

CUC NATIONAL IDENTITY INITIATIVE

WORKSHOP FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Version 1.0

November 25, 2008

CUC National Identity Task Force

With thanks to the Statement of Principles Task Force
for use of their workshop template

CUC NATIONAL IDENTITY WORKSHOP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background Information for Facilitators.....	3
Goal of the Identity Initiative	4
Goals of the Workshop	4
Preparations.....	5
Conducting the Workshop	7
What to Do with the Responses	7
Workshop Outline.....	8
Appendices	10
Appendix A	11
Appendix B.....	13
Appendix C.....	18

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

The CUC Board recognizes a need for further discussion, consultation, and collaboration among Canadian UUs on many questions of importance. It supports an **on-going national conversation** in the development of the longer-range aspects of our strategic plan. At the same time, there are some practical initiatives we can take forward right now. At the 2008 ACM in Ottawa, delegates approved a **Short-term Action Plan** (see http://cuc.ca/strategy/short_term_plan) that sets out immediate priorities and goals.

This **National Identity Initiative** is part of the Go Out! section of the that plan - aimed at letting others know we exist and who we are.

The **National Identity Task Force** was formed in the fall of 2008, with representation from our diverse communities. Its role is to engage Canadian UUs in conversations to examine the feasibility and utility of articulating and promoting a national identity. The task force is expected to work for 2 years, and using the information collected, come up with an agreed-upon articulation of who we are, and ways of letting others know we exist.

You might consider offering this workshop as part of your congregation's "Sharing Our Faith" Sunday. A "Sharing Our Faith" packet will be available shortly and will include appropriate materials for a **Sunday service** related to the National Identity conversation.

A **Youth Workshop** is also forthcoming, designed for our youth community by the youth member on the Task Force.

We hope that these workshops will stimulate and facilitate rich conversations within congregations and other communities and among all of us across the country.

GOAL OF THE IDENTITY INITIATIVE

Why do we want to engage in this initiative?

"To name that which is important to us" by:

- Providing more opportunities for congregations to engage in meaningful conversation;
- Clarifying our identity, so that we can become better at living out who we say we are;
- Clarifying our message to others about Canadian Unitarianism, so that those who haven't yet found their spiritual home might discover their place with us.

"Identity is the source of organization. Every organization is an identity in motion, moving through the world, trying to make a difference. Therefore, the most important work we can do at the beginning of an organizing effort is to engage one another in exploring our purpose. We need to explore why we have come together."

- Margaret Wheatley -

GOALS OF THE WORKSHOP

1. To provide a space for UUs to discuss the question of our identity and come up with common answers to help us articulate who we are.
2. To stimulate local congregational conversation about who they are and the face/image that they present in their communities.

PREPARATIONS

Workshop Format

This workshop design offers itself to adaptation, depending on the length of time available for it, the number of participants, and the strengths of the facilitators. It is hoped that the process and content are engaging enough that people will enjoy themselves and feel enriched through their participation.

- a) The minimum time suggested is 1.5 – 2.0 hours.
- b) It can be facilitated as a regular workshop: i) if there are less than 15 participants, the group can go through the questions together; ii) in a larger group, divide the participants into groups of 4-6 each. Each group gets a copy of all the questions, and works their way through these.
- c) It can also be done in a World Cafe format, where participants are divided into small groups, and each group addresses one question at a time. Once each question is complete, the group then moves on to the next question at another table with different people.
- d) We also suggest that the workshop can be held after a Sharing Our Faith Sunday service perhaps following lunch, at a potluck, or as a small group ministry event.

Supplies & Equipment

You will need the following supplies and equipment:

- a) Copies of the Questions (Appendix A) for all participants; or alternatively, project them on a screen or wall. An electronic version of the questions and this workshop guide can be found at <http://canadian-unitarian-council.pbwiki.com/Our-National-Identity>;
- b) Pens and paper; and
- c) Flip chart, masking tape, felt marking pens.

Promoting the Workshop

An announcement for your newsletter / website is included in Appendix C. You might also decide to make verbal announcements, telephone & e-mail people, and otherwise encourage attendance.

We also suggest posting the announcement on a **bulletin board** ahead of time.

The Questions

The Workshop is designed to solicit individual and collective responses to four key questions.

The format is intended to encourage participants to reflect individually on the context before engaging in a group discussion.

The last statement invites participants to tell us their stories about being UU. If time permits, these stories can be shared with the larger group. Alternatively, participants can go to the National Identity site at <http://canadian-unitarian-council.pbwiki.com/Our-National-Identity> to write their stories to be shared with the wider UU community. Ultimately, we hope to collect all these stories between two covers.

All responses are important!

Please read carefully through the workshop material a couple of times before leading it. It would be helpful for you to try answering the questions yourself so that you have a sense for the content. It is important that each participant is free to come up with his/her own answers to the questions, and not be influenced by anyone else's responses.

Above all, we hope that you have an interesting, lively, and engaging experience in conversation together!

CONDUCTING THE WORKSHOP

- a) If the workshop is to be conducted in one large group, appoint a "**scribe**" or "**recorder**" to take notes and write on flip charts, so the facilitator can simply facilitate. If the room will be divided into smaller sub-groups, each group should appoint a scribe and facilitator
- b) The **facilitator**:
 - Ensures that everyone in the group has an equal opportunity to talk
 - Keeps an eye on the time
 - Stays focused and moves the group through all the questions
 - Makes sure that the discussion is respectful and open
- c) Talk up the workshop ahead of time – we want all UUs to share with us their thoughts about identity. Encourage as many people as possible to attend.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE RESPONSES

Please input the group responses at:

<http://canadian-unitarian-council.pbwiki.com/Our-National-Identity>

You do not have to edit or organize the answers – just type them in as is. We are looking for all responses at this point.

Please invite individuals to go to the site and add their own individual responses.

The Task Force will collate the responses and present them with an update at the CUC annual meeting in Thunder Bay, May 2009. We will use these responses to determine the format and approach of the subsequent phases of the Initiative.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Introductions

1. Facilitator / presenter introduces self and topic (briefly);
2. Participants introduce themselves.

Opening Words

Franci Louann's poem about "*On being a (Canadian) Unitarian*" (Appendix B); or
Select your own preferred Opening Words.

Explain the Process

1. Explain what this workshop is all about and how the responses will be used. (Refer to "Background Information for Facilitators" section above.)
2. Explain the format you have chosen for the workshop (e.g. small groups, World Café) and the logistics involved.

The Questions

1. Read the Individual Discernment Questions aloud;
2. Allow quiet time for silent and individual reflection;
3. Start the discussion on each Group Question.

Conclusion

When all the questions have been completed, gather the participants together in a large group. If time allows, you may invite each group to briefly share their reflections.

At the End of the Workshop

1. Collect the flip chart notes;
2. Thank participants for taking part;
3. Point them to further information links at the end of their workshop hand-outs;
4. Invite them to continue their participation on-line.

Closing Words

See Appendix B.

Post-Workshop

1. Input the responses at <http://canadian-unitarian-council.pbwiki.com/Our-National-Identity>.
2. Please e-mail the Task Force at national_identity@cuc.ca to let us know you've completed the workshop.

Thank you for contributing your time and energy to the Identity conversation!

The National Identity Task Force
national_identity@cuc.ca

APPENDICES

A. Workshop Questions

B. Opening & Closing Words

C. Promotional Flyer

APPENDIX A

NATIONAL IDENTITY INITIATIVE
WORKSHOP 2009

Please take a few moments to ponder the Discernment Reflections individually before engaging with your group in the Group Discussion Question.

1. Individual Discernment Reflection:

What defines a UU? Is it our beliefs? Our values? Our actions?

Group Discussion Questions:

- a) What are our defining characteristics?
- b) What is unique about UUism as compared to other liberal faiths or philosophies?

2. Individual Discernment Reflection:

What is personally enriching about being in a UU community?

Group Discussion Questions:

- a) What is it about your UU community that adds vitality and meaning to your life?
- b) How do UU communities differ from other religious, philosophical or philanthropic groups?

3. **Individual Discernment Reflection:**

What are you passionate about as a UU? How do you live out your UU values in society?

Group Discussion Questions:

- a) What is our collective mission or purpose in society?
- b) Are there areas where UUs are uniquely positioned to make a significant difference in society?

4. **Tell us your story** about why you love being a UU, and how you came to this spiritual home. Please enter your responses on the blog at <http://canadian-unitarian-council.pbwiki.com/Our-National-Identity> to share your story with the wider UU community.

Additional Comments

Please share any additional comments you may have.

More information about the National Identity Initiative can be found at

<http://canadian-unitarian-council.pbwiki.com/Our-National-Identity>.

For information on the CUC's Short Term Action Plan, please visit http://cuc.ca/strategy/short_term_plan.

Thank you for contributing your time and energy to our national conversation!

CUC National Identity Initiative Task Force

national_identity@cuc.ca

APPENDIX B

OPENING WORDS

Franci Louann (Workman)

I AM a Unitarian.

I might be a Universalist,
or a Unitarian-Universalist,
or a Universalist-Unitarian.

This is not to be confused with
the United, the Unity,
or the Unification Churches.

We Canadian Unitarians belong to the CUC,
also the ICUU, and possibly the IARF!
(And we probably listen to the CBC!)

Like the U.K. Unitarians,
we have believed in
Freedom, Reason, and Tolerance!

Like our U.S. / U-U / UUA siblings,
we accept seven principles.
(Or is it eight? Now?)

We have six sources.
(Or is it seven? Now?)
We are a Living Tradition.

We Unitarians agree to differ.
We believe in religion without dogma.
We celebrate life.

We come together because
we are enough alike to speak with each other,
enough unlike to make it worthwhile.

We are a mosaic,
not a melting pot,
does that sound familiar?

We might be mystics
or humanists
or both.
Some of us are Christian, some Buddhist,
some call themselves Jew-nitarians,
some, Interfaitharians!

We might be agnostics - maybe devout agnostics,
who think about God a lot,
but decide they can't be sure -

probably not casual agnostics,
who don't know,
and don't care...

We might be theists, atheists, or "omnitheists" -
I made that last one up, meaning -
if there is a God - s/he is the same for all folk.

We don't have all of the answers,
but we do have most of the questions.
To question is an answer.

I believe that,
as my first Unitarian brochure read,
Truth can't be pickled!

And as Shakespeare said,
First onto thine own self be true...
look that one up yourself.

We might be inspired by Mahatma Gandhi -
and Harry Potter -
on the same page.

I believe that, not by faith,
but by good works alone,
shall I be saved (if I shall be saved).

I believe in people, that people are worthwhile,
that people are basically good,
except by accident, not design.

I don't believe in angels - or do I?
I cheer for the underdog -
well, not always.

I believe in nature, in animals, in birds -
in heaven, on earth only.
Let it be. Keep it so.

I believe in the environmental "R's" -
recycling is
a religious experience.

For some of us, worship
means worth-ship,
and the coffee hour is communion.

Some come to hone their consciences,
some to heal their wounds.
Out of many different houses...

We endeavour to
afflict the comfortable,
and to comfort the afflicted.

We are inclusive, not exclusive -
our circle draws in all but those
who would exclude themselves.

Some of us are straight - some gay -
we welcome all -
trans-gendered and asexual too!

I believe in Love, Love is God,
God is Love,
Love is the doctrine of this church.

Some of us call it church -
I say sanctuary...
We celebrate all the holidays, just in case.

YES, I AM A UNITARIAN!
Sometimes I say UN-itarian,
or FUN-itarian!

CLOSING WORDS

The Task of the Religious Community

by Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed

The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all.

There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of our own lives and the lives of others. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice.

It is the church that assures us we are not struggling for justice on our own, but as members of a larger community.

The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done.

Together, our vision widens and our strength is renewed.

APPENDIX C

Promotional Flyer

for bulletin boards and inclusion in congregational newsletters
& websites.

Who are **We?**



Tom Harpur said that Unitarians have
*“a unique opportunity to fill the growing
spiritual vacuum.”*

How do we do that? Who do we say we are?

- *Help clarify our identity so we can become better at letting people know who we are...*
- *Join the conversation about who we are as Unitarians...*

Come to the
Congregational Workshop on _____

*Stay in-the-loop by visiting:
<http://canadian-unitarian-council.pbwiki.com/Our-National-Identity>
or contact Vyda Ng at vyda@cuc.ca*