

Religions of Star Trek

Lesson 11: The Final Frontier

Star Date 5.09.2021

Objectives: Reflect on the intersection of Star Trek and UU's understanding of the faith journey.

Materials: Teachers should download lesson plan and attachments onto their desktop, login to **Unity's YouTube and Amazon accounts.**

Time allotments: Suggested for 60 minute online class.

1. Zoom Welcome (as youth arrive into the breakout classroom)

- Teachers and youth are expected to log on to zoom at 11:15am (15 min before class begins at 11:30am) so that everyone can be organized into correct breakout classrooms. We want to make sure there is an attentive adult in each breakout classroom with youth.
- Greet youth and ask everyone to correct their display name as needed. Ask everyone to select "gallery view" to see everyone else.
- Staff will take attendance.

2. Zoom Icebreaker: Guess the Rhythm (5 minutes)

One youth leads and changes the rhythm. The group mimics the changing rhythm while another youth tries to guess who the leader is.

Teachers, pick one youth to be the "guesser" and ask them to turn around. Quietly, select a different youth to be the "leader" by writing their name on a piece of paper and showing it to the group. The "leader" can clap, snap, make sounds, etc. to start and change the rhythm. Once the rhythm starts, invite the "guesser" to turn back around. The "guesser" gets three tries to identify the leader. Hands should be visible and sound audible so that everyone can follow along and participate. If someone does not have working video, they can be the guesser. Repeat as time allows.

3. Chalice Lighting Light a chalice at your home, invite youth to light their own chalices and say together: *"We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith, the light of truth and the warmth of love."*

Teacher reads: (from T.S. Eliot, poet and cousin of Frederick May Eliot, minister of Unity Church-Unitarian from 1917-1937)

“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

4. Brief Check-in (5 minutes)

Continue weekly ritual/check-in (e.g. sharing a joy or sorrow so that everyone feels present in class).

5. UU identity and Star Trekking TOGETHER (10 minutes)

- **Screen share lesson attachment 11a** (Star Trek Mission Statement & Covenant) and invite a youth to read aloud the Mission Statement from Star Trek (don't read the covenant yet).
- **Screen share (with audio)** the NG intro, which recites the mission statement: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnDtvZXYHgE> (1.46 min, **stop at 0.55 min**)

Teacher summarizes: By now, we have become familiar with this introduction and guiding vision for Star Trek. Imagine that vision alongside the Coming of Age program – our signature program for 9th graders when youths finally stand before their community and declare what they have learned in the form of a *Credo* or statement of faith. Each *Credo* is a unique statement of faith authentic to each youth.

Unitarian Universalists value the individual spiritual journey and believe that there is no one right way to lead a religious life. There is no *creed of belief* or *statement of doctrine* to which one must subscribe to be a Unitarian Universalist. Out of the combination of experience, conscience, and reason, each one of us shapes a personal faith. In the end religious authority lies not in a book, person, or institution, but in ourselves and the journey to “boldly go where no one (or at least ourselves) has gone before.”

But while the individual may be the final religious **authority**, the individual is not the only **source** to help in the faith exploration. Individual freedom exists in dynamic tension with the (1) insights of our history and (2) the wisdom of our communities. It is this tension which shows as false the oft-heard statement that Unitarian Universalists can believe anything they like, or “Unitarian Universalism is like a *build-a-bear* religion.” It is simply not true.

Star Trek was radical for its time (and for our time, too!) in bringing diverse beings into community, and that perhaps the greatest mission and exploration is the question of how we are to journey **together**: with each other, with the earth, and with the Sacred.

Questions for Discussion:

- How can our lives be *both* free *and* bound together?
- We are likely familiar with freedom as being “free **from**” others, but what might it mean to be “free **for**” others?

6. Mission of Star Trek vs. Unitarian Universalism (15 minutes)

- **Screen share lesson attachment 11a** again and invite the youth to unmute and read aloud together the “Covenant” (from the hymnal #471). This is a frequently used reading, especially for welcoming new members into the church community.

Questions for Discussion:

- What kind of words are “doctrine/ sacrament/ prayer”? (*religious, institutional, belief-centered*)
- What kind of words are “love/ quest for truth/ service”? (*spiritual, ethical, deed-centered*)
- Why are they paired? How is *love* the *doctrine* of the church? Or *service* a *prayer*?
- Why might covenanting with one another be both challenging and necessary for Unitarian Universalists?
- How does this covenant compare with Star Trek’s Mission Statement?
- Star Trek gives focus “To explore/seek out/boldly go” ... but for what?
- What ends or purpose does the covenant provide?
- Is space the final frontier? Is love-truth-service the final frontier?

7. Viewing Episode: The Inner Light - NG, Season 5, Episode 25 (15 minutes)

Teacher introduces: In this episode, Captain Picard is struck with an energy beam from an alien probe that downloads another person’s entire lifetime into Picard’s memory and experience. While minutes pass for the other crew on the Enterprise, Picard begins to dream 40 years of life as another person named “Kamin” – a member of an alien race whose civilization died out long ago. Picard/Kamin is a loving husband, father, and scientist whose planet is on the verge of destruction when its sun begins to die. He experiences his son and daughter growing up, the death of his beloved wife, and attempt after failed attempt at trying to save his planet from destruction. Finally as an old man, Picard learns about a probe that will be sent up into space, its purpose to keep alive the memory of this race of people long after their civilization has died, by downloading a living memory into another sentient being. The probe also contains Kamin’s flute.

- Play from beginning and stop when Star Trek theme sequence begins (**stop at about 2:02 min**)
- Fast forward and **play from 33:21 minutes to the end** of episode (about 12 minutes total)

Share screen (with audio): https://www.amazon.com/Times-Arrow-Part-1/dp/B005HEK3JW/ref=nav_youraccount_switchacct?keywords=watch+star+trek+next+generation&qid=1609282065&dchild=1&s=movies-tv&sr=1-2

8. The Final Frontier (10 minutes)

Questions for Discussion:

- The journey through space has led Picard to journey through another person's/civilization's lifetime. What happens to Picard from such a journey?
- What happened to you, as a viewer of this story, who was in a way "beamed" this story and given a download of another person's life?
- What is the final frontier that Star Trek is trying to "boldly go"? Is it the journey through space? Is it the journey into another's life and world?
- What do you hear when Picard plays the flute? What do you feel?
- Whose music is he playing? Picard's or Kamin's? Or our own music?

9. **Announcement:** Next week is our closing celebration. Thanks for being with us this semester.

10. **Extinguish the chalice**, saying together: *"May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts."*

11. **Leave zoom breakout classroom:** wait until all youth have left, click "Leave" then "Leave Meeting."

Viewing clips, in order of sequence:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnDtvZXYHgE> (1.46 min)
- **Amazon Video: The Inner Light - NG, Season 5, Episode 25** (about 15 min)

Capt. Picard has a profound experience of living another's lifetime. An ancient alien probe has downloaded another man's entire lifetime into Picard's memory & experience.

https://www.amazon.com/Times-Arrow-Part-1/dp/B005HEK3JW/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=watch+star+trek+next+generation&qid=1609282065&dchild=1&s=movies-tv&sr=1-2