



Reimagining Article 2

Small Group Ministry Guide

Six 90-minute sessions for use in UU congregations and communities

Written by Becky Brooks

Offered by the Article 2 Study Commission, 2020-2023





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Introduction

The Article 2 Study Commission has been [charged by the UUA Board](#) to review Article 2 of the UUA Bylaws. This section of the bylaws is better known as the home of the Principles, Purposes, and Sources. Such a review occurs every fifteen years as a practice of our living faith, to ensure that our guiding theological documents thoughtfully and clearly articulate the heart of Unitarian Universalism.

Key to this effort is—in the words of the Board—for the Commission to “seek to engage the active participation of UUs across all demographics, identities, and theological/philosophical beliefs.” This program is one of the many ways the Commission hopes to connect with a wide range of UUs. These materials (and others, available online at <http://uua.org/a2sc>) are available for anyone to use, free of charge or commitment, though, ideally, participants will offer their input and suggestions, informed by the work they do in this program.

The Commission will continue to learn from groups and individuals, and produce trial options throughout the study period, ultimately proposing any changes to the Board in January, 2023. If approved, such revisions will be voted on by delegates at General Assembly for a year of study in June of 2023. After that period of scrutiny, any such changes will be offered for adoption by the General Assembly in June of 2024. Only at that point will Article 2 be officially changed.

The UUA Board is hopeful that a reimagined Article 2 will “lead us into the second quarter of the 21st Century, while honoring the historic roots of our liberal, progressive faith.” Thank you for helping to make that hope a reality.

Members of the Commission are Satya Mamdani, Rob Spirko, Paula Cole Jones, Maya Waller, Cheryl M. Walker, and Becky Brooks. For more information about the work of the commission, visit <http://uua.org/a2sc>.



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Program Overview

This small group ministry guide is a six session program to engage with the Article 2 Study Commission's set of four topics: Shared UU Values, Inspirations, Purpose, and Covenant. Each session is 90 minutes. Sessions are as follows:

1. Co-Creating Unitarian Universalism
2. Shared UU Values
3. Inspirations
4. Mission and Purpose — a Wider UU world
5. Covenant
6. Connecting

Each session features activities and opportunities to reflect and share on the topics. For ease of use, each activity is generally addressed to the group, with instructions for leaders in brackets.

Groups will create materials that may be sent on to the Commission. Allow participants to opt out of sharing their personal materials if they like, but let them know that group materials (without names attached) will be shared with the Commission. If participants would like to contribute their perspectives as individuals after this course has ended, encourage them to complete the [Individual Survey](#), which will remain open until March 31, 2022.

Though the program is designed to be a stand-alone small group meeting, congregations and communities may prefer to extend or abbreviate sessions as needed to fit ongoing small group ministry programs. As we carefully navigate the needs of our communities regarding in-person or online programming (or a mix), you may find that your own community's needs may shift even after the program has begun. We have tried to make each session outline appropriate for in-person, online, or multi-platform use. Leaders should feel free to adapt these materials as they see fit to best serve the needs of their groups.



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Guidelines for Sharing in Groups

Sharing in groups can be a very powerful way to think together about important topics. It's vital for the program leader to skillfully facilitate discussion to prioritize equity and inclusion. Consider using Eric H.F. Law's "Mutual Invitation" and "Respectful Communications Guidelines"* during times of open sharing like check-in, etc. These can be used in person, online, or for multi-platform groups.

The Mutual Invitation process is designed not only to allow all to share who want to, but also to understand group sharing as a meaningful part of relationship building. In being invited and inviting others to speak, we embody our role in the community we are creating and find ourselves called to listen deeply and respectfully to each other.

The process is simple. After describing what is to be shared in the group, the leader speaks first (or invites someone else to speak first). Then, after the first person shares, that person invites another member of the group (by name) to speak. If the invited person wants to share but isn't ready yet, they can say "I pass for now" and will be invited to speak again later in the process. If the invited person doesn't want to speak, they can say "Pass" and invite a different person to speak. Sharing continues until every person who wants to speak has had the opportunity to share.

Respectful Communication Guidelines

R = take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel without blaming others.

E = use EMPATHETIC listening.

S = be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles.

P = PONDER what you hear and feel before you speak.

E = EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions.

C = keep CONFIDENTIALITY

T = TRUST ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong.

A note on covenant: It is common in UU groups to have the group create a set of group agreements or "covenant" to guide and inform their behavior. This process is part of session one of this program. Because the power of any small group covenant is in the assent of each individual, when developing your group covenant, you may need to reject an item that not everyone can agree to. Only once they are agreed upon will the list be used. These Respectful Communication Guidelines, however, are non-negotiable. They reflect an appropriate baseline for being in relationship in the group. If the group leader(s) feel this particular list isn't an appropriate baseline for the group, be sure to make any changes before the first session.



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* Both the “Mutual Invitation” process and these “Respectful Communications Guidelines” were developed by Eric H. F. Law and appear in his book *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*, 1993. More information is available at Law’s website: <https://www.kscopeinstitute.org>.



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Session 1: Co-Creating Unitarian Universalism

Chalice Lighting — “[Exploring Who We Are](#),” by Melanie Davis

Under the right circumstances, playing with fire is a delight—imagine being gathered round a firepit as the crackling flames invite us to sing, dance, and roast a marshmallow or two.

Our chalice also invites us to play, although with ideas rather than with marshmallows. The flame encourages us to explore who we are, who our neighbors are, and where we are on our spiritual journeys.

Today, we light this chalice in the spirit of play. Let us trust the light to guide us in this hour and in the days to come, finding joy along the way.

Check in (10 min or less) — Share your name and what brought you to this group today.

Logistics and Housekeeping (10 min) — This program was created by the Article 2 Study Commission (more about them below) to offer an opportunity for congregations to be in conversation about four important questions facing Unitarian Universalism right now. There will be six sessions of our program, as follows:

Week 1 — Co-Creating Unitarian Universalism

Week 2 — What is most important to us, our shared UU values?

Week 3 — What inspires us; where do our values come from?

Week 4 — What is our work in the world, our mission or purpose?

Week 5 — What promises must we make to each other; what is our covenant?

Week 6 — Connecting: What’s next?

Materials that are collaboratively created in this class may be sent (digitally) to the Article 2 Study Commission. There may also be opportunities to send individually created materials as well. Any participant can opt out of this sharing if desired, by letting the facilitator know they wish to opt out. More information is available at the Article 2 Study Commission’s website with the UUA here: <http://uua.org/a2sc>

[Add any housekeeping, logistical, technological, or other details here about how the class will go.]



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Introduction to Article II Study process (5 min) — [Read or paraphrase the following introduction if you haven't already included it in the program's advance materials to participants] “You probably already know that the Unitarian Universalist Association has a set of bylaws, just like congregations. But you might not know that one of the sections in the UUA's bylaws (Article 2) is the home of the UU Principles, Purposes, and Sources. When the Universalists and Unitarians merged, they included principles in their bylaws to be sure that those ideas would be at the heart of what guides our faith. But sometimes change is needed.

Change is part of who we are as Unitarian Universalists. When we say one of our core values is learning and valuing direct experience, that means that we have to be open to change. It's impossible to learn and grow but not to change. And so every 15 years, we study our principles, purposes and sources, and talk about whether or not they're doing the job we need them to do, and whether or not they reflect the whole of Unitarian Universalism and not just a part.

The Article 2 Study Commission is a group of volunteers who are helping to organize conversations and figure out what changes might be necessary. They'll do this in many ways, including these types of experiences for congregations and communities. Once they've gathered input and studied and learn what's most needed, they will write a recommendation to the UUA Board, who will put it on the agenda of the General Assembly in the summer of 2023. That's where UUs from around the UUA will vote on whether or not to study the proposed changes for a year before a second vote in 2024 to adopt them.

Though we don't yet know what changes might be in store for Article 2, we do know that any changes start here, with Unitarian Universalists thinking, creating, and talking together about what the UU present looks like and what the UU future holds.

Thank you for being a part of this important work!”

Imagining Together (10 min) — We'll begin with a question for the whole group to consider and discuss: *What should a Unitarian Universalist community be like? Imagine a UU community that is already just the way you think it should be. How would you describe the community if it was just as you think it should be?* [Make note (on a white board, easel pad or jamboard) of the descriptive words that participants use. You may want to assure the group that you could spend six weeks talking about just this question! But the purpose of it today is just to take a quick snapshot of our aspirations. These musings won't be perfect or comprehensive.]



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My Faith Community (20 min) — On your own, take a few moments to complete the following prompt: *It's important to me that my faith community is _____ because _____*. In the first blank, share a descriptive word or phrase (for example: “peaceful” or “intellectually stimulating” or “fair”). In the second blank, explain why that attribute is important to you. For example: “It’s important to me that my faith community is intellectually stimulating because learning new things helps me be an engaged citizen of the world.” (These might be aspirational or currently descriptive or somewhere in between) Once everyone has completed the prompt, we’ll discuss these in small groups of 2-3 people each for about 10 minutes.

When time is up, we’ll come back together and share with the whole group. [Again, make note of all the descriptive words that are used. To prompt sharing, you could ask if there were any surprises in what was said or if anyone experienced a new way of thinking about something.]

Movement/Transition — Take a brief movement break: begin by making your body small (for whatever that means for you). Hold that position for two full breaths. Then, slowly, make your body big (for whatever that means for you). Hold that position for two full breaths. Lastly, return to a comfortable position and breathe together for two full breaths.

Group Agreements (20 min) — Now that we’ve talked a bit about what we want Unitarian Universalist community to be like, let’s think about our own agreements for this group. What are the things we **must** say, do, and promise as individual members of this group in order to create the Unitarian Universalism we want to experience? [Lift up some of the top descriptive words previously mentioned to help guide participants in thinking about those qualities.]

[Some groups will easily brainstorm items for a list of group agreements. For the rest of us, it might help to offer a framework or organizational structure. If that’s true of your group, ask folks to write down three statements:

1. one group agreement they’ve had in a previous group that was useful or important to them;
2. one group agreement they wish had already been in place when a challenge arose in a previous group experience (UU or not);
3. one descriptive word they used earlier in this session and a thing they can personally do in this group to help make that description true of this community.

Then share out.]



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It's possible that not every suggestion will be included in our covenant. In order for a covenant to work, each person must agree to each element. So if there is an item on the list that someone can't agree to, we'll come back to that item later and discuss if needed. If there are members of the group who cannot agree to that item, it won't be included in the covenant.

[Discuss until you have an acceptable list. In between this session and the next, be sure to send this list to all participants.]

Check out (Learn, Yearn, or Turn) — In a “Learn, Yearn, or Turn” check out, each person shares a word or phrase about only one of these three options:

- “Learn” — a word or phrase about something you learned during our time
- “Yearn” — a word or phrase about something you are longing for right now
- “Turn” — a word or phrase about something you hope for in our next time together

(Each week's check out will follow this same format.)

For Next Time — Our next session will focus on UU Shared Values.

Closing — “[Ready](#),” by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

You'll need to travel light.

*Take what you can carry: a book, a poem,
a battered tin cup, your child strapped
to your chest, clutching your necklace
in one hot possessive fist.*

*So the dough isn't ready. So your heart
isn't ready. You haven't said goodbye
to the places where you hid as a child,
to the friends who aren't interested in the journey,
to the graves you've tended.*

*But if you wait until you feel fully ready
you may never take the leap at all
and Infinity is calling you forth
out of this birth canal
and into the future's wide expanse.*



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Learn to improvise flat cakes without yeast.

Learn to read new alphabets.

Wear God like a cloak

and stride forth with confidence.

You won't know where you're going

*but you have the words of our sages,
the songs of our mothers, the inspiration
wrapped in your kneading bowl. Trust
that what you carry will sustain you
and take the first step out the door.*

Optional Journaling homework: Part of being a living faith means being open to change. Think of a time in your life when you experienced a positive change. Describe the experience, both what existed for you before, and what the change entailed. Describe the environment that existed in your life that enabled the change to happen as it did. Note which parts of the experience you had control over and which parts were beyond your control or influence. Were there risks involved? If so, what feelings came up for you as you faced these risks? How has the change you experienced impacted your life since then?



Session 2: Shared UU Values

Chalice Lighting — [Love is our Greatest Purpose](#), by Jay Abernathy, Jr.

We affirm that love is our greatest purpose.

Accepting one another is the truest form of faithful living.

The search for truth our constant star.

We pledge our hearts, minds, and hands:

To challenge injustice with courage;

To find hope in times of fear;

And to live out our Unitarian Universalist values every day as a beloved community.

Thus do we covenant with each other and all that is sacred in life.

Check in (10 min) — Remind us of your name and share something you appreciate about our congregation or community.

Values Brainstorm (5 min) — We will take three minutes of silence while each person writes down as many values as they can think of. These might be values you hold or values you don't. Just come up with as long a list as you can of different values.

Once the three minutes are up, circle any values on the list that are values you do hold, that you consider important to you.

Then draw a single line through anything on this list that you do not consider part of your values.

Place a star next to anything on your list that you think is a value that is shared with your religious community. Set your list aside for a bit. We will come back to it.

Defining “Values” (20 min) — In pairs, discuss: “*What is a value? If you had to explain values without using the word values, how would you explain it?*” Come back to the group and share your explanations. Can the group come up with a communal definition that everyone can agree to?

Values in Action (10 min) — Think of a time when you witnessed a UU community (of any kind, of any size) *do* something that expressed or embodied their values. This might be a UU community you are involved with or not. It might be a positive or negative action. Picture that event or action in your mind. Think about these questions: *What did they do? Name the value it embodied or proclaimed. How could you tell that particular value was at the heart of the action?* You may want to jot down some notes and refer to them in your small groups.



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Shared UU Values Brainstorm (20 min) — We will divide into groups of 3 or 4. In these groups, share the experience you recalled in the previous activity. Referencing this experience and your lists from earlier in the session, work together to create a list of as many **shared** UU values as you can think of, using only 1-3 words for each one. Don't forget to choose a recorder to report back to the whole group.

Sharing Lists (15 min) — Come back into a whole group. To share lists, each group's recorder will share one thing on the list, then another group's recorder will share something that hasn't been named, then another, etc. Once every group has reported back, we'll start again, reporting only one item from your list that hasn't yet been said. We'll continue reporting until every group's list is essentially represented into one whole list. Finally: *are there UU values that are missing from this larger list?*

Check out (Learn, Yearn, or Turn) — Reminder: in a "Learn, Yearn, or Turn" check out, you'll each share a word or phrase about only one of these three options:

- "Learn" — a word or phrase about something you learned during our time
- "Yearn" — a word or phrase about something you are longing for right now
- "Turn" — a word or phrase about something you hope for in our next time together

For Next Time — Our next session will focus on "Inspirations" that help or have helped us form the values we share.

Closing — Adapted* from [If You are Proud of this Church](#), by Michael A. Schuler

If you are proud of this faith, become its advocate.

If you are concerned for its future, share its message.

If its values resonate deep within you, give it a measure of your devotion.

This community cannot survive without your faith, your confidence, your enthusiasm.

Its destiny, the larger hope, rests in your hands

[*the word "church" has been changed to "faith" in the first line and "community" in the fourth line for our context, as we work on behalf of Unitarian Universalism as a whole]

Optional Journaling homework: At this moment in your life, what would you say is your most important value? Take 10-20 minutes to write about what it is and why it's so important in your life right now. If you like, write the word or words of your value in



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the center of a piece of paper and decorate the area around the words. Hang it on the wall somewhere in your home so you can see it regularly and keep it at the forefront of your mind.



Session 3: Inspirations

Chalice Lighting — Adapted* from “[The Heart of Our Faith](#),” by Monica Jacobson-Tennessee

*What is it
That calls you here
That calls you onward
That calls you inward
That leads you homeward?*

*What is it
That gives you the power
To make that change
To ask that question
To take that journey?*

*What is it
That says you have done well
That asks you to learn more
That brings you to stillness
That holds you up in hard times?*

*It is relationship
The beating heart of our faith.*

*It begins when we share
This hour
Our truths
This air
Our hearts.*

Come, let us explore together.

[*the word “worship” in the last line of this reading has been changed to “explore” for the purposes of our context.]



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Check in (10 min) — Remind us of your name and answer: *What is something/Who is someone that inspires you?*

Belonging (10 min) — Do this activity working quietly on your own. It's in two parts. You'll have about five minutes for the first part and then I'll describe the second part:

1. Think of a time when you felt like you belonged. Whether it was recently or long ago, as part of a small group or as part of a large system, or anything else. Bring the feeling and that moment to mind and write a bit about it. Be as specific about the details as you can. What did it sound like? What did it smell like? Name your feelings in those moments. (5 min).
2. Continue your remembering. What happened or was happening that led to your feelings? Were there people there who said or did something that helped you know you belonged? See if you can name the specific actions/environmental elements/words that contributed to that sense of belonging. (4 min).

Belonging Clues (20 min) — Discuss as a whole group: *what actions/environmental elements/words might help someone know they belong?* (Whether from your personal experience or not) [Write up responses on an easel pad or white board.]

Some of these answers will be specific to a person or group of people. Are any universal, helping *anyone* understand that they belonged there? [Circle any that the group believes would be truly universal.]

Is anything listed here something that would help *some* people believe they belong, but communicate to others that they don't? [Draw an asterisk by these]

Which items on the list are things you see regularly in your own religious community? [Underline these, noting where circles or asterisks overlap with underlines. As you annotate the list, continue to add any other items that come up in conversation and annotate those as well.]

Movement/Transition (5 min) — Take a few minutes after the previous discussion to equilibrate. [Depending on your group, this might mean singing a beloved song together or a quiet meditation or a calming reading.]

Inspirations (20 min) — In this activity we're going to think about where our UU values come from. [Post or share the list of UU values the group made last time]. Each person will choose a value from the list. Everyone will pick a different value, but during the activity, each person will be able to comment on each value. [Do this aloud together so that each chosen value has only been chosen by one person and no two



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people are using the same value. If you have more people than values, go ahead and allow more than one person to pick a value, but keep as few people to each value as possible.]

In person activity instructions: write the value you've chosen in the center of a piece of copy paper. If the space is conducive and there are no mobility issues that prevent it, tape your paper up on the wall. (Papers should be spread out around the room.) If mobility constraints would limit participation, papers can be passed from person to person for this exercise when it's time for participants to move on to the next value.

Online activity instructions: [create a jamboard or shared document for this activity in advance] type the value you've chosen in the center of a blank page.

Once each chosen value has its own page, write a note on the page of your chosen value about where this value comes from for *you*. For example, if the value stated is "generosity" you may write "my Muslim community as a child" or "the concept of tithing," or "an influential book I read as a teen" or "my grandmother". Think earnestly about this and list at least one origin. Every one of our values comes from something or someone.

Once everyone has had a chance to write on their own chosen value, move to a new value and do the same. If you are physically together and papers have been posted around the room, simply move over to the next sheet, or pass the paper to the person to your left. If you are meeting online, move to the next page in the jamboard or document. (The person on the last page should move to the first page). In this way, everyone should have a new value to contemplate and annotate with where they think that value comes from. Ultimately each participant should have the opportunity to comment on each chosen value. *If you encounter a value that you do not share, note that on the page instead of your inspiration. It's helpful for all of us to understand that not all "shared UU values" are shared by every UU.

[A note on timing. These musings should be brief. For each round, give participants no fewer than 30 seconds and no more than a minute to write their comments. If your group is fewer than 10 people, a minute would be fine. If your group is larger than 10 people, you may want closer to 30 seconds to help the activity as a whole fit into its 20 minute suggested time frame.]

Inspirations Discussion (15 min) — Find your original page (in person or, if online, in the jamboard or document). In groups of 2 or 3, share your pages with your group. For discussion: *what do you notice about the origins listed that you find surprising or interesting? Which values have repeated origins listed? Which have a diverse range of origins? Had anyone responded that they don't hold that value? Numerous*



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people? How widely shared do you think a value must be in order for it to be a “shared UU value”? These materials will be collected for the Article 2 Commission.

Check out (Learn, Yearn, or Turn) — Reminder: in a “Learn, Yearn, or Turn” check out, you’ll each share a word or phrase about only one of these three options:

- “Learn” — a word or phrase about something you learned during our time
- “Yearn” — a word or phrase about something you are longing for right now
- “Turn” — a word or phrase about something you hope for in our next time together

For Next Time — Our next session will focus on the “Mission and Purpose” of Unitarian Universalism as a whole and the Unitarian Universalist Association in particular.

Closing — “[Through Our Temporary Lives](#),” by Carl G Seaburg

Through our temporary lives the great currents of history run.

Let us keep the channels open and free so not to obstruct purposes greater than our own.

Let us keep our minds set upon the high goals that here bind us into one sharing fellowship of loving hearts.

Amen.

Optional Journaling homework: Do you have a longer story about the origins of one of the values you encountered? Journal about it. If the exercise reminded you of a moment in your history that you’d like to think more deeply about or a person you’d like to describe on paper, take 10-20 minutes this week to write down your memories or descriptions.



Session 4: Mission and Purpose — A Wider UU World

Chalice Lighting — Adapted* from “[Toward a Place of Wholeness](#)” by Viola Abbitt

We are Unitarian Universalists.

When we lift up our Seven Principles, some of us think of them as a form of theology—but they are more important to our collective than that:

they do not tell us what we should believe; they tell us how we should be.

They tell us how we should act in the larger world and with each other.

We are brought here today by the fact that Unitarian Universalism has fallen short of the image that was presented to the world, and to many of those who embraced this religion.

But we are also brought here today by the truth that Unitarian Universalism has shifted course to move toward a place of wholeness: a place that perhaps never existed for us as a denomination.

It has been a long, and sometimes unforgiving road to today. But we are here today because we are mindful of that past, and because we have hope for the future. We want the practice of this faith to be a fulfilling manifestation of its promise.

Open your hearts. Seek new ways of understanding.

Come, let us practice together.

[*the word “worship” in the last line of this reading has been changed to “practice” for the purposes of our context.]

Check in (10 min) — Remind us of your name and share: *What is something you remember about your first encounter with a Unitarian Universalist community as an adult or teen OR If you have been in UU community since childhood, share something you remember about UU community as a child.*

Know, Be, Do Activity (20 minutes) — Divide a sheet of paper into three sections and label each of the columns at the top as follows: “Know,” “Be,” “Do.” In the first column: *What should Unitarian Universalists Know?* Then, in the second column, *What/How should Unitarian Universalists Be?* Then, in the final column, *What should Unitarian Universalists Do?* Take 5-7 minutes to brainstorm and write down answers to each of these three things.



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When time is up, discuss your lists in pairs for 10 minutes. It's okay to keep adding to your list if you think of new things or if others' ideas resonate with you. Use a second sheet of paper if desired. Keep these sheets handy for the next discussion.

Mission (30 min) — Having gathered back as a whole group, consider your lists as you discuss the question: *What is Unitarian Universalism's ministry in the world today? What are we called to? What is the job we are supposed to be doing?* Folks may have different ideas about what ministry entails. That's okay! [Depending on the style of your group, you can just open this up for sharing thoughts, or ask participants to make notes on a jamboard or shared document or some combination. In any case, it will be helpful for the Article 2 Commission if notes are recorded.]

Movement/Transition — Take a brief movement break. Use this suggestion or another movement activity: Take a few moments to toss around some imaginary tennis balls. You can do this exercise whether you are in person, online, or a combination. Begin by picking about a third of your folks to start and mime tossing a ball to another person. For the rest, imagine catching a ball from an unexpected direction, then toss it to someone else. Once you've tossed your ball, be on the lookout to catch one from an unexpected direction. Urge the group to go faster or slower as you like. When you're ready to finish, just ask folks to toss the ball they have behind them, over their shoulder. They can clean up later ;)

Purpose (20 min) — Having divided the group into three roughly equally-sized smaller groups, we'll be talking about the following question from three different angles: *What is the role of the UUA ("Boston") with regard to the ministry of Unitarian Universalism as a whole?*

Group 1's question: *Why does the UUA exist?*

Group 2's question: *How, specifically, might the UUA support congregations and communities in their mission?*

Group 3's question: *What can Unitarian Universalism do as an association of congregations that we can't do as individual, unrelated congregations?*

Discuss for about 10 minutes, being sure to have someone take notes. Then come back and share thoughts with the whole group.

Check out (Learn, Yearn, or Turn) — Reminder: in a "Learn, Yearn, or Turn" check out, you'll each share a word or phrase about only one of these three options:

- "Learn" — a word or phrase about something you learned during our time
- "Yearn" — a word or phrase about something you are longing for right now



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- “Turn” — a word or phrase about something you hope for in our next time together

For Next Time — Our next session will focus on Covenant.

Closing — “[Co-Regulation](#),” by Elizabeth Mount

*From our very first breath, we reach out
Co-regulation, not self-regulation, is in our nature.
We find our cues from the sun and the moon,
From each parent and caregiver,
We find our place in this great turning planet,
By turning to one another,
Generation to generation,
We awaken to the dawn, and fall asleep at the evening’s end.
Our life’s journey is part of something greater,
Something simple,
Something divine.
A flame cannot be lit without a spark,
A life cannot begin without the air,
And we cannot begin to find ourselves without love.
May we reach out to one another,
May we offer love and nurturing care,
May we join together in celebration of the interdependence of our lives.*

Optional Journaling homework: Think of a time when you needed help. Was there a time in your life when you needed help, not just from one person, but from a group of people or from your community? Take 10-20 minutes to write about what happened. How did it feel to need help? How did it feel to *receive* help? Did your experience of being helped inform later experiences of helping others? In what ways?



Session 5: Covenant

Chalice Lighting — “[Bold and Courageous Together](#),” by Erika A. Hewitt

Reader 1:

The word courage comes from the Latin cor, which means heart. According to poet Mark Nepo, the original use of the word courage meant to stand by one’s core: a “striking concept that reinforces the belief found in almost all traditions that living from the Center is what enables us to face whatever life has to offer.”

Reader 2:

To “encourage” means to hearten; to impart strength and confidence. This is our work, as a religious community: to encourage one another; to be bold in engaging the world around us, as well as what scares us internally; to give one another the confidence and heart to live as fully as possible.

Group:

*With full hearts,
we affirm our relationships with one another;
we recognize our agency and our connective power;
and we accept our responsibility to be bold and courageous.
We light this chalice,
symbol of all that we are, all that we have done together,
and all that we will be as our shared ministry encourages those within, and beyond,
our walls.*

Check in (10 min) — Remind us of your name and share: *In just three words or fewer, what is something to which you are giving your heart? (Not a person or people, but something you do or are or are working on).*

What is Covenant? (20 min) — [Make available the covenant the group created in week one and read it together.] If you have a small group to begin with, discuss the question in the whole group, but if you have more than about 8 people, divide into pairs or threes to discuss: *What is the purpose of a covenant?* Be sure to take notes on keywords that come up in discussion. If you’ve split into groups, report back to create a comprehensive list of keywords.



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Promises (50 min) — Keep in mind all your previous work for this next set of discussions, especially the work from session one to imagine an ideal Unitarian Universalist community. In this activity, you will discuss the different needs of different types of covenants. Like last week, we'll divide into three relatively evenly sized groups: A, B, and C, and discuss the following questions:

- Group A — *What are the promises an individual might make about their own actions in community? What should individuals do in order to stay in covenant with their community (and their world)*
- Group B — *What are the promises that UU congregations or communities might make to each other in order to pursue the mission and purpose of Unitarian Universalism?*
- Group C — *What are the promises that a UU congregation or community might make to individual members? What should the collective—including leadership and membership—do in order to stay in covenant with individuals?*

You will have 15 minutes to discuss specific items that might be included in the types of covenants your group has been assigned. Suggestions should be thoughtful, but prioritize the number of different ideas over precise wording for any individual item on their list. (*NOTE: unlike the covenant your group created in session one, the promises named in today's discussion don't have to be agreed on by everyone.*)

When you gather to share your group's learnings, name the promises you came up with, and also allow the rest of the group to add any further items that belong in that category. [Take notes (in a jamboard or shared document perhaps) to capture both the original group's items and the new ones that are named. Once Group A has reported back and additional items have been named, ask for Group B to report back, etc.]

For Next Time — Our next session will be our final one, where we will wrap up our work and discuss how participants might continue to be involved in the work of the Article 2 Study Commission.

Check out (Learn, Yearn, or Turn) — Reminder: in a "Learn, Yearn, or Turn" check out, you'll each share a word or phrase about only one of these three options:

- "Learn" — a word or phrase about something you learned during our time
- "Yearn" — a word or phrase about something you are longing for right now
- "Turn" — a word or phrase about something you hope for in our next time together



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Closing — “[We Are One](#),” by Hope Johnson

We are one, a diverse group of proudly kindred spirits, here not by coincidence but because we choose to journey together. We are active and proactive. We care deeply. We live our love as best we can.

We are one, working, eating, laughing, playing, singing, storytelling, sharing, and rejoicing, getting to know each other, taking risks, opening up, questioning, seeking, searching, trying to understand, struggling, making mistakes, paying attention, asking questions, listening, living our answers, learning to love our neighbors, learning to love ourselves, apologizing and forgiving with humility, and being forgiven through grace, creating the beloved community together. We are one.

Optional Journaling homework: What would it look like to have a covenant with yourself? Imagine the very best YOU. What promises might you make to yourself to support you being the You you want to be? What kinds of things can you do/say/think in order to nurture that person? What are the promises that would tenderly care for your wellbeing? What are the promises that would hold you accountable or challenge you? Make a list of no fewer than three, but no more than 10 promises.



Session 6: Connecting

Chalice Lighting — [The Promise and the Practice: Chalice Lighting](#) by Adrian L.H. Graham

We kindle a flame of power, illuminating the Holy in each of our faces.

We recognize in the flame a passionate commitment to our shared faith.

We are held and carried from day to day, week to week, in the shining of the light.

This flame is mine, as well as yours.

We are brought together on this day, called to growth, to expansion, within its glow.

What does your heart know while beholding this holy fire?

Check in (20 min) — Remind us of your name and share something you've learned in our time together. [If appropriate for your group, take a little extra time for check in this week]

Seeds of our Future (35 min) — In the beginning of our program, we imagined together what a Unitarian Universalist community should be like. The full beauty of that imagining is something for our future selves to enjoy, but the seeds of that community are here, now, all around us. Think about your own UU communities, including this class and these people, as well as those you encounter as you navigate UU spaces. Where do you see the seeds of our future in your UU world today? Take about five minutes to think, write, and/or draw some notes about what you notice within UU communities that give you hope for the future. This might be values you see in action or promises kept. It might be healthy practices you witness within groups or meaningful moments between individuals. Once you've gathered some of these "seeds," share in small groups of 3 or 4. After about 15 minutes of discussion, come together and report back to the whole group.

Closing Ritual (20 min) — [If your group is amenable, you may wish to play some soft, instrumental music here.] Think over the "seeds" that were shared in the previous exercise. Pick one or two that you think you can "nurture". This might mean continuing to ensure something happens regularly in your congregation or starting something new in your community. It might mean engaging in a different way that you have in the past or letting go of something it's time to let go of. However you envision it, what are one or two seeds for our imagined future that you are willing to commit to nurturing? Write a description of your chosen "seed" on a small piece of paper and fold it up tenderly.



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[For the ritual, take turns going around the group, welcoming each participant into sharing the chance to name the “seed” they’ve selected, if they wish.]

[To close, ask participants to place their folded paper(s) gently in their cupped hands and hold them out as if in offering. Ask them to repeat after you, in unison: “My Unitarian Universalist home was nurtured before me. My present care co-creates our future. May it be so.”]

What’s Next (and a word of gratitude) — The work of reimagining Article 2 is ongoing. All participants are encouraged to continue engaging with events and materials as the process moves along its path. Be sure to visit uua.org/a2sc to keep in the loop about events and progress. If you haven’t already, please complete the [A2SC Individual Survey](#), to ensure your personal perspective is represented, in addition to the materials you’ve created as a group.

Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal faith. The thing that ties us together in religious community is the *practice* of keeping covenant with each other and the world. Our covenant grows out of our values, which grow out of our inspirations and all are in service of our purpose. It is because ours is a *living* covenantal faith that we must revisit the things that are most important to us to be sure they are still the things that are most important to us. And we cannot grow unless we grow *together*, which is why the work this group has done is so vital. Thank you for your time and creativity!

Check out (Learn, Yearn, or Turn) — Reminder: in a “Learn, Yearn, or Turn” check out, you’ll each share a word or phrase about only one of these three options:

- “Learn” — a word or phrase about something you learned during our time
- “Yearn” — a word or phrase about something you are longing for right now
- “Turn” — a word or phrase about something you hope for in Unitarian Universalism’s future.

Closing — [The Promise and the Practice: Benediction](#) by Rebekah Savage

*Spirit of Life, Spirit of Love,
We have gathered under the banner of a shared faith.
We are born of a welcoming grace that extends and receives love;
we are touched by the ways we have fallen short of who we strive to be;
and we here we reborn — forged by a greater courage.
Let us move from this place,
Encouraged and refreshed for the journey ahead.*