

# UU Identity & History

## Lesson 9: The 8<sup>th</sup> UU Principle?

4.18.2021

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**Objectives:** Explore UU Principles as core dimensions of UU faith.

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

**Time allotments:** Suggested for 60 minute online class.

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### 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: Two Facts and One Dream** (5 minutes, begin while waiting for everyone to arrive)

Have each youth think of two factual truths about themselves plus one thing they dream or wish as being true about themselves. They should be able to describe the three things in three sentences (keep it short). Have one youth share aloud then invite everyone else to write in the chat what they think is the sharer's dream. As time allows, take turns until everyone has shared.

### 3. **Chalice Lighting:** Light the chalice, saying these words together: *"We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love."*

**Teacher reads:** (from UU religious educator, Edith Hunter)

*"Perhaps we should realize that our need is not to 'find something to believe' – but rather to discover that our lives indicate what we believe right now. This is the place to start."*

### 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. Review: Seven Principles** (10 minutes)

**Teacher asks:** Who knows one of our UU Principles? As a group, how many can we remember?

**Screen share** lesson attachment 9a (Seven Principles).

- Ask volunteers to read each principle aloud (stop before the second page).

**Questions for Discussion:**

- If someone didn't know much about Unitarian Universalism, what do you imagine might be their first impression based on these defining elements of our faith?
- What Principles are most important to you?
- Which Principles would be most evident from observing how you live your life?
- Do you have any disagreements or conflicts with any of the Principles?

**6. Hymn Listen** (10 minutes)

**Screen share (with audio):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdnr4fNuR74>

- Start at 1:10 (beginning is humming).

**Screen share** lesson attachment 9b (Spirit of Life)

- Invite a youth to read the lyrics aloud.

**Questions for Discussion:**

- What values do you recognize in the lyrics of Spirit of Life? It can be related to our principles or sources or anything else we've talked about in the last few weeks (e.g. Transcendentalist, Humanist, Christian, conservative, liberal.)
- Which lines and words stand out to you and why?

**7. Are Seven Principles Enough?** (10 minutes)

**Teacher asks:** Is there anything missing from the list of Seven Principles for you?

**Paste** the Seven Principles into the chat for reference:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

**Questions for discussion:**

- Can a UU community follow the Seven Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism or other forms of oppression? (*Take some time with this question, considering each of the Seven Principles and how they do/not address racism.*)
- How is it that most UU congregations are primarily European-American in membership, culture (especially music), and leadership even when they are located near diverse communities?

*Note: UU's also have a mixed record historically in other areas of racial justice: e.g., we had people on both sides of Abolitionism (including people like Jefferson who was a slaveholder), and Unitarians were proponents of eugenics (leading to selective breeding, sterilization of poor and disabled, criminalizing interracial marriage, and some of the racial extremes of Nazism and Apartheid in South Africa).*

- **Who** has been largely missing from Unitarian Universalist history **in the United States?** Give a chance for youth to offer responses.

*Hint: At a global level, the oppression of women remains fundamental to poverty and lack of development in many areas. **But in the United States, racism stands out:***

- The UUA has done well with women becoming ministers and leaders.
- The LGBTQIA+ community is well represented as members, ministers, staff, and in other forms of leadership.
- The UUA has also made good progress with accessibility and supporting people who are differently abled.
- However, problems rooted in economic class exploitation remain that disproportionately affect UUs of color. Racism and classism remain interwoven in very complex ways.

*Note: This doesn't mean that the UUA and Unitarian Universalist congregations cannot continue to improve inclusion for various marginalized groups, but racism and welcome of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) UUs stands out as the biggest gap.*

**8. The 8<sup>th</sup> Principle** (20 minutes)

**Teacher summarizes:** After working with congregations on issues of racial justice for over 15 years, Paula Cole Jones – the old UU director for racial and social justice – realized that a person can believe they are being a “good UU” and following the Seven Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism and other oppressions. What was her evidence? Most UU congregations are primarily European-American in membership, culture, and leadership, even when they are located near diverse communities. She realized that an **8<sup>th</sup> Principle** was needed to correct this, and with other anti-racist

activists, recommended in May 2017 that an 8<sup>th</sup> Principle be adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Today, the Black Lives of UU (BLUU) continues to urge the UUA to adopt this 8<sup>th</sup> Principle.

**Screen share** lesson attachment 9a again. Scroll down to the second page (The 8<sup>th</sup> Principle).

*“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”*

### **Questions for discussion:**

- In your own words, what does this Principle mean?
- What is a “Beloved Community”?  
*(Hint: Beloved Community is NOT a description of some affectionate, loving community. “Beloved Community” is a term first coined in the early days of the 20th century by philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, then gained popularity through the prophetic work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement. Beloved Community happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, sexual orientation backgrounds/identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and in the broader world.)*
- Review the language of the Seven Principles (screen share or past in chat as needed). Notice that the language is positive and *does not describe what opposes each principle* (e.g. the 1<sup>st</sup> principle does not mention prejudice and hatred; the 5<sup>th</sup> principle does not mention censorship or suppression of free press; the 7<sup>th</sup> principle does not mention pollution and habitat destruction).
  - Does the positive language risk seeming overly sunny, optimistic, and one-sided?
  - Is it important for the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle to use critical, *oppositional* language of working to “*dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions*”?
- Some voices have argued that the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle is already entailed and included in the Seven Principles. Others argue that the historical reality of white supremacy requires the specific focus of the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle. What do you think? Take a class vote whether or not to adopt the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle.
- What do you know about the work Unity Church does towards building a Beloved Community? List examples (e.g. *Project Home, Circle of Peace, the Beloved Community Jr. High class*).
- How are **you** involved in “dismantling racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions”?

9. **Announcement:** Next week is COA Sunday, so we don't have class, but please go to the service and support our 9<sup>th</sup> graders!
  
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.”