

Theme for September - Evangelism:

The Practice of Telling Your Story

Questions for discussion and discernment on your own, around the table, or with each other:

When we are asked about our faith, what do we say? As a denomination, we don't offer a creed, but we surely have good news. How do we frame that news, and how do we tell that story? We might pick our favorite of the Seven Principles and talk about it as a way of introducing our faith to others, but we could also tell personal tales of how we got to UU and what we found there. But *why* tell our story? Is it to reach every person, to increase our numbers as a denomination, to save every soul, or to tell people what we are so that they may join us if they choose? Do we want *everybody* to come to our church? If we live our faith--if we embody it--perhaps that is the best telling of our story that one person can offer.

1. What does evangelism mean to you?
2. What does evangelism look like?
3. How comfortable are you talking about UU?
4. Has there ever been a time you fell short explaining what your faith/our faith means to you?
5. What are the key principles and beliefs you bring to the world?
6. When you share UU with others, what do you speak to?
7. What would compel you to speak about UU?
8. What inhibits you from speaking about UU?
9. What is the most important part of the UU faith to you?

Readings and Quotations:

"You are, in my estimation, the church of the new millennium. In this era, Unitarian Universalism is not the lowest common denominator, but the highest common calling... In a world divided by race and by religion and ideology, the very presence of a church like this, committed to the oneness of God, the love of God, the love of neighbor and service to humanity is a beacon. The Unitarian theology, and yes you have one, does not reduce the mystery of the divine, the transcendent, but amplifies it, broadens it to include the investigation of the many, many ways in which the divine is known and yet unknown... You do have a mission. The world is in need of your theology."

-Diana Eck, professor at Harvard, in her sermon at the installation of the Rev. Dr. Galen Guengerich as the senior minister of All Souls Unitarian Church on October 28, 2007

"I grew up with the language of being saved. Today, that means something far

different than it did when I made my first trip to an altar to accept Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour. That language and understanding is no longer part of my beliefs. But, I DO BELIEVE we have a SAVING MESSAGE. I do believe we have a message the world needs to hear. I do believe we have something life-giving to offer the world and that if we don't do the offering, someone else will with a message that could be more harmful than good.

I am not talking about proselytizing. I am not talking about getting into endless debates with people or grabbing them by the collar and making them listen.

I AM talking about sharing our stories, telling what matters to us, offering another way for folks to consider. I am talking about sharing our visions for a world that is just, kind, merciful, and at peace. AND THAT IS EVANGELISM!"

--Reverend Mike Quayle, <http://huuweb.org/community-cafe/unitarian-universalist-evangelism/>

"The promise of our faith is the promise of a living tradition, not the dry bones of old, irrelevant texts. The promise of our faith is the promise of personal wholeness; from our identity-based ministries to our anti-racism, anti-oppression and multi-cultural work. And the promise of our faith is the promise of being connected to something greater than ourselves—whether we call it the universe, the Spirit of Life or the interconnected web of all existence. The best gift we can give each generation is to embody that promise, to invite each new generation to join us, to nurture them as they become a part of our communities and grow in their own faith and commitment, and—most importantly—to step back and allow them to transform our living tradition as generations before have done."

--Rev. Renee Ruchotzke, <http://vitalleaders.blogs.uua.org/2012/06/28/to-be-bona-fide/>