



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Building Your Own Theology and Why You Need One

By Annie Foerster, Adult Education and
Enrichment Team Leader

When you belong to a church without a creed, you're pretty much on your own explaining your system of life values to anyone else, much less yourself. Those of us who come to UU-ism from a childhood religious background often end up explaining what they *don't* believe, as they discard certain earlier teachings. Those of us who came from no church experience often don't feel the need to explain anything. **That's why we are offering a five-week discussion course, "Building Your Own Theology," beginning Saturday, June 22, from 1:00-3:30 pm.**

Let's start with some definitions. This is from the preface of the course materials:

Religion is that core of ultimate meanings, values, and convictions out of which we live our lives. More than mere beliefs, which are intellectual constructs, religion is an existential construct that permeates the total life of the self.

Theology is the intellectual process of analyzing, clarifying, criticizing, articulating and symbolizing those values, meanings and convictions that grow out of experience. In this sense, everyone is a theologian.

We won't be concerned with your 'elevator speech,' your explanation of what a UU church

is to a stranger in an elevator, short enough to be completed before you come to the ground floor. We're talking about the stuff that helps you get through the night you lie awake tossing and asking yourself, "Why is this happening to me?"

Here's a brief outline of what to expect in our discussions:

Week 1: A Liberal Religious Theological Model. How do you integrate the self with broad questions about Ultimate Reality, Ethics, Human History and Meaning with your chosen and lived values? Because experience is part of our own personal understanding of life, what is the religious (spiritual) journey that brought you to this moment?

Week 2: Varieties of Liberal Religious Experience and a Look at "Human Nature." We've all had experiences we can't explain, but not everyone refers to them as religious experiences. Why do we have them and what can they teach us? And, **What Does it Mean to be Human?** What traits do we all share? What are the limits of our understanding?

Week 3: Ultimate Reality. Even those who don't "believe in God" understand "The God Concept" — that there is more meaning to the life of the individual than the eye can see and the mind may know. How can we make that unknowable useful to us? And, **A Look Backward.** How do we develop a critical appreciation of one's own heritage with a fresh

appreciation of the Unitarian Universalist Tradition.

Week 4: Ethics: the Importance of Being Good for Nothing. No explanation needed, right? And, **We Are the Meaning Makers.** We'll explore the sources of meaning in our lives.

Week 5: Imperatives of My Theology. Exploring how personal theology is an ongoing process of experiences and reflections on experience. And, **Writing a Credo.** 'Credo' is Latin for 'I believe.' We'll all have a chance to share.

This is important: I need to know who will attend so I can prepare handouts and small group discussions. Please reserve a place in the course at AdultEE@uufw.org. The sessions build on one another and it will be better if you can attend them all. But if you can't, I will provide written material for the classes you miss. If you do want to 'drop in' on any one session, let me know and I will see if there is room for you and try to provide you with readings ahead of time.

We Have a Permanent RE Director!

Nancy Lay has accepted the 20-hour RE director position on a two-year contract beginning July first. We are so fortunate because, in her time as interim director, Nancy has forged a very positive relationship with our children and their parents. And she feels that doing this job has energized her.

Nancy has already jumped into the permanent position by enrolling in a six-week UUA course on Philosophy of Religious Education. She will be going to The Mountain

for training with other RE directors in July, and she will be attending Our Whole Lives (OWL) facilitator training in August.

Nancy brings a great deal of experience to this role. She has taught every grade from fourth through high school. For six years, she worked in the children's literature department at Barnes and Noble, telling stories and helping parents and children select books. She has also been a volunteer story teller in Catholic schools. But nothing has energized her as much as working with our children to encourage their spiritual development and sharing her sense of wonder and joy with them.

Over the summer, Nancy will be studying UU curricula, interacting with other DREs in the Blue Ridge Cluster and making plans to build a UUFW Youth Program.

Congratulations Nancy!



Signing the contract for the Director of Religious Education position with Board President, Kay Yost.

