



UU Elevator Speech

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

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Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a sacred space. We light the chalice in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words:

Weavers of One Story

Here we are together each facing our different human tasks or maybe the same central one: to embrace the lessons life delivers to discern and respond as we grow to refuse harm and cherish flourishing.

May we know ourselves as vessels of infinite possibility. Holders of each other's heartaches and tales of joy alike weavers of one story in which we each have our part. May you always know that you are held in this sacred web of love.

~ Leah Ongiri, UU Minister

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What does it mean to you to be UU?
2. How do you explain your faith to others? Share some of the experiences you have had.
3. What would you say if asked, "What's a Unitarian Universalist?"
4. How has what you say or might say in your elevator speech changed with the passing of the revision to Article II?

Readings – see below

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions and readings)

Sharing - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions or comment on something else that the questions or readings bring up for you.

(This is a good time to take a brief break)

Open Discussion -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening. If you have written your own elevator speech, now is a good time to share it aloud.

Closing reading:

We receive fragments of holiness, glimpses of eternity, brief moments of insight. Let us gather them up for the precious gifts that they are and, renewed by their grace, move boldly into the unknown.

~ Sara Moores Campbell, *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading # 701

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.

These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Readings

I don't actually have one straight up memorized elevator speech. I tend to tailor my response to my audience, and try to pay attention to what the person is asking. Some people just want to know if I go to church. Others want to know the basic values of our religious community. Instead of having a single speech that I repeat, I have four essential concepts that I try to include. Sometimes I'll focus more on one or another, and sometimes I'll include all four. Depends on how many floors in the building!

1. **Our roots are firmly planted in liberal Christianity** – Unitarianism and Universalism as theological positions can be found in the earliest days of Christian history, and in the Protestant Reformation. Unitarian refers to the unity of God (as opposed to the trinity, in which Jesus is one of three divine parts of God). Universalism refers to the idea that all souls are saved (as opposed to predestination, in which only a few are chosen)
2. **We are a religiously pluralistic faith tradition** – Since the two denominations consolidated in 1961, we are no longer specifically Christian, but embrace and learn from many different religious traditions.
3. **We are a relational faith, a people of covenant** – Rather than requiring adherence to a creed to hold us together and stipulate who can be a member, we rely on our relationships. We commit to a covenant which lays out the expectations of relationship and holds us accountable to one another.
4. **We are committed to working toward justice and freedom for all** – Throughout the history of this movement, Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists have been found at the center of most of the major social and civil rights movements. This continues today in our commitments to anti-oppression, dismantling racism and white supremacy, economic and environmental justice, and more.

One way to use these notes is to combine the bolded sentences into one short statement you can memorize, and then be prepared to answer more questions if there is time or interest. Another is to remember the general concepts, doing your own research and figuring out what bits are most important to your story. Either way, I hope they will be helpful to you in clarifying your own speech about this beloved faith tradition of ours. ~Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper, Question Box Sermon, May 5, 2019. Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Evolving, not revealed. This life, not the afterlife. Actions and experiences, not beliefs. Democracy, not hierarchy. And don't choose between goodness and happiness, insist on both.

~Doug Muder, *Stop the elevator; I'm not done. If someone on an elevator asked you what Unitarian Universalism is, could you answer before one of you reached your destination?* UU World, 12/27/2010

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/stop-elevator>

The Unitarian side of our family tree tells us that there is only one God, one Spirit of Life, one Power of Love. The Universalist side tells us that God is a loving God, condemning none of us, and valuing the spark of divinity that is in every human being. So Unitarian Universalism stands for one God, no one left behind.

~Bill Sinkford, Unitarian Universalist minister and former UUA president

Our faith is not interested in saving your soul—we're here to help you unfold the awesome soul you already have. ~ Andrea Lerner, Unitarian Universalist Association religious educator

We believe that as fallible human beings we do not have all the answers. Consequently, we are religious seekers, seeking ways to be better human beings. We believe that life is a path along which our experiences lead to theological reflection and religious beliefs. We welcome unconventional believers, religious pluralists, and non-believers, very often refugees from other religions, people whose religious journey has led them to us. ~Dick Dana, Member of First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, New York

Love at the Center: New UU Statement of Values Passes after Momentous General Assembly Delegate Vote
The years-long democratic process culminated with debate and the GA vote. A two-thirds majority was required for approval. ELAINE MCARDLE 6/23/2024

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/uua-article-ii-passes-general-assembly-result-unitarian-universalism-bylaws-vote-values-statement>

