

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY: UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S HERITAGE  
TRAILBLAZERS

This session is based on **Women Blazing Trails: Their Flames Light the Way to Our New Frontiers**, Created by Kim Hardee and Dorothy Emerson for the Unitarian Universalist Women's Heritage Society (UUWHS) Worship Service at General Assembly, 1994

**Chalice Lighting/Opening Words:**

*We light this candle for all our courageous foremothers who paved the way – our foremothers who bravely demanded an education, racial justice, the vote, control over their won bodies, their womanhood.*

*We light this candle for our descendants – our children and those we influence, and those that will follow the. May they have a smoother path, an life where there is peace , equality and love. We light this candle for us – our generation. May we have the strength and courage, the self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-reliance, self love, self-honesty, and self-confidence to continue challenging injustice.*

Adapted from *Meg Bowman*, Contemporary UU

**Check-in:** How long have you been interested in Unitarian or Universalist women's history?

**Topic/Activity:**

Trailblazer—person who leads the way in new areas, pioneer in any field.

Were they trailblazers precisely because they were women trying to enter the field of interest or work that was not open to them previously.

Maria Mitchell: "I am but a woman! ....No woman should say, "I am but a woman." But a woman! What more can you ask to be?" 1874 in *Life, Letters and Journals*, compiled in 1896

Why is trailblazing important?

Is it that women should have opportunities similar to men—an equality issue. Or is also that women have a contribution to make to any and every field of endeavor? If so, what are the contribution that women make that differ from the contributions of men?

Did Unitarian or Universalist connection have any impact for trailblazers, or was the trailblazing done outside of the faith tradition?

Have you reaped any benefit from trailblazers?

Are you, or have you been a trailblazer? Tell a story about a time that you, as a woman, made a difference. Was this recognized? Or is it 'the best kept secret?'

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

**Closing:**

*We sometimes speak as if the past were over and done with: "That's past; that's out of date; that's ended." Yet try to obliterate in your thought all that is past. It is impossible, of course, because in so doing we obliterate ourselves. Without the help of what we call the past we could not live at all...*

*The past, instead of being done with, is, then, the real fiber of the world as we know it. Just as the food we eat nourishes us till it becomes what we act with, so the past is always what we think with...*

*The present. . is what we make of it, and its size is exactly that size which our hands are capable of grasping...*

*Our future is in our power—not, indeed, what happens to us, but what we do with what happens to us...*

*How can we best meet an unknown future? Three things seem to be essential: resolve, resource, discipline...*

*Our own future may be spiritually and physically.. rough, wild, [and] complicated... To meet its uncertainties we need to know what to do in woods where we have lost our life-way and in whirlpools that break to pieces our cherished hopes.*

*ELLA LYMAN CABOT (Our Part in the World, 1918)*

“Today we look to the past, the past that is “the real fiber of the world,” the past that “nourishes us till it becomes what we act with” and “what we think with.” The women we celebrate and praise today are inspirations for our present and our future.” “

**Likes and Wishes:** How was this session for you?

**Who is with us today?**

MARIA MITCHELL (1818-1889) was a Unitarian and a pioneer in astronomy. She discovered a comet in 1847. As professor of Astronomy at Vassar College, her teaching methods were considered radical.

*Ella Lyman Cabot* (1880-1930) was a Unitarian and a pioneer in education. She was one of the authors of the new religious education curricula published by the American Unitarian Association just before World War I.

Note: The UUWHS is now part of the Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society.2011.