



Unitarians Promoting Equality:

Past – Present – Future

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2019

Youth Sunday Pack

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## Background

At this year's General Assembly Meetings, two GA affiliated groups, The Foy Society and The Unitarian Women's Group, raised motions urging our movement to take action against the growing inequality experienced by many in Britain today. In presenting the motions they were walking in a long line of Unitarian social activists.

Historically Unitarians have led the way in tackling inequality and injustice. The Object of The General Assembly states the importance of mutual sympathy, co-operation, tolerance and respect and recognising the worth and dignity of all people.

As affiliated congregations and individual members we have a duty to act in accordance with The Object of the General Assembly and a responsibility to communicate both its meaning and significance to our younger members. To support us with this task, I have made promoting equality the central theme of this year's Youth Sunday Service.

In this pack you will find a users guide to help structure the service as well as guides to help differentiate and ensure the content and style of delivery is accessible to all. Please note that the advice provided is a guide. Congregations are free to adapt as appropriate to meet local need.

Finally, I'd like to thank all those who offered contributions, advice and encouragement. You know who you are – Thank you.

Enjoy!

Gavin James Howell

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## Service Leader Guide

### Purpose

The purpose of the service is to communicate to our younger members the role played by Unitarians in promoting equality, mutual sympathy, co-operation, tolerance and respect and recognising the worth and dignity of all people.

### Structure

The title of the service is: Unitarians Promoting Equality: Past - Present - Future

I envisage the service being delivered in 3 parts. In part one we hear of our past actions, in part two our present actions and in part three we reflect upon and share our future actions.

**In part one** there is a short reading recounting the actions taken by Unitarians in the name of equality and their impact on society. (Contribution by The Unitarian Historical Society.)

**In part two** there is a short piece on some of the most recent/current actions being taken by Unitarians in the name of equality and their desired impact upon society. (Contribution by The FOY Society)

**In part three** The congregation is invited to reflect upon, light a candle and share what they believe to be our next great challenge.

The three parts can be supported with additional readings, hymns, meditations, a story for all ages and music. Congregations can pick and choose depending on the need and make up of their membership.



Each component part is short and has been adapted in order to make it accessible to younger members. Needless to say, younger members are expected to remain with the congregation for the duration of the service. Ideally they should be active participants. Better still if they are part of a small group who take ownership for the planning and delivery of the service. The challenge for us, the service leaders, is to differentiate appropriately in order for this to happen. This, I appreciate, is more work on top of a very busy work schedule. However, if done right, the benefits both in terms of individual and congregational growth are tremendous.

## **Delivery Models - Differentiation 1**

Possible structure for congregations with lots of small children (4 – 7 years of age)

1. Chalice lighting (Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry)
2. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
3. Story for all ages (Youth Officer)
4. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
5. Unitarian present actions (The FOY Society)
6. Unitarian future actions (Congregational participation)
7. Musical interlude (Unitarian Music Society/ Youth Officer)
8. Closing words (Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry)

### **Benefits of this model**

- This service is deliberately short and sweet (approximately 30 minutes in length)
- Readings are brief and to the point
- Hymns provide movement breaks
- Lots of variety
- The children are involved for large parts of the service (Chalice lighting, singing, engaged in the story and through sharing their future actions)

## Delivery Models - Differentiation 2

Possible structure for congregations with older children (7 – 11 years of age)

1. Chalice lighting (Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry)
2. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
3. Unitarian past actions (Unitarian Historical Society)
4. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
5. Story for all ages (Youth Officer)
6. Unitarian present actions (The FOY Society)
7. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
8. Guided meditation/Prayer (Unitarian Women's Group)
9. Musical interlude (Unitarian Music Society)
10. Unitarian future actions (Congregational participation)
11. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
12. Closing words (Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry)

### Benefits of this model

- This service is still relatively short and sweet (approximately 40-45 minutes)
- As readings are designed to be highly accessible to all members there's no reason why, with plenty of warning, younger members couldn't read the reflections/ meditations etc.
- Progression is provided through the Inclusion of the meditation and the musical piece. Both allow for a deeper more personal engagement with the theme.



- Four hymns provide movement breaks
- Potentially the children could be involved in delivering every stage of the service.

## **Delivery Models – Differentiation 3**

Possible structure for congregations with adolescents/no young people

1. Chalice lighting (Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry)
2. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
3. Story for all ages (Youth Officer)
4. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
5. Theological reflections on equality (Unitarian Ministerial Fellowship)
6. Unitarian past actions (Unitarian Historical Society)
7. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
8. Unitarian present actions (The FOY Society)
9. Guided meditation/prayer (Unitarian Women's Group)
10. Silence
11. Musical interlude (Unitarian Music Society/Youth Officer)
12. Unitarian future actions (Congregational participation)
13. Hymn (Unitarian Music Society)
14. Closing words (Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry)

### **Benefits of this model**

- Service length appropriate for adults/adolescents (approximately 55 - 60 minutes)
- As readings are designed to be highly accessible to all members there's no reason why, with plenty of warning, younger

members couldn't read the reflections/ meditations etc. Potentially members could take some of the readings and adapt them. Perhaps pick up on an issue raised and offer their brief reflections on it.

- Younger members could lead the entire service from start to finish. In fact anyone could lead it. High levels of youth participation.
- Progression is provided through the inclusion of a period of silence and a reading on theological perspectives on equality. Theological perspectives should help put our actions in promoting equality in context. It helps explain why we do what we do. The silence offers an opportunity for deeper reflection.
- Hymns provide movement breaks.

## **Additional Opportunities...**

With a shortened service why not seize the opportunity and have a 'Bring & Share' lunch. A family service followed by a community meal. A wonderful way nurture and deepen relationships.

Youth Sunday is a great opportunity to do some outreach in your local community. Invite charities/ groups you have long standing links with. Or perhaps invite groups you'd like to work with. Or even better do both! By putting the needs of children/ families at the centre of the service, your chapel walking its talk in terms of inclusivity. You are demonstrating that your space is a welcoming one. Families see that they are truly welcome. You're also informing the public of how we've walked our talk in promoting equality for all. Don't just stick a poster on the notice board get proactive and start sending invites and do so now!

Could this start a conversation about how your congregation provides ministry in your chapel/community? Are you differentiating in terms of congregation/community need? Are your messages accessible to all? Are you providing frequent meaningful opportunities for the whole congregation/community to come together at one time? Could a regular well differentiated monthly/quarterly family service provide an opportunity to do some great outreach within your community?

## Contributions

### The FOY Society

The General Assembly has voted that fairness about money is important to Unitarians. We don't think everyone should have the exact same things, but we don't accept that anyone can be forgotten or treated badly because they are poor.

So as Unitarians, we think everyone should have access to schools and doctors and hospitals. Everyone should be able to visit green spaces and city parks. Everyone should get to go to concerts and films and libraries and art galleries and museums. And we need to share all these things with everyone else, everyone we don't know, not just our friends. Each of those people we don't yet know is as important as we are, and we are just as important as they are.

Nationally, Unitarians have acted on our values by affiliating to the Equality Trust, a charity which explains why large inequalities are bad for all of us and campaigns to reverse inequality (they have much more information available online). But if we are to be true to our values, and if we mean what we say about fairness - what else should we do? What can I do? What can this whole congregation do when we come together?

There are other differences in society than just money, too. To be black or to be white, to be born in this country or to choose to live in this country. To be bisexual or straight or gay or asexual. If you are comfortable in the sex you were assigned, or if you struggled to be recognised as the person you are and always were. Whether you speak English with a high-status accent, or a lower-status accent, or as a second language. If you have a mental illness, or another chronic health problem, or have cancer.

We don't get anywhere by ignoring these differences - of course they exist, and help shape each of us. But my differences from you make me, me! Your differences from me are what make you, you. And it is wonderful to learn about you, to hear your story.

Fairness surely means that none of these differences should ever change the basic things in our society. No-one should suffer untreated pain because they happen to also have a mental illness. No-one should be denied access to green space because they use a wheelchair. No-one should be denied education because of the place they were born. No-one should be intimidated or threatened because of the clothes they wear. When any of these things happens, it is unfair. And when we say fairness is important to us as Unitarians, we need to do more than just say the words, we need to act.

What should we do? What can I do? What can you and I do together?

## Contributions

### Unitarian Historical Society

Unitarians have been leaders in many areas of social progress over the last two hundred years. Religious freedom, education in all its forms, local government and better public health have been objects of special concern. They supported the abolition of slavery, Catholic emancipation and the extension of the voting franchise. Unitarians also made important contributions to the economic life of the country during the Industrial Revolution, helping to improve the lot of ordinary working people – examples include the Greg family associated with Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire and Josiah Wedgwood in the Potteries.

Unitarians have shown an enthusiasm for education that has amounted to a passion. They devoted time, energy and money to the spread of education in every form – day schools, religious education, Sunday Schools, adult education, the universities and education for women. The Dissenting Academies had their origin in the exclusion of nonconformists from Oxford and Cambridge, and in addition to theology some of them had a particular interest in teaching natural science. In Portsmouth John Pounds opened up his cobbler's shop to poor children and taught them to read and write, creating the idea of Ragged Schools. In Bristol Mary Carpenter established the first reformatory school for boys and girls in 1852.

Probably no religious body except the Quakers has given such wholehearted support as the Unitarians to the cause of women's freedom in all its forms. The story perhaps starts with Mary Wollstonecraft, whose 'Vindication of the Rights of Woman' was published in 1792. In the nineteenth century Frances Power Cobbe was a social reformer, anti-vivisectionist and leading women's

suffrage campaigner. Our headquarters in London, Essex Hall, was a popular meeting place for progressive movements, including the Fabian Society and various women's suffrage groups. Mrs Pankhurst addressed a meeting there in 1907. With regard to women in ministry, Gertrude von Petzold was appointed as minister at Narborough Road Free Christian (Unitarian) Church in Leicester in 1904, and became the first woman to have full ministerial status in any British denomination.

Coming more up-to-date, our own General Assembly set up a working party to consider the implications of feminist theology, and its report 'Growing Together' was published in 1985. Earlier this century the GA established a Sexual Orientation Equality Group, which produced a resource pack in 2003 on sexual orientation and other equality issues entitled 'Celebrating Diversity' (still available). For many years Unitarians have promoted the cause of equality in its many forms, and this work continues today.



## **Contributions**

### **Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry**

#### **Opening words**

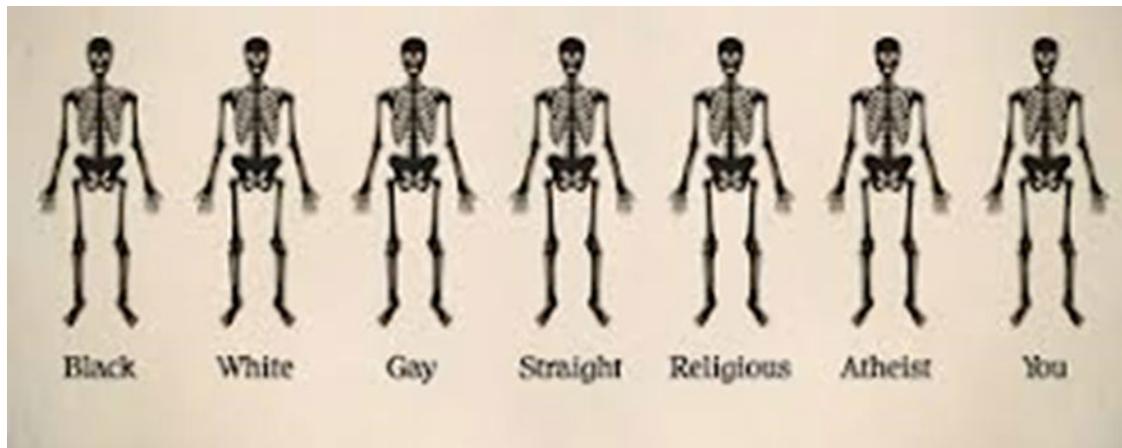
Welcome to this service for Youth Sunday. Welcome, however young you are. You are one of the lucky ones – fairly free, fairly equal. We will be looking at some who are, or have been, not quite so lucky as us, and how we might help to make the future better. Let us listen, learn, and play our part as best we can.

#### **Closing words**

This service may be ending now; but your opportunity for service keeps on going, and I hope it will never stop: your service to your friends and family, your service to your fellow Unitarians and the movement of which you are a part, your service to society as a whole, your service to the environment and the natural world, your service – if you like to think of it in these terms – to God and all existence. Your service can, and will, make a difference. Do your best to make sure it does. Go in peace and joy. Amen.

## Contributions

### Unitarian Ministerial Fellowship



The seven people pictured above are all people. Yet one is black, one is white, one is gay, one is straight, one is religious (perhaps even Unitarian!), one has no religious beliefs, and the seventh is you.

The Unitarian view of equality is that we are all people, regardless of race, sexual orientation, religious belief or any other factor which makes each human being unique.

We believe that to judge somebody by how they identify themselves or how we identify them is wrong.

We believe that the only right way to judge someone is about how they behave to others, not because of the colour of their skin, or their gender, or sexual orientation, or faith.

We believe that we can learn from people who are different to us, learn about their human lives, and learn to respect them, as they are.

We need to be aware of ourselves and each other as unique human beings, and to respect and appreciate the struggles that each of us goes through to be recognised as such. If we are privileged in some way e.g. by being white or straight or male, we need to have empathy for people who are different to us.



Because we are all human beings, each one unique, with unique gifts to offer. We celebrate that diversity but recognise that we are all people. Everyone is worthy of love and justice and respect.

## **Contributions**

### **Unitarian Music Society – Hymns**

#### **Let us Sing**

38 - Loving Friends Together

17 - Love is a Circle

#### **Hymns for Living**

215 – Black and White

#### **Sing Your Faith**

5 - All the colours (racial equality by implication)

20 - Come, all who look to God today (equality before God)

33 - Enter, rejoice and come in (just because it is a great opener to any service)

36 - For everyone born (this is central to the theme, a wonderful Credo statement and GREAT song)

60 - Here I am, all alone (equal sharing gets the job done. Fun to sing)

92 - Let us renew our covenant (Unitarianism a place for people of all kinds)

130 - Ours is a town for everyone (Inclusiveness rather than equality perhaps)

165 - The Spirit lives to set us free (the light that shines is in us all)

187 - We ask that we live... in peace (one people, one world)

191 - We have a dream (Martin Luther King's speech)

226 - A round "From You I receive" (equal giving and receiving)

## **Unitarian Music Society – Musical Interlude**

I'd like to teach the world to sing – Multiple covers

Imagine by John Lennon

Past Time Paradise by Stevie Wonder

Spread a Little Happiness (Even when the darkest clouds are in the sky) Multiple covers

Take care of your friends

### **A few additional suggestions from the Youth Officer...**

Beautiful by Christina Aguilera

Brown Girl by Aaradhna

Respect by Aretha Franklin

Same Love (Play it Loud and Play It Proud) by Macklemore

Something Inside So Strong by Labi Siffre

True Colours – Multiple covers

## **Contributions**

### **Unitarian Women's Group**

#### Spirit of Life

An ocean needs all the drops of water in it to be an ocean

all the drops of water are important

we are like those drops of water

and we are the ocean.

We share our space

we need one another

we are each part of the whole

we are one.

And we are different – in many ways –

Our favourite colour

Who we love

What makes us cry

Where we come from

Our language

Why we hurt

What makes us laugh

Our gender

Our skin

Whether we sleep on the street or in a bed –

And more

How amazing!

Now that is a miracle

That is magic – the magic of creation

That we are all so different

And we share this

Loving, breathing planet.

So we challenge those who

Teach us to be afraid.

We refuse to hate

To bully

To turn away from one another,

To be unkind to someone who is different.

We live in an exciting world

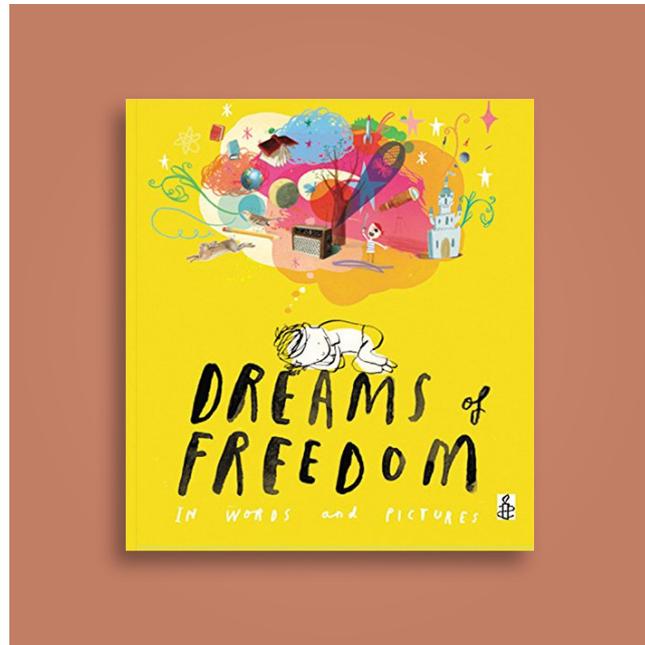
Of swirling colour and sound and light and shape and love.



This is our Real, Beloved World.

## Contributions

### Unitarian Youth Officer



### Details

- **Title:** Dreams of Freedom: In Words and Pictures
- **Author:** Amnesty International
- **Hardcover:** 48 pages
- **Age Range:** 6 - 9 years
- **Publisher:** Lincoln Children's Books (5 Mar. 2015)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1847804535
- **ISBN-13:** 978-1847804532
- **Product Dimensions:** 25.1 x 1.3 x 28.3 cm

# Support your local library

## Resources

### Service Checklist

- **Volunteer readers**
- **Copy of story**
- **Copies of readings**
- **Promotional poster circulated and displayed. Additional posters can be downloaded from the Youth Programme page of the Unitarian website.**  
[www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/youth-sunday-2019](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/youth-sunday-2019)
- **Candles**
- **Colouring pencils for order of service**
- **Music downloaded and performance rights observed**
- **Event publicised on website and social media**
- **Local groups invited**
- **Order of service adapted and printed. You can download an adaptable version of the order of service on the Youth Programme page of the Unitarian website.**  
[www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/youth-sunday-2019](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/youth-sunday-2019)

