

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Aspects of Orthodox Christianity
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

The most talked about book on Christianity in the last several years is Philip Jenkins's *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Jenkins, a Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State University, believes that worldwide shifts in religion, especially Christianity's explosive growth in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, "are the most significant, and even the most revolutionary" changes in the contemporary world. He cites the outbreak of conflict between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia, Nigeria, and the Philippines—and the interest of the United States in these conflicts—as evidence of the importance of religion in early twenty-first-century geopolitics.

~*The Complete Idiots Guide to Christianity by Jeffrey Webb*

Check-in: *What is on your mind today?*

Focus Reading:

The beliefs of Christianity can be seen in the words of the Apostles' Creed, a document written to distinguish Christianity from other religions and show basic Christian doctrine in a concise manner.

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN.

From the UUA website:

For many Unitarian Universalists, Christianity provides insight and guidance. One of the shared sources of our faith is "Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves."

As one Unitarian Universalist Bruce Southworth writes, "Jesus' message remains strong in our efforts to create a beloved community here on earth, impelling us to witness to the injustices of this time." And Rev. Anita Farber-Robertson has said, "Jesus [gives us] the strength to fight, the courage to love, and hearts that do not give up on anyone."

The Bible and its many interpretations have largely shaped our Unitarian Universalist history. Today, the Bible is used in most Unitarian Universalist congregations as one of many sources of inspiration and reflection. To quote Unitarian Universalist (UU) Laura Spencer, "I claim the Bible as one more chapter, among several religious texts, in the Unitarian Universalist guide to living."

~*From www.uua.org*

Focus Questions:

1. How much do you know about Christianity and what has been the primary source of your information?
2. If you were raised as a Christian, what brought you to Unitarian Universalism? Is there anything UU's can learn from the Christian faith?
3. What are the most appealing aspects of Christianity? What, if anything, troubles you about it?

Check-out/Likes & Wishes: *Did this session meet your needs for spiritual growth?*

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice

Christianity started out in Palestine as a fellowship; it moved to Greece and became a philosophy; it moved to Italy and became an institution; it moved to Europe and became a culture; it came to America and became an enterprise.

~Sam Pascoe

Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.

~C. S. Lewis

Yes, the long war on Christianity. I pray that one day we may live in an America where Christians can worship freely! In broad daylight! Openly wearing the symbols of their religion... perhaps around their necks? And maybe -- dare I dream it? -- maybe one day there can be an openly Christian President. Or, perhaps, 43 of them. Consecutively.

~Jon Stewart

Christianity At-A-Glance

Christianity: a monotheistic system of beliefs and practices based on the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus as embodied in the New Testament and emphasizing the role of Jesus as savior.

Fundamental Beliefs:

(Variation may exist among the different sects of Christianity.)

- Christians believe that there is only one God.
- Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) Trinity consists of three persons. Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are considered to be an essence of the God.
- The bible is the final revelations of God. The bible consists of The Old Testament (books written prior to Jesus) and The New Testament.
- Death and Resurrection. Jesus was crucified on the cross. Christians believe that Jesus died for the sins of people and was resurrected.
- Return of Jesus. The bible also proclaims that the Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.
- ^[1]_{SEP}Salvation and Punishment. Christians believe in life after death. Those who believe in Jesus will be forgiven and saved, whereas, the unbelievers would face eternal punishment.

Fast Facts:

Date founded:

c. 33 AD

Place founded:

Palestine

Founder:

Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish carpenter

Adherents:

2 billion

US adherents:

159 million in 2001

Size rank:

largest world religion

Main location:

Europe

North America

South America

Major sects (denominations):

Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant

Sacred texts:

The Bible, comprised of the Old Testament and New Testament

Original languages:

Aramaic, Greek, Latin

Religious professionals:

Priest; bishop; archbishop; patriarch; pope; pastor; minister; preacher; deacon

House of worship:

Church, chapel, cathedral, basilica, meeting hall

Human nature:

Created good but now born sinful

Purpose of life:

Know, love and serve God