

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York

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Religious Education  
Coming of Age Program

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# COMING OF AGE PROGRAM[[1]](#footnote-1)

## Description

Coming of Age (COA) helps youth discern for themselves what it means to live a life of faith, individually and as part of the larger Unitarian Universalist (UU) faith community. It involves individual activities, community service, family participation, and working with a mentor. This program initiates a process of life-long learning and promotes right relationship with one’s self, with others, and with the wider world. This individualized program is for 8th-10th grade youth.

## Purpose

Coming of Age is a way to:

* Explore and clarify beliefs and values
* Enable youth to discover what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist among diverse faith traditions in an increasingly secular world
* Develop a maturing pursuit of life-long spiritual inquiry, personal integrity, and action for the greater good
* Provide a foundation for a life-of-faith and a sense of belonging in a covenantal community within the Unitarian Universalist tradition

## Program Structure

Our program consists of seven units, culminating in a worship service during which youth deliver their personal credos on Youth Sunday in late spring. Each of these units provides the COA participant with the opportunity to explore aspects of a mature religious life, including both beliefs and practices. In combination, these units assure a comprehensive program and a meaningful Coming of Age experience. Each unit consists of various activities, reflection, and discussion with mentors and others. The seven units are:

* UU Perspectives—surveying UU history, values, and beliefs
* Theology/Beliefs—clarifying your ideas about humanity and the divine
* Spiritual Practices—learning practices that balance us and keep us in touch with life
* Leadership—developing leadership skills, handling conflicts, and inspiring others
* Social Action—putting values into practice
* Worship—designing and leading worship services
* Credo Development—articulating your spiritual path

### Unit Outline

The unit outline can serve as the curriculum, so that the COA program is simply a matter of completing the component parts. However, if you prefer, the units can merely serve as a guide as you design a program that is custom-made for you or a small group. Unit outline format:

* Why this subject area?
* The Unitarian Universalist Principle(s) and/or Source(s) that relate to the unit
* Definition of the focus of the unit, and what is to be accomplished
* Activities for the unit (required and alternative)
* Credo reflections

There is a wide choice of activities to assure a meaningful and fun COA experience; there are 12 required activities. Our program contains different approaches and alternatives to accommodate different learning styles and emotional skills; some activities are required, some are alternatives. [Additional resources](#_Program_Overview) for each unit’s subject matter are located at the end of this document.

### The Credo

Hosea Ballou cautions, “There is one inevitable criterion of judgment touching religious faith in doctrinal matters—can you reduce it to practice? If not, have none of it” (as cited in Millspaugh, 2009, p. 163). Most Coming of Age programs focus the Credo on personal beliefs and ethics. At UUCY, our Credo emphasis is on how one should *live*—how to practice right relationship with the world—creating a credo that articulates a *process* that initiates, informs, and nourishes a life-of-faith.

Where do we start? Edith Hunter wisely counsels, “Perhaps we should realize 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” (Frevert, 2009, p. 62).

Over the course of the Coming of Age program, participating youth will develop a personal statement—a Credo—of how one should live. Answers to four questions lead youth in the creation of this statement, the final version of which will be presented as part of the Youth Sunday worship service. These questions gently awaken four fundamental realms of the inner life: Identity, Love, Daily Practice, and Kindness (Muller, 1996, p. xi). Our Credo questions adopted from Muller are:

* 1. **Who am I?** What is my true nature, and how do I find it?
  2. **What do I love?** By what star do I navigate my journey on earth?
  3. **How shall I live, knowing I will die?** In our brief time here, what qualities do I wish to cultivate? What shall I set my heart to?
  4. **What is my gift to the family of earth?** How do I uncover my true gift? How do I balance giving and receiving (Muller, 1996, p. xxi)? Who is most in need of my gift?

Credos may take the form of a written statement, original art work, poetry, multi-media, a collage, a scrapbook of collected pictures, words, and mementos from program projects, video and/or audio recordings, as well as music, silence, meditation, readings, or other worship elements (or any combination of these or other appropriate elements).

### Recognition Service

Our Coming of Age Program ends with a Sunday worship service, including some form of recognition and celebration. Youth share the Credo they prepared during the course of the program. Parents and/or mentors may elect to speak about the young person and their changing place in the world as they enter adolescence. Other family members may also contribute words or music to the ceremony.

The celebration is a time to bring all the component parts of the program together in some form that articulates what the participant has learned, about others and him or herself. The participating youth will help design the worship service that concludes the program.

Although participating youth help plan the ceremony that celebrates their completion of the program, parents, mentors and others, may wish to plan a party to augment our social hour following the service. Inviting friends and extended family to this ceremony and celebration is a customary part of the process, with the ultimate goal of the larger faith community welcoming youth into the community in a new way. *Youth may elect to join the church any time after completing Coming of Age—this is an individual decision.*

## Getting Started

### Commitment

This program is voluntary; however, participants and mentors must commit to the entire program—both content and duration (which for our program means from July to April). Youth must be both self-actualized and personally responsible for accomplishing the required activities and meeting with their mentor. Participant planning includes considering COA time commitments as well as necessary schedule adjustments to other personal commitments. In years that there is more than one youth participating in the program, our Director of Religious Education (DRE) will help coordinate the overall program details.

### Participants

**Youth**

Pursuing a Coming of Age experience may make a busy life even busier; in addition to being challenging and affirming, it is both serious and fun. If you’ve ever wondered about:

* Who or what is in charge? Is there a creator?
* Is there a god? Is god a being? An entity? A path? A process? A human concept?
* What is my purpose?
* Why am I here?
* How do I know what I know?
* What is the nature of existence and how do I fit into the picture?
* What in our world is divine—if anything?
* What is our uniquely human challenge?
* What are the purpose of faith and the role of religion?
* What does it mean to be a religious community?
* How shall I live in order to transform myself and the world?
* What happens when I die? Is there an afterlife for me? Reincarnation?
* What does Unitarian Universalism have to say about these questions?

. . . this program is for you.

**Parents**

Parents must help UUCY professional staff determine if their youth is ready, willing, and able for a Coming of Age experience. If the answer is *yes*, then your support of the program and your youth’s participation is a vital element in the success of the program and your youth’s experience. Participate in the COA initial meeting. Help schedule and provide transportation to occasional meetings. Ask your youth’s mentor for periodic updates on covered topics; so that you can continue the conversations at home and help youth carry what they have learned into the wider world (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 22). You may wish to have a role in the Recognition Service; you may elect to plan additional celebratory activities after the Youth Service.

**Mentors**

Mentors are adults who work with the COA participant throughout the program, inviting conversation, supporting exploration and providing the support of an adult with a perspective from outside the family. Program participants must follow UUCY’s Church Children and Youth Protection Policy. All mentors working with youth must have a current volunteer application and background check on file in the church office. Everyone involved in the program must understand the Mentor relationship guidelines, which must be documented and signed by the mentor and youth.

**Qualities of a Good Mentor** (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 15)

* A mature and emotionally secure adult
* A good listener
* Able to focus the relationship on the youth’s needs
* Model respect and trustworthiness
* Affirm youth as they are
* Know that the youth is the real architect of transformation
* Has resolved his or her own issues and is not trying to relive adolescence through the youth
* 25 years or older, and a member of the congregation for at least a year
* Not currently a parent of a teenager

**Mentor Responsibilities** (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 17)

* Meet periodically with the youth to discuss program activities
* Play an active role in study unit activities, including reading the same material as the youth and reviewing such additional and on-line resources as may be necessary to be an effective mentor
* Help the youth make choices to fulfill program requirements in a timely fashion
* Provide youth a safe, impartial atmosphere to express ideas and feelings of accomplishment as well as feelings of frustration or confusion and help overcome or cope with negative feelings
* Be an adult in whom youth can confide freely, trusting they will not be responded to with parental voice or parental judgment
* Help the youth prepare their credo and sponsor the youth at the Recognition Service
* Maintain the privacy and protect the physical and emotional safety of the youth

**Matching Youth and Mentors**

In considering mentors, the youth may wish to make a list of qualities that they are hoping for in a mentor, and perhaps a list of adults they would like to ask. Parents and professional staff can also make recommendations. If a suitable mentor from the church is not available, you may wish to consider members of your extended family, family friends, or parents of friends. The Director of Religious Education will assist in recruiting Mentors; however, the choice of mentor is ultimately that of the youth and the parents.

### Exploring Expectations of Coming of Age—A First Meeting

It is important to begin the Coming of Age process with a conversation that engages parents, youth, and the mentor in a discussion about what the program is for and what each person’s role in the process will be. If you wish, you may invite the DRE to participate in this initial meeting. Refer to [Exhibit 1](#_COA_Activity_Planning) to help you plan your personal program.

**Expectation Questions**

* What do you hope will come out of this process?
* What are you afraid might happen in the process?
* What do hope will be included as part of the process?
* What do you expect of me?

**Goals for the Program**

Listed below are general goals of COA programs. After reading them through aloud, brainstorm additional goals of youth, parents, and/or mentor; decide which resonate most strongly. In a Coming of Age program, a young person generally will:

* Develop a process to enable a life-long pursuit of spiritual inquiry, integrity, and action for the greater good
* Develop knowledge and appreciation of the wide diversity of belief within the Unitarian Universalist tradition and other faith traditions
* Discuss, reflect on, and explain his or her personal religious beliefs within the framework of Unitarian Universalism
* Examine his or her own values and beliefs and how they relate to daily life
* Establish a strong and supportive relationship with a mentor
* Have opportunities for independent thinking, assuming responsibility and leadership, decision making, and values exploration
* Understand the role worship plays in our faith community
* Put faith and values into action in his or her own life and community
* Be recognized, celebrated, and welcomed into the larger church community on completion of the COA Program

**Where do we go from here?**

* Share appropriate contact information
* Rough out a trajectory and schedule for your program; next meeting; compare calendars
* Determine next steps; choose the activities to be pursued in Unit One
* Review mentor relationship guidelines; review what steps are to be taken if established boundaries are crossed or there is a threat of harassment or harm by or to any party
* Agree upon guidelines when youth and mentors are interacting electronically

# STUDY UNITS

## Unit 1—UU Perspectives

**Why This Subject Area?**

Our Seven Principles define our public persona as a faith community; our six Sources inform our spiritual practice. Unitarian Universalism comes from a long and distinguished history of individuals and organizations that struggled to live out our values of open mindedness, equality, and compassion. Our members embrace, respect, and are informed by a bewildering array of faith traditions and beliefs. Non-creedal, covenantal, and welcoming, our rich UU heritage defines who we are as a faith community.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Principle(s):**  All seven of them.

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/index.shtml>

**Related Unitarian Universalist Source(s):**  All six of them.

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/index.shtml>

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish**?

1. Learn how our Principles and Sources define us as a religious community and guide us into right relationship with all that is
2. Learn about the shared history of Unitarian Universalists
3. Reflect on the Big Questions and relate them to the UU perspective
4. Explore what UU’s hold dear
5. Add your own outcomes

**What do I do?**

*“An unexamined faith is not worth having.” ~ James Luther Adams*

Refer to the appropriate [Study Unit Resources](#_Unit_1—UU_Perspectives) at the end of this document.

**Required**

1. **Unitarian Universalist Overview**. Read **one** of the following and discuss at length with your mentor and family:
   1. Morales, P., & Unitarian Universalist Association. (2012). The Unitarian Universalist pocket guide. Boston: Skinner House Books. [www.uua.org/bookstore](http://www.uua.org/bookstore)
   2. Frevert, P. (2009). Welcome: a Unitarian Universalist primer. Boston: Skinner House Books. [www.uua.org/bookstore](http://www.uua.org/bookstore)
   3. Sias, J., Edington, S., & Unitarian Universalist Association (1998). 100 questions that non-members ask about Unitarian Universalism. Nashua, NH: Transition Pub. <http://www.uunashua.org/100quest.shtml>
2. **Unitarian Universalist History**. David Bumbaugh writes “what binds Unitarian Universalists together is not so much a shared theology, or even a shared response to the experience of the sacred, but our shared history” (as cited in Millspaugh, 2009, p. 175). Choose **one** of the activities below:
   1. Research a man or woman from Unitarian and/or Universalist history who speaks to you. You can find a huge number of short biographies of important Unitarians and/or Universalists at <http://www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/>, searchable by name or by area of interest. You can also find many short bios at <http://www.famousuus.com/>. When your research is complete, share with family, mentor, or others. Your effort could take any of a variety of forms—a speech you read; a poster with pictures; a timeline and important facts or quotations; a dramatic presentation to children in our Religious Education program in which you dress up as your historical person and speak in his or her voice; a PowerPoint or multi-media presentation with pictures and information from the Web; a collage…use your imagination!
   2. Interview the minister and older members of our congregation to learn about our church’s history and stories of our congregation; discover the incidences where our congregation particularly honors its history; can you identify events in our church’s history that reflect our Seven Principles? Take notes (or create a video or audio interview) and discuss with your mentor and family.
   3. Some history is in the making. Interview our minister about how our church is governed. Attend one church Board meeting and one Religious Education Committee meeting. What goes on in these meetings? Which of our Seven Principles is most evident at these meetings? Take notes and discuss your experience with your mentor and family.
3. **Unitarian Universalist Theology**. Theology is not just about the study of God—it is the study of the sacred within, among, and beyond us (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 142). It grapples with, but is not limited to, consideration of Big Questions like:

* Who am I?
* Who or what is in charge?
* How do I know what I know?
* What happens after I die?
* What is my purpose? Or, What am I called to do?
* How do I know what is right and what is wrong?

Choose **one** of the activities below from the Coming of Age Handbook (Millspaugh, 2009):

* 1. **Good and Evil**. The Jewish tradition talks about people having two tendencies, the inclination toward evil (yetzer ha-ra) and the inclination toward good (yetzer ha-tov). According to this tradition, we are all born with the inclination toward evil, but the inclination toward good does not take root until age 12 for girls and age 13 for boys. Agree or disagree with this idea and explore what might change at these ages that would support the Jewish position. What does Unitarian Universalism say about good and evil (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 144)? Share your thoughts and discuss with your mentor and family.
  2. **Original Sin and Free Will**. Compare and contrast the Christian and Jewish religions that all humans are born sinful based on the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the first humans, with the Unitarian Universalist position that humans can choose to act for good or evil—that from birth we are neither depraved nor holy. Make up your own ten commandments, justify your commandments, and share your thoughts on good and evil with your mentor and family (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 145).
  3. **Ultimate Reality**. Forrest Church in Lifecraft (as cited in Millspaugh, 2009, p. 147) describes seven paths people might take to understand Ultimate Reality and live their lives in response to it. Review the seven paths (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 156). Choose your preferred path and decide on three ways which Unitarian Universalism supports your chosen path. Discuss your thoughts with your mentor and family.
  4. **God. Not God**. Read the pamphlet, *UU Views on God*. Write down the things you believe in and those you don’t. Next, review *Some Ways of Looking at God* (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 157) and choose which ones appeal to you most. Based on your answers, can you define yourself as Unitarian Universalist? Discuss with the minister, your mentor, and your family.

1. **Unitarian Universalist Beliefs.** The original meaning of believe is to “hold dear, to prize” (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 89). Choose one or more of the activities below from the Coming of Age Handbook (Millspaugh, 2009):
2. **Covenant vs. Creed**. You have probably heard that UU's are non-creedal; we have no orthodox dogma. If not creedal or dogmatic, then what? The “what” is that we are *covenantal*. Our Seven Principles and Purposes are not a statement of belief; they are a *covenant*. They are a promise. Read our Principles; review the definitions of *creed, dogma, doctrine, promise*, and *covenant*. With whom are we covenanting (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 95)? What are we promising? Discuss your views with your mentor, and your family.
3. **Talking about Unitarian Universalism**. It is not always easy to explain Unitarian Universalism, but being able to do so is useful because you might want to share your faith with your friends. Prepare an “elevator speech” about Unitarian Universalism. An elevator speech is short enough to deliver between floors on an elevator ride—30 seconds maximum. Share your result and justify and discuss your speech with your mentor, and your family (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 99).
4. **Evil**. Whereas bad human behavior—evil—is so prevalent, it is important to observe it accurately, be skilled at responding to it, and confident in talking about it (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 97). Read the pamphlet, *Unitarian Views of Evil* and *review Handout 9, Why do People Do Evil Things?* (in Millspaugh, 2009, p. 111). Which positions from the handout resonate most with you? Why? Discuss with your mentor, and your family.

**What do I reflect on for my Credo?**

*“Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me am I everything. Between the two, my life flows.” ~ Anonymous Indian master*. Don’t think you have to answer all the following questions! But do read them all and think about some of them. The ones that intrigue you may be ones that might find their way into your Credo. Don’t hesitate to add your own questions! Our four Credo questions:

1. **Who am I?**

* What does Unitarian Universalism say about me?
* If my mind and heart are truly open, how will my human spirit respond?
* Why am I worthy of unconditional love?
* Am I sacred or secular?
* Am I good? Why or why not?
* Am I free? Why or why not?
* What is my true nature?
* In what way am I the light of the world?
* What names do I give myself? I am a . . .
* Of all the names, which is most deeply true?

1. **What do I love?**

* In what ways do I love myself?
* How does my love change my world?
* How does love overcome all differences?
* How does love cast out fear?
* If it is true that we become what we love, what does that say I am becoming?
* What courage do I gain from what I love—or just the act of loving?
* What do I love most about Unitarian Universalism?
* What does Unitarian Universalism say about the power of love?
* How do the promises made by my Unitarian church community affect me?

1. **How shall I live, knowing I will die?**

* What is divine living?
* How can I learn to cherish my doubts?
* How can I learn to be comfortable with mystery and uncertainty?
* How can I learn to live content with small means?
* What then, when I fail to “bear all cheerfully and do all bravely?”
* Shall I seek elegance or luxury?
* Shall I seek refinement or fashion?
* Shall I seek to be worthy or respectable?
* Shall I seek becoming or being?
* Will it matter more what I believe or how deeply I love?
* What will I stand for?
* What should the measure of my life be after I am dead?

1. **What is my gift to the family of earth?**

* Am I a part of the interdependent web of all being?
* Who is in need?
* What can I give?
* Who can I liberate?
* Who shall I have faith in?
* What bridge can I build?
* What story can I tell?
* What wish can I make come true for someone?
* What promise shall I keep?
* What generosity of spirit can I show?
* What grace, what dignity can I confer?

## Unit 2—Theology/Beliefs

**Why This Subject Area?**

Unitarian Universalists do not have a creed or a dogma—there is no one thing that all UU’s believe—we are one faith with many beliefs. This means that each of us is responsible for deciding for ourselves what we think are the best answers for life’s most vital questions. Our answers may change over time, but part of moving toward adulthood—at least in the Unitarian tradition—is to think about what answers are true for you at this time, rather than unquestioningly accepting the beliefs of family and friends.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Principle(s):**

* Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations.
* A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
* Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Source(s):**  All six of them.

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/index.shtml>

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish**?

* Find out some of the religious beliefs that those around you hold
* Explore your own religious beliefs
* Add your own outcomes

**What do I do?**

*“Perhaps we should realize 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.” ~ Edith Hunter*

Refer to the appropriate [Study Unit Resources](#_Unit_2—Theology/Beliefs) at the end of this document.

**Required:**

* What do you believe? Go to the Belief-O-Matic™ website, <http://www.beliefnet.com/Entertainment/Quizzes/BeliefOMatic.aspx>, and carefully and thoughtfully navigate the Belief-O-Matic™. The Belief-O-Matic™ is really fun, but enlightening as well. As the site claims, “Even if YOU don't know what faith you are, Belief-O-Matic™ knows. Answer 20 questions about your concept of God, the afterlife, human nature, and more, and Belief-O-Matic™ will tell you what religion (if any) you practice...or ought to consider practicing.” What does it say you are?[[2]](#footnote-2) Do you agree? To what extent do you agree? Does it say you are a Unitarian? Why do you think the Belief-O-Matic™ returned the answers that it did? Are there some questions that you felt very strongly about? Which ones and why so? Does the way you live now, reveal your beliefs? Discuss your answers to the Belief-O-Matic™ and your resulting profile with the minister, your mentor, and your family.

Choose **one** of the following activities:

* Attend a worship service at a church, mosque, temple, or other house of worship that is unfamiliar to you. After the service consider, if this were your only experience of religion, what (if anything) would you have been taught to believe about:
  + God
  + Jesus/Mohammed/Buddha/another religious figure
  + The nature of human beings
  + Death
  + The way to live a good life

Discuss with your mentor, and your family.

* Interview a Unitarian Universalist. It’s OK to do this by phone or even e-mail, or you may want to interview a parent. Write down at least five questions for your interview beforehand. Some examples of possible questions include:
  + How do you live out your UU values in your daily life?
  + Do you believe in God? If so, what is this deity like? If not, what is the most vital thing that you believe in or hold sacred?
  + What sacred texts, if any, are most important in your life?
  + Who is your most important religious teacher/figure?
  + What do you think happens when we die?
  + Do you think there are absolute rules about right and wrong behavior, or does it change depending on the situation?
  + Are there any guidelines you use, like the Ten Commandments or the UU Seven Principles, in making choices about your behavior?
  + Do you think people are basically good, bad, or somewhere in between?
  + What does “salvation” mean to you?
  + Do you pray? What does prayer mean to you?

Discuss with your mentor—they don’t need to know *who* you interviewed.

* Interview someone who is not a Unitarian Universalist whom you respect. This might be an adult such as a teacher, scout leader, coach, etc., or might be a friend your age. Ask them the same questions you asked the UU whom you interviewed. Discuss with your mentor, and your family—they don’t need to know *who* you interviewed.
* Values Survey. Do the exercise at <http://clf.uua.org/re/coa/ValuesSurvey.pdf> and discuss your thoughts with your mentor and family.

**What do I reflect on for my Credo?**

* Ask yourself the same questions you asked your interviewees
* How did these activities inform or clarify your response to your Credo questions?

1. Who am I?
2. What do I love?
3. How shall I live, knowing I will die?
4. What is my gift to the family of earth?

## Unit 3—Spiritual Practice

**Why This Subject Area?**

Spiritual practice is about *relationship*—with one’s self, with others, and that which is beyond one’s self. Spirituality is the process of staying *engaged* in these relationships, what *intention* we bring to them, and how willing we are to *change* as the relationship affects us (Miller, 2010, p. 2). Across time and around the world, people of different religions have developed different techniques for quieting the mind and coming to a still, centered, place – what some would call *opening to the Spirit*, others *Mindfulness*, or *moving toward Enlightenment*, and many others wouldn’t care to name, but practice anyway. As Unitarian Universalists we are free to explore different spiritual practices in search of disciplines that allow us to listen to the still, small voice within.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Principle(s):**

* Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations.
* A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Source(s):**  All six of them.

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/index.shtml>

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish**?

* Experience a spiritual practice—this practice, if developed, may serve you life-long
* Find a technique that helps you cope when life is stressful
* Learn to listen to your interior voice
* Learn to cherish yourself
* Add your own outcomes

**What do I do?**

*“The real miracle is to not walk on water [or rise from the dead], but to walk on the earth, recognizing that this one everlasting moment is a miracle.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh*

Refer to the appropriate [Study Unit Resources](#_Unit_3—Spiritual_Practice) at the end of this document.

There are many spiritual practices. Familiar possibilities include journaling, prayer, meditation, yoga, chanting, walking meditation, soft martial arts, reflective reading of sacred texts (ancient or modern), mindfulness, and such like. Other, less celebrated practices, may surprise you: discourse, caring, hospitality, money, gratitude, technology, music, art, reading, movies, reading, study, consciousness, nature, handwork, and innumerable variations on each (Miller, 2010).

**Required**: engage in **one** spiritual practice. Whatever the practice, it should provide the experience of centering, finding quiet, and listening to the voice within. Proficient practitioners advocate that *mindful*, *intentional*, and *daily* practice is best. You may elect to engage in *any* spiritual practice; however, here are four very approachable techniques:

* Establish a daily 20 minute practice of meditation
* Establish a daily 20 minute practice of prayer
* Establish a daily 20 minute practice of yoga or Tai Chi
* Enjoy a monthly day of mindfulness—refer to Chapter 3 of Nhat Hanh’s, The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation (1987)—a day of slow-motion awareness, presence, and intention

Discuss your experience with your mentor, and your family.

**What do I reflect on for my Credo?**

* How do you feel before and after 20 minutes of spiritual practice? Or a day of mindfulness?
* What is there inside you that can be relied on to lead you to good choices if you learn to listen and trust yourself?
* What brings you a sense of peace and well-being? Of total rest?
* How did this activity inform or clarify your response to your Credo questions?

1. Who am I?
2. What do I love?
3. How shall I live, knowing I will die?
4. What is my gift to the family of earth?

## Unit 4—Leadership

**Why This Subject Area?**

Moving into adulthood means taking on leadership roles, cultivating our ability to make things happen in the world. Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to action. Leadership makes things happen. Making things happen in the world requires a variety of important skills, including breaking a complicated process into smaller steps, figuring out what resources are needed and available, and inspiring and working with other people to achieve your goal. Good leadership involves personal responsibility for the welfare of the group.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Principle(s):**

* The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
* Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
* The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Source(s):**

* Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with compassion and the transforming power of love.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish**?

* Figure out what steps are needed to complete a significant project
* Experience the joys and hardships of leadership
* Build a sense of personal empowerment through action
* Add your own outcomes

**What do I do?**

*“I don’t know what the future may hold, but I know who holds the future.” ~ Ralph Abernathy*

Refer to the appropriate [Study Unit Resources](#_Unit_4—Leadership_) at the end of this document.

**Required**. Come up with **one** project you can lead that will do something to make the world a better place—discuss with your mentor. This project could be on behalf of our church, an organization, such as the UU Service Committee or a local animal shelter, or it could be on behalf of individuals such as homeless or homebound people in your community. Your project should be large enough in scale to a) require more people than you to make it happen, and b) require at least ten hours organizing and completing. Carrying out this project may be done in conjunction with Unit 5, Social Action.

* Clarify goals for your project—who will benefit, what will the benefits be, and what will be different because of your efforts?
* Create a timeline for your project—what steps need to happen when? What details need to be arranged? How will you plan for uncertainties?
* Identify resources needed for your project—what stuff do you need to make it happen? Where are you going to get this stuff? How are you going to pay for it? Keep is as simple as possible.
* Recruit participants for your project—Endeavors succeed or fail because of the people involved. Who will you need to work with you, what will they need to do, how will you invite them to participate, and what will you do to thank them for their help?
* Execute your project—the ripple effect of your enthusiasm and optimism will be invaluable
* Evaluate your project—how will you know if you’ve succeeded?

**What do I reflect on for my Credo?**

* What leaders do you admire? What makes them leaders?
* Think about the ways you interact with people in different settings: home, school, with friends, etc. Do you see yourself as a leader in any of these settings? If not, would you like to?
* What would you need to do differently to be more of a leader?
* What three or four qualities do you think are important in a good leader?
* How did this activity inform or clarify your response to your Credo questions?

1. Who am I?
2. What do I love?
3. How shall I live, knowing I will die?
4. What is my gift to the family of earth?

## Unit 5—Social Action

**Why This Subject Area?**

Unitarian Universalists believe that we have the power to make a difference in the world, and that human beings are most fulfilled—most fully human—when we are working for the greater good. Social action can take shape as *social service*, doing something immediate to make someone’s life easier or happier; *social justice*, working to change the structures of society for the better; or *social advocacy*, speaking up for and lobbying in solidarity with groups who are oppressed or ignored by society.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Principle(s):**

* Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
* The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
* Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Source(s):**

* Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with compassion and the transforming power of love.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish**?

* Participate in a project that will do something to make the world a better place
* Understand your capability to change the world
* Add your own outcomes

**What do I do?**

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. ~ Margaret Mead*

Refer to the appropriate [Study Unit Resources](#_Unit_5—Social_Action_) at the end of this document.

**Required**. Decide on **one** project you can either lead or participate in that will do something to make the world a better place. If you lead, you may do this activity in conjunction with Unit 4, Leadership. Before you begin, discuss with your mentor, and consider:

* Will the nature of my activity be social service, social justice, or social advocacy?
* Will I lead or participate?
* What do I want to change about the world? Why?
* What does taking on this project say about what matters to me?
* What do I need to know/do to make sure that I am meeting the *real* needs of others rather than imposing *my* ideas of what someone else needs?
* Whom do I hope to come into closer relationship with through this project?
* Whom do I risk offending through this project? How can I minimize this risk?
* After you are done reflect on:
  + What did I feel while doing the project?
  + What did I feel when I was done?
  + What changed about the world as a result of my actions? What changed about me?
  + How, if at all, did my view of the world change through this project?
  + Who did I come to know? Did I really see and care about them as a person? How, if at all, did they change my point of view?
  + Do I feel like I made a difference?
  + Do I feel like I want to do more?

**What do I reflect on for my Credo?**

* Do you feel hopeful about the future of the world?
* Do you feel hopeful about your ability to make the world a better place?
* Do you think that people, at heart, are basically loving and generous or greedy and self-serving?
* Who do you think people are obliged to serve and support? Themselves? Their families? Their communities? Their nation? A people? All living beings?
* How did this activity inform or clarify your response to your Credo questions?

1. Who am I?
2. What do I love?
3. How shall I live, knowing I will die?
4. What is my gift to the family of earth?

## Unit 6—Worship

**Why This Subject Area?**

In the Unitarian tradition, worship is most often a celebration of life itself, rather than adoration of a deity. Worship means “to shape things of worth” (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 120). Worship is the way we shape words, silence, and music into a shared experience of meaning. You are absolutely a “thing of worth” and your Credo is an expression of that worth. This unit celebrates *you*. Here is your opportunity to present yourself to, and create a meaningful ceremony for, our whole church community. Coming of Age is a rite of passage—it’s a public celebration and acknowledgment of growing up—and in this context—of welcome into a more intentional relationship with our church and our faith community.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Principle(s):**

* Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Source(s):**

* 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 that create and uphold life.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish**?

* Explore how UUs shape worship, given that we do not have a set liturgy
* Create a worshipful celebration of the Coming of Age process
* Express to family and wider community insights gained through the Coming of Age program
* Add your own outcomes

**What do I do?**

*They come to church to share God, not find God. ~ Alice Walker*

Refer to the appropriate [Study Unit Resources](#_Unit_6—Worship_) at the end of this document.

**Required** (two items):

1. Before Youth Sunday, volunteer to be liturgist at a Sunday worship service.
2. In collaboration with other COA participants and the UUCY Youth Group, and with the support of mentor(s) and/or parent(s), plan the worship celebration of the completion of the COA process. The structure of the ceremony is up to the organizing group, but here are some elements you may wish to include:

* Chalice Lighting
* Opening Words
* Opening Song
* Reading
* Meditation and/or Time of Silence
* Statement from Mentor
* Statement(s) from Parent(s)
* Symbolic Act of Passage (possibilities are limitless, but could include parents giving gift to participant, mentor giving gift to participant, rope linking parent(s) to COA participant is untied, participant gives gift to parents or others, community lays hands on participant, game of Red Rover in which participants bursts through a line of linked hands, light a new chalice belonging to (or made by) the participant from the flame of an old one, participant walks through a tunnel made by the arched arms of all present…you can get creative)
* Music (could be sung by all present, or performed by someone present, or be a recorded piece that is special to the participant or which says something about the process)
* Credo from Participant
* Closing Song
* Closing Words
* Extinguishing

**What do I reflect on for my Credo?**

You’ll be sharing your Credo as part of a worship service. How did your development of a worship service inform or clarify your response to our Credo questions?

1. Who am I?
2. What do I love?
3. How shall I live, knowing I will die?
4. What is my gift to the family of earth?

## Unit 7—Credo

**Why This Subject Area?**

Credo means “*what I set my heart to”* (Millspaugh, 2009, p. 76). At UUCY, our credos emphasize “*what I set my heart to*” rather than “*what do I believe?”* How shall I *live* a life of faith? How will I *act*? How will I stay in *right relationship* with myself, with others, and with the wider world? More than most faith traditions, Unitarian Universalism is just as comfortable with the quest/question, as it is with the destination/answer. A credo positions you on a pathway to a life-of-faith. What is your path? Tell us about it; about you.

**Related Unitarian Universalist Principle(s):**  All seven of them.

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/index.shtml>

**Related Unitarian Universalist Source(s):**  All six of them.

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/index.shtml>

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish**?

Prepare a succinct expression of *living a life of spiritual inquiry, personal integrity, and right action* as informed by your examination of our four Credo questions and your Coming of Age experience. Present this Credo at the Youth Sunday service.

**What do I do?**

*“The meaning of life is to give life meaning.” ~ Ken Hudgins*

Refer to the appropriate [Study Unit Resources](#_Unit_7—Credo_) at the end of this document.

*Work with your mentor.* Decide if you will deliver a written Credo, or some other format, consistent with both communicating your message, and your ability and talent. As George Burns said, “A good sermon should have a good beginning and a good ending, and they should be as close together as possible.” Credos can benefit from following the same advice—Credos don’t need to be lengthy—but they *do* need to be long enough to convey your message. Millspaugh (2009) recommends:

1. Write in your genuine voice. The congregation is most interested in caring about you as a person.
2. Give brief examples to illustrate how your beliefs are applied in your real life.
3. Use appropriate grammar so listeners can focus on your message and not have their attention distracted by your wording.
4. Practice reading it out loud; revise any awkward sounding bits (p. 88).
5. Expect to revise your credo—repeatedly!

Don’t worry if you don’t have definitive answers to *any* of the questions in this Program—like so much of life, it is the *process*, not the product that is *really* important.

*Live the questions now. Perhaps then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. ~ Ranier Maria Rilke*

# STUDY UNIT RESOURCES

Many of the following resources are available from the UUA Bookstore, [www.uua.org/bookstore](http://www.uua.org/bookstore). Also, a general Internet search engine query for *Coming of Age UU* will provide many additional references.

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# EXHIBITS

1. COA Activity Planning Sheet

## [COA Activity Planning Sheet](#_Exploring_Expectations_of)

Use this sheet to plan your activities with your Mentor.

**Unit 1 UU Perspectives**

**Required**. Read **one**:

* The Unitarian Universalist pocket guide
* Welcome: a Unitarian Universalist primer
* 100 questions that non-members ask about Unitarian Universalism

1. **Unitarian Universalist History**

**Required:** choose **one** activity below:

* Research a man or woman from Unitarian and/or Universalist
* Interview the minister and older members of our congregation
* Interview our minister. Attend two church meetings
* Other ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Unitarian Universalist Theology**

**Required:** choose **one** activity below:

* Good and evil
* Original sin and free will
* Ultimate Reality
* God. Not God
* Other ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Unitarian Universalist Beliefs.**

**Required:** choose **one** activity below:

* Covenant vs. Creed
* Talking about Unitarian Universalism
* Evil
* Other ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 2 Theology/Beliefs**

**Required**. Explore the Belief-O-Matic

**Required**. Choose **one** activity below:

* Attend a worship service unfamiliar to you
* Interview a Unitarian Universalist
* Interview a non-UU
* Values survey
* Other ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 3 Spiritual Practices**

**Required:** choose **one** activity below:

* Prayer
* Meditation
* Yoga
* Other ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 4 Leadership**

**Required:** choose **one** activity to lead.

* My Activity ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 5 Social Action**

**Required:** choose **one** activity below to either lead or participate in:

* Social Service
* Social Justice
* Social Advocacy
* My Activity ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Unit 6 Worship**

**Required**. Volunteer as liturgist one Sunday

**Required**. Help plan, prepare, and conduct the Coming of Age worship service

**Unit 7 Credo Development**

**Required**. I will prepare:

* A written Credo
* Other ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**An approximate time line:**



1. This program is principally based on The Church of the Larger Fellowship Coming of Age Program model (<http://clf.uua.org/re/coa/COA.pdf>) of individualized/independent study as modified by Steven Mead, DRE, First Unitarian Church, Alton, Illinois in 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Additionally, you might consider answering in an *opposite* way from your authentic self and compare and contrast the two answers! [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mentors unfamiliar with this work might benefit from spending some quality time with this book. . . [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Miller’s wisdom comes to us by way of the Christian, Episcopalian tradition. You can download .pdf files or listen to her book for free, chapter-by-chapter at: <http://episcopalcredo.org/wellness/credo-podcasts/practice-readings/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Recipients of social services have a deep and abiding need *to be seen*! Practice *darsan*. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)