Ten Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism," published by the Council on Interracial Books for Children
- *Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children*, ed. Beverly Slapin and Doris Seale, University of California, 1998.
- Oyate Anti-Indian Biases Resource Center & Clearinghouse: www.oyate.org.

Teachers and Families

- *Ten Ways to Nurture Tolerance* found at www.teachingtolerance.org/parents/tenways.jsp
- A series of articles for teachers and parents about talking with kids about oppression and discrimination in many forms found at <http://www.tolerance.org/parents/talktokids.jsp>

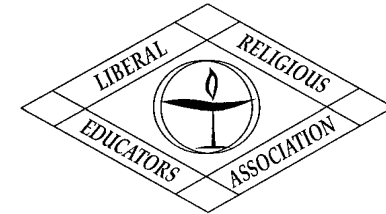
Racial Identity Development

- *Nurturing Children and Youth: a Developmental Guidebook*, by Tracey L. Hurd, Boston, Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005. Addresses the developing UU from infancy through early adulthood, with attention to racial identity development and faith development.
- *Teaching/Learning Anti-racism: A Developmental Approach* by Louise Derman-Sparks and Carol Brunson Phillips, New York, Teacher's College Press, 1997.
- *"Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" and other Conversations about Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum, New York, Basic Books, 1997

Diverse Families

- *Nothing to Hide: Mental Illness in the Family*, by Jean J. Beard and Peggy Gillespie with photographs by Gigi Kaeser, New York, The New Press, 2002.
- *Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment, and Love*, by Aylette Jenness, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1990.
- *Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families*, by Peggy Gillespie with photographs by Gigi Kaeser, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1997.

A Blueprint for Excellence: Best Practices for Unitarian Universalist Congregations



Moving Toward An Inclusive Vision 2005

The Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) promotes religious growth and learning for people of all ages by providing opportunities for continuing education, sharing resources, advocating for professional recognition, and providing encouragement and support for religious educators.

The *mission* of LREDA's *Integrity Team* is to articulate a compelling vision of LREDA as an organization made whole by the empowerment of all our members, assist LREDA in living that vision as an organizational priority, and monitor LREDA's ongoing progress toward that vision. Our *vision of LREDA* is an inclusive organization that is intentionally willing to struggle to dismantle legal and social barriers to equal association, act with integrity, and honor the many gifts we bring.

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Additional copies may be requested from LREDA,
PO Box 691254 San Antonio, TX 78269
www.uua.org/lreda

Introduction

Unitarian Universalist congregations serve as beacons of hope in a complex and disordered world. We must therefore be intentional about how we demonstrate our welcoming vision. This pamphlet provides an introduction to ways in which we can keep that beacon alight.

We recognize that as a faith we share the goal of greater inclusivity and that congregations are in their own places on the path to best practices. This brochure is intended to help congregations decide how to proceed in doing the important work of seeking justice and equity for all kinds of people and honoring the many gifts that a diversity of people bring to our congregations. It offers suggestions, practical guidance and resources to congregational leaders and religious professionals in these areas:

1. Evaluating facilities for accessibility
2. Evaluating atmosphere for affirming the worth and dignity of every person
3. Evaluating curricula for use in religious education
4. Creating and planning worship with a multicultural anti-oppression lens
5. Searching for more diverse professional leadership

Please make use of it in all aspects of congregational planning.

LREDA welcomes your comments, suggestions, and stories as you engage this vital work.

Join us as we move toward a more inclusive Unitarian Universalism in this new century!

Searching for More Diverse Professional Leadership

Note: Start any search for professional leadership by reading and considering the information found in *The Search for Professional Leadership found at www.uua.org/re/curriculum/leadershipguide.pdf*

Before making a decision to search as broadly as possible for applicants for a professional position, take an honest look at the diversity and strengths of your congregation.. What are the reasons for broadening your search to increase the likelihood that persons from historically underserved groups are likely to apply? What gifts would a broader perspective offer to children, youth and adults of your congregation? How is your congregation willing to support a religious professional from an historically underserved group?

Here are some ways to broaden and enrich your search process so that your congregation will welcome applications from a variety of skilled people, including those from historically underserved groups:

- Form a search committee and include people with diverse identities on the search committee. Charge the search committee with conducting as broad a search as is possible.
- Commit to being a fair compensation congregation.. Visit <http://www.uua.org/programs/ministry/finances/compensation.html> .
- Conduct a mini-audit of your space to decide if you are truly accessible to potential applicants with specific disabilities. Choose the appropriate accessibility audits and checklists on the UUA accessibilities website.
- Contact and network with Unitarian Universalist Religious Educators, your district or region Religious Education Program Consultant, and Rev. Beth Williams in the Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group at the UUA (bethwilliams@uua.org). If you wish to advertise your position through the LREDA member mailings, contact Shannon Hawkins, at ireda@uua.org.
- Post the job announcement in places where people belonging to historically underserved groups are likely to notice it.
- Find and advertise in publications in your area that are read by historically underserved groups (for example, neighborhood or special interest newspapers/newsletters).
- Post job descriptions and/or network with organizations that serve historically underserved groups

- When you plan to share wisdom or information from a culture other than your own, credit your sources and place your story or activity in context, explaining why and how you have chosen to use the material.
- Include contemporary readings that represent cultures featured in your worship, not limiting yourself to “long ago” materials. Use of only “long ago” materials and prayers can perpetuate the myth that certain cultures were active in the past and are no longer active in the present. Avoid romanticizing cultures with which you are not familiar.
- Build in the right to “pass,” or not participate, in any interactive component of the service. Keep exit routes clear for people who wish to leave.
- Worship experiences over time will enable you to address various aspects of inclusion and anti-oppression in a series of services. Don’t try to include too many things into any one worship experience.

For further information, contact Rev. Sofia Craethnenn, Program Coordinator, Racial and Ethnic Concerns at scraethnenn@uua.org.

Evaluating Facilities for Accessibility

"Welcoming ALL children to our program has helped our congregation put a "face" to our first principle, so that we can put our faith into action every day."

Pat Kahn, Director of Religious Education, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, Georgia

Unitarian Universalist congregations share the goal of having buildings and programs fully accessible to all. Many have undertaken extensive building modifications to increase accessibility. The following set of questions is designed to help congregations think about some accessibility issues they may not yet have considered.

Outside:

- Is parking for people with disabilities wide enough for a van, clear of debris or snow, near the entrance of the building?
- Are play areas and play structures accessible for use by children, parents and staff with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities?

Entrance to building:

- Are entrance doors well marked from the outside?
- Are outside doors accessible to people using wheelchairs, scooters, baby strollers?
- Can doors be opened by someone using a wheelchair, scooter, or walker, someone with arthritis, someone who is frail?
- Do doors stay open long enough for someone using a wheelchair/scooter, with a baby stroller or with small children to enter?

Inside the building:

- Are maps and signage obvious, enabling people to find their way around the building?
- Are brochures, flyers, and other printed materials offered in alternative formats such as large-print, audio-tape, and Braille?
- Are pictures, signs, fliers and posters displayed at eye level for people using wheelchairs or scooters?
- Are entrances to all rooms accessible to wheelchairs, scooters, baby strollers and walkers?

- Are there cutout spaces for wheelchairs inside gathering rooms so people using wheelchairs are seated with and included in the community? Are nearby spaces provided for companions, family or friends?
- Are gathering rooms equipped with assistive listening systems?
- Is there adequate lighting in gathering rooms for people with vision problems?
- Are water-fountains well-marked and mounted so that they are accessible for children and/or people who use wheelchairs?
- Are there lower coat-racks that can be reached by children and by people using scooters or wheelchairs?
- Are all levels of the building accessible to people with limited mobility, i.e. people using wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, crutches, or strollers?
- Is there an accessible restroom on each level?
- Can fathers, mothers, and caregivers find and easily use changing tables?
- Can small children easily locate and identify restrooms?
- Can a child using restrooms easily open the door; reach the toilet, urinal, sinks, soap, paper towels, hand dryers and light switches?

For more information about accessibility visit the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) website:

<http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/accessibility> or contact Rev. Dr. Devorah Greenstein, UUA Accessibilities Program Associate at dgreenstein@uua.org.

For information about welcoming children with special needs in your programs, please read:

Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities, by Sally Patton (copyright 2004, Unitarian Universalist Association, available from the UUA Bookstore).

Creating and Planning Worship with a Multicultural Anti-Oppression Lens

As a liberal, inclusive religious faith, we draw wisdom from many sources to enrich and shape our worship practices. Lay leaders and religious professionals seek to find ways to draw wisdom from the cultural and religious traditions of the world, as well as those found represented in our Unitarian Universalist congregations, in a way which is respectful of those traditions, cultures, rituals, and practices. Here are some things to consider when planning and conducting worship:

- Our Unitarian Universalist community includes many theological and cultural traditions. Use language, music, visual displays, art and activities in worship that respect and reflect the theological and cultural pluralism of today's Unitarian Universalism.
- Plan, implement and evaluate worship to ensure it is respectful and inclusive of persons of all ages, races/ethnicities, religions, classes, genders, gender identities, physical, sensory, and cognitive abilities and affectional orientations. Choose language and names for examples that reflect a variety of identities.
- Speak from your own experience and identify it as such. Be mindful that your audience will listen from multiple perspectives. Develop your worship in consultation with persons, communities and religious groups whose culture is referenced in your presentation.
- Be mindful of the potential negative impact of cultural appropriation (enacting rituals or using stories, songs, objects or symbols that are sacred to a particular culture). When in doubt, consult with a representative of that group about using such materials. Be particularly cautious when representatives of a community advise against using their traditions or materials.
- While members of an historically underserved group in your congregation may be valuable resources in sharing their culture/faith/experience, guard against "tokenizing" them by always expecting them to represent their group.

- Be sure that the resources and the teachers/advisors/leaders make no assumption about the racial, ethnic, or cultural and/or the gender and affectional orientation of people in the room.
- Advise teachers/leaders/advisors to exercise caution about participating in or re-creating rituals/practices of an ethnic or religious group without a member(s) of that group involved in the planning.
- Teachers/advisors/leaders should consider the following points and integrate their responses into their approach to use of stories or materials:
 1. What do we, as Unitarian Universalists, appreciate and learn from this tradition and/or story? Why am I including this in my teaching?
 2. What can I, as a Unitarian Universalist, learn/know from this experience/material from another tradition? How is this different from what a person from within that culture might gain (a first-person resource is helpful). How can I share these two different lenses (points of view)?

Outreach and Integration

- Social justice projects done as part of your program should be respectful of any groups the participants are setting out to help. Consult with a group or agency that understands what kind of help is needed in your community.
- Be sensitive to the fact that a participant in the helping activity may, in fact, be a potential recipient of any service (e.g. A child in your program may belong to a family that needs the help of a food pantry or thrift shop.)
- Design opportunities for children, youth, and/or adults to examine conditions and social structures that might cause people to be in need of help. Build in a reflection component so that participants integrate what they have learned and grow their faith through the project or experience.

A word of caution: When using older Unitarian Universalist curricula or those from non-UU sources, evaluate those curricula based on the above criteria and make whatever modifications are necessary. In some cases, you may need to discard old resource materials and replace them.

For further information, contact Dr. Tracey L. Hurd, UUA Children and Families Program Director at thurd@uuu.org or Sylvia Bass-West, CUC Director of Lifespan Learning at Sylvia@cuc.ca

Evaluating Atmosphere for Affirming the Worth and Dignity of Every Person

“This is my place. I can be who I am here.” This quote is from a middle school-aged son of a lesbian woman who believes First Parish of Arlington “does an incredible job of letting you know you’re welcome.”
Tina Schulz, Director of Religious Education, First Parish of Arlington, MA

It is a useful exercise to pretend that you are a visitor to your congregation. What are the perceptible signs of our Unitarian Universalist faith and values? What kind of information might a visitor glean about what kind of welcome awaits in your congregation? Below are some items you may not yet have considered:

Ushers and Greeters

- Have staff, greeters, and ushers received training in disability etiquette so that they can comfortably and appropriately welcome people with varying physical, sensory, psychiatric, and cognitive abilities?
- Have your staff, greeters, and ushers received training in welcoming people from a variety of cultures?

Information about Unitarian Universalism

- Are pamphlets about Unitarian Universalism available and prominently displayed?
- Do pamphlets honor and reflect the diversity of your congregation and its surrounding community?
- Are there pamphlets and information readily available about lifespan faith development/religious education programs? about social justice projects and programs? about music in your congregation? about the path to membership?
- Have you included in your pamphlet display some of the Spanish language brochures available from the UUA? French language resources from the Canadian Unitarian Council(CUC)?
- Is there someone clearly designated and available so that visitors know who can answer their questions?

Welcoming Congregation

If you are a Welcoming Congregation

- Is there a statement or a Welcoming Congregation certificate displayed?
- Is there a Pride Flag or sign outside of your building?
- Is there a Pride Flag inside your building?
- Are transgender people included in your welcoming congregation certification and materials?
- Are you working with “Living the Welcoming Congregation” materials in order to keep your commitment to being a welcoming congregation a living part of your congregation’s ministry?

If you are a United States congregation that is not yet a Welcoming Congregation, contact Rev. Keith Kron, Director of the UUA Office of BGLT Concerns to learn more about the Welcoming Congregation program (kkron@uua.org).

The Canadian Unitarian Council processes, serves and affirms Canadian congregations as Welcoming Congregations. You may contact the CUC Toronto offices at 1-888-568-5723 or e-mail info@cuc.ca or you can link directly to <http://www.cuc.ca/queer/index.htm> for all of the information.

If your congregation did the welcoming congregation program a number of years ago and needs an update, you might also call the UUA or CUC for information on the new “Living the Welcoming Congregation.” program.

Libraries

Do your adult’s and children’s libraries reflect...

- Unitarian Universalist values and Principles?
- Multiculturalism?
- Different affectional orientations?
- Different family styles?
- Differing abilities?

A good resource about books that value all families and allow children to see reflections of themselves, no matter what their situation, can be found at <http://www.amazeworks.org/programs/fam>

Evaluating Curricula for Use in Religious Education

“Our young people don’t have to fear differences; rather, they can embrace diversity, inclusion, and creativity.”

Rebecca Anderson, librarian, First Unitarian Universalist, Burlington, VT

Lifespan Faith Development programs shape a person’s developing sense of faith, religion, and religious identity. The materials, programs, and curricula with which we engage children, youth, and adults define our faith. Inclusive and sensitive representation of people and faith traditions is thus essential to religious education. By what criteria do we evaluate and adjust our curricular materials?

Consider the following when choosing and implementing curriculum for your religious education program:

Welcoming and Representing Diversity

- Persons invited, depicted, or talked about in your program should represent a wide variety of races, ethnicities, abilities, social classes, life experiences, and family configurations.
- Look for resources that aim to help children, youth, and/or adults develop skills to identify oppression. Such resources might include curricula with multicultural, anti-bias, anti-racist, or anti-oppression components.
- Be sure that activities, field trips, and excursions are accessible and enjoyable for children with varied physical, cognitive, and sensory abilities. You may need to modify curricula/activities/field trips so that all may participate.

Sensitive Cultural Representation

- Stories from other cultures and faith traditions should be written by and attributed to a member of that culture or tradition. Enough background information should be included to provide context for the story. The purpose of telling or using the story should be stated clearly.
- Where curriculum materials highlight the experience or rituals of an ethnic or religious group, be sure that voices representative of that group are used. Consider inviting a representative of that culture or tradition to help with your planning and presentation.

Teachers, Youth Advisors, Small Group Leaders

- Provide ongoing training for volunteers so they can learn skills related to inclusion and sensitive cultural representation.