

## From iChurch to Beloved Communities

**Friday, June 26 | 6pm-7:15pm US/Eastern (3:00 – 4:15PM PDT)**

Join the conversation as a group of ten leaders address issues and challenges facing our faith communities in this time of uncertainty, scarcity and changing cultural identities. The panel/workshop will describe tipping points and turning points in the UU journey by sharing stories and ministries that are reshaping and sustaining our beloved faith for future generations.

Rev. Fredric Muir | Rev. Carlton Smith | Rev. Rebekah Montgomery | Rev. Terasa Cooley

Book: *Turning Point: Essays on a New Unitarian Universalism*

Trinity of errors leading us astray.

- Exceptionalism
- Individualism
- Anti-authority

Trinity of promises leading us to a better future.

- Generosity
- Pluralism
- Imagination

How we got to this point. Shaped by promises of generosity, inclusion. We need to liberate ourselves from the past that is replete with errors.

What we have done with the words of Emerson is what happens whenever we scripturalize a thinker's words. What we do with words that inspire us, but there are implications. Blurring of lines between Emerson the Unitarian and Emerson the American. Individualism became a dogma that is corrupting both America and UUism. (Different from celebration of diversity, individuality.) Went from celebration of differences to demand for individual rights. Left us with a twisted definition of what it means to be a UU or American. Perversion of Emersonian individualism has damaged our relationships with each other. Not just a matter of balancing individual and community needs.

Twisted understanding of Emerson's writings has led to problems.

Two different contexts for development of contemporary UUism.

James Fowler "Stages of Faith"

James Schade "Unitarian Universalist Faith Development in Stages"

Individualizing faith. Stage of faith where we say this is what I believe, I can believe no other. Anti-Nicene Creed led to formation of Unitarianism. What counts most is what I believe. We're all on our own

separate journey. Too weak to sustain UUism against challenge of conservatism. Children left unable to explain who they were or what our religion was about. UUism re-worked earlier stages of faith. Faith development based on group identity (an earlier stage). Most people in UUism had experienced that in other faiths. Long-term members wanted children to have their own experience, grow their own individuality. Became attached to symbols that are “us” like chalice and flower communion. Part of our development has reverted us to “stage 4” faith. Eventually you run into someone who says the same thing but believes opposite. Do we exclude others from pulpit? “Light shines through many windows.” Religiously diverse, with a strong identity.

In our desire to move beyond individualism, need to remember most people live in circumstances where they are pushed to conform more than shaped by isolation. Most people pushed into conforming to rigid stereotypes. Do not feel free to say “this is what and who I am.” UUism will lose a part of itself if individual loses the moment when individualism is operating. It will require a lot of people claiming their identity.

Interconnection, innovation, impact. Future of UUism.

## The Global Challenge of Universalism:

We think of ourselves as Americans. Don’t trust that we can reach out without arrogance or ignorance.

We used to think the only way to connect was to send someone out to build a congregation. As a movement, we did not have enough evangelists. We are beginning to learn intercultural competence. We can’t understand ourselves in isolation. Technologies allow us to build virtual communities.

How do we move out without arrogance of imperialism? We can learn these things in our backyards. Groups beyond our congregational walls. People organizing selves in ways that don’t require so much infrastructure. We have to understand ourselves with humility wrt #blacklivesmatter movement. Sense of humility and fellowship.

## Unitarian Universalist Chaplaincy and the Promise of Pluralism

Bring chaplaincy model to congregations. People stay for the relationships. Stay for the way we are in community with them. Radiate open, welcome heart. Starts with radical hospitality. How we welcome people into our space. Language matters. Be sensitive to that, expansive, not insensitive to that. Suspend judgement. Our job not to judge. Heal broken and lift the fallen.

UUs are not good at being uncomfortable with others. Need to be comfortable with being uncomfortable with people who are not like us. “I see you as you are.” Ok that others are different. Unite around mission of serving people.

When you feel disenfranchised, come back to the table. We can begin process of forgiveness, understanding, everyone can benefit from your light. Only as diverse as the people willing to be in community with us.

[www.originalblessing.org](http://www.originalblessing.org)

## Lucy Stone Cooperative

12-person, intentional living community. Purchased house in 2010.

<http://uucommunitycoops.org/lsc/>

## Sanctuary Boston

<http://thesanctuaryboston.org/>

## The Remedy of Connection

Theme-based ministry. Ministers ask what they want from parishioners. Church not a product/service. Need to ask what do we want for parishioners. Want them to feel like their life matters. Changes whole view of ministry. All aspects of church about same theme helps increase connection. Look at number of people who are disconnected. Just need one person.

<http://www.uua.org/re/themes>

When you share themes across neighboring conversations, can share resources. Need to take interdependence more importantly than independence.