

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network

**UU Jokes – What Do They Say About Us?**

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Northern New England District Workshop, April 2011

**Opening Words**

“One of Sigmund Freud’s famous observations was that people joke about whatever is most important to them in order to reduce the tension created by that importance. This is true on the level of speech in communities as well as individuals. If the jokes shared by the members of a community are reflections of the values of that community, and in particular the tensions created as members of that community try to live up to those values. It is no accident that preschoolers joke about control of bodily functions, teenagers about sex, and teachers joke about outrageous excuses offered by students.”

Karen Tracy, University of Colorado at Boulder, from *Unitarian Universalist Identity*,  
Kate Tweedie Erslev, Youth and Campus Ministry Covenant Group Series, Vol. 1, p.11

**Check-in/Sharing** How are you feeling right?

**Topic/Activity**

You might be a Unitarian Universalist if

*You are unsure about the gender of God - or even if there is a God.*

You might be a Unitarian Universalist if

*You study the "ten suggestions" instead of the "Ten Commandments."*

You might be a Unitarian Universalist if:

*The only time "Jesus" is mentioned at church is when someone falls down the stairs.*

You might be a Unitarian Universalist if:

*You have trouble singing hymns because you're always reading ahead to see if you agree with the words.*

You might be a Unitarian Universalist if:

*You are not even sure if you are Unitarian Universalist. That removes all doubt.*

So how do we take jokes about Unitarian Universalists? Are the jokes that we tell ways of holding up some of our characteristic and, yes, quirks? In holding up these characteristics, do we ridicule ourselves or celebrate who we are?

How do you feel and react when others tell jokes about Unitarian Universalist?

What part does humor play in your religious identity?

**Check-out/Likes & Wishes** How was this session for you? How did or would this work with an intergenerational group? What ages?

**Closing Words** “Holy Is Our Humor” (Tune of “Holy, Holy, Holy” or Nicea)

Holy, holy, holy! Holy is our humor.

Holy are the hurts that cutting humor brings us,

Early in the morning light, life's laughter do we hear.

Healing is the love we choose to set our humor right.

Holy, healthy laughter we offer to each other.

Holy, healthy laughter always will be with us.

Cel'brating humanity, the joy behind the tear.

Humor was and is, and evermore shall be.

Small Group Ministry Session

**Compassionate Humor**

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Northern New England District Workshop, April 2011

**Opening Words:**

Laughter is an affirmation of our humanness, a face-saving way to express our anxieties, fears, and other hidden emotions. It breaks the ice, builds trust, and draws us together into a common state of well-being. Laughter is called "inner jogging." A robust laugh gives the muscles of the face, shoulders, diaphragm and abdomen a good workout, and sometimes even the arms and legs. Heart rate and blood pressure temporarily rise, breathing becomes faster and deeper, and oxygen surges throughout the bloodstream. We become alive!

Youth service on UU Humor, Sangerville, ME, February 15, 2004

**Check in/Sharing** How are you feeling right now?

**Topic/Activity:**

At a youth conference, junior youth considered "compassionate humor" as including "stories of endearment", memories of laughs that have been shared - truly shared, stories that remind us that humor is part of a community and a relationship.

This "compassionate humor" is set against the jokes that are harmful to a group of people, from 'dumb blond' jokes to those with ethnic, racial and religious overtones, jokes that make assumptions that may not be true. The junior youth developed guidelines for using humor.

Remember that people have feelings.

Develop the ability to laugh with and not at another person.

Be willing to be surprised at how well your own ideas and those of others might turn out.

Think before you speak.

Make jokes that expand rather than impose on a person's right to search for what they believe.

Accept, honor and celebrate rather than make fun of differences.

"Compassionate humor" - I like that term!

Humor is a big part of our lives. Humor and laughter are known to have healing effects. Humor gone awry can be dangerous, demoralizing, dehumanizing, The person who uses malicious humor could benefit from humor that heals.

How do we use humor?

Share a time when how you have been hurt by humor, yours or another's.

Share a time when you laughed with someone, or laughed at yourself in a way that was refreshing and healing.

Share humor that did not need words to be funny.

Do you have additional guidelines for "compassionate humor"?

**Check-out/Likes & Wishes** How was this session for you?

**Closing Words:** Humor touches us at the very core of our existence, as individuals and as Unitarian Universalists. There is so much within and around us that is good humor, healing humor! Look for it, celebrate it!

## **Humor All Around Us**

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Northern New England District Workshop, April 2011

### **Opening Words:**

The gods and goddesses must have a sense of humor.

Why else would cats chase things that I cannot see?

Why else would puppies chase their tails?

Why else would something happen to make me smile when I am crying?

Grant me the eyes to see humor that opens a heart.

Grant me the heart that can to be warmed by the smile.

Grant me the smile that makes others wonder what secret I know.

Grant me the gentle humor that engages others –human and otherwise – is seeing the wisdom of the universe.

**Check-in/Sharing** How are you feeling right now?

### **Topic/Activity:**

Humor is all around us. Take, for example, the irony of the winter storm on April Fool's Day.

Some humor we observe.

Some humor we create by our actions. Have you ever pretended that you were a fly on a wall or standing on a balcony above yourself and watching what you are doing? It often takes three tries for me to get things together to leave. Even the dogs expect that and just lie still as I come back into the house for things I have forgotten -- even after I have left the driveway and returned.

Share something that you have observed in the last day or so that makes you smile.

Share something about yourself that is humorous. How is it to laugh at ourselves?

(Caution: Truly define something for ourselves rather than what others may tell us.)

Does humor enhance your life?

**Check-out/Likes & Wishes** How was this session for you? How did or would this work with an intergenerational group? What ages?

### **Closing Words** "The Prayer of the Cat" adapted

Lord,

I am the cat.

It is not, exactly something I ask of You!

No----

I ask nothing of anyone.....

Wouldn't You like someday

To put a curse on the whole race of dogs?

If so I should say.....AMEN

## **Humor Through Our Ages**

Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, ME, Later Life Series, May 2011

### **Opening Words**

An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100% . The gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, "Your hearing is good. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again." The gentleman replied, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!"

A police car pulls up in front of grandma Bessie's house, and grandpa Morris gets out. The polite policeman explained that this elderly gentleman said that he was lost in the park and couldn't find his way home. "Oh Morris", said grandma, "You've been going to that park for over 30 years! How could you get lost?" Leaning close to grandma, so that the policeman couldn't hear, Morris whispered, "I wasn't lost. I was just too tired to walk home."

**Check In:** How are things with you today?

### **Topic/Activity**

Children laugh with a newness of discovery.

Our youth thrill to UU jokes, but, at a junior youth conference, they coined the phrase "compassionate humor" as including "stories of endearment", memories of laughs that have been shared - truly shared, stories that remind us that humor is part of a community and a relationship.

Humor has been viewed as a way of looking at a situation from a different point of view, diffusing a crisis and providing an opportunity for increased insight and objectivity. Have you ever pretended that you were a fly on a wall or standing on a balcony above yourself and watching what you are doing?

Humor has been described as willingness to accept life and ourselves with a shrug and a smile, lightheartedness, and gives a sense of mastery over a situation.

1. What role does humor have in your life?
2. Where do you find humor? Has your source of humor changed over the years?
3. What has made you smile or laugh in the last 24 hours?

**Check-out/Likes and Wishes** How was the session for you?

**Closing words:** The Senility Prayer (from a website)

God, grant me the Senility to forget the people I never liked anyway,  
The good fortune to run into the ones I do,  
And the eyesight and hearing to tell the difference.