

Confused? A primer on UU terms

UUA: The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) represents the interests of more than one thousand Unitarian Universalist congregations, on a continental scale. The UUA grew out of the consolidation, in 1961, of two religious denominations: the Universalists and the Unitarians.

UUSC: Firmly grounded in Unitarian Universalist values, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) promotes and protects human rights in the United States and internationally. Through advocacy, partnership and education, UUSC focuses its programs to promote environmental justice, defend civil liberties and access to democratic processes, and advance economic justice. Working in collaboration with the UUA, UUSC also responds to disasters, especially where human rights are threatened.

Check in: Typically done at the beginning of meetings and small groups and usually brief, the check in is an opportunity to talk about something that the participants want to uplift and let go of so they can focus on the group.

Baby/Child Dedication: Child dedication ceremonies happen any time the parent wishes at a variety of ages. The child is officially named and welcomed into the community and the community pledges its love and support for the child. Some parents wish to have a baptismal component to the dedication to affirm their Christian path. Other traditions are also celebrated as the parent wishes.

Commitment Ceremony: As a child explained, a commitment ceremony “means that they love each other and promise to always help each other.” This ceremony is for couples who don’t want to or cannot get legally married. Couples choose the ritual that is meaningful for them. Some couples also may use the terms marriage, wedding or spiritual wedding, but do not go through the state to be legally recognized.

Visitor to the Fellowship: Someone new to the Fellowship who has not yet gotten involved in a group or class.

Friend of the Fellowship: Someone who has gotten involved in a group, class or activity within the Fellowship (and has notified the office staff of this participation), but has not signed the membership book.

Member of the Fellowship: Someone who has signed the membership book and has filled out a pledge card. For more information, see the Fellowship by-laws Article IV, sections 1 - 5.

Pledge: A statement of financial commitment to the Fellowship. Making a pledge is a private decision that is not shared with the congregation. Knowing each individual's life circumstances are different, there is no minimum required of a pledge, but suggested guidelines are 3, 4 or 5% of gross annual income.

Annual Pledge Drive: Occurring every spring, this is a time when our Finance Team asks congregants to fill out a pledge card for the following fiscal year (July through June).

Welcoming Congregation: This is a distinction given by the UUA to individual congregations that voluntarily make an intentional effort to be especially welcoming of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered members and visitors. The process to become a Welcoming Congregation typically involves a series of workshops on GLBT issues, concrete plans to become more intentionally welcoming, and a congregational vote to request the status from the UUA. The Fox Valley UU Fellowship began its Welcoming Congregation process in the early 1990s, and finally voted as a congregation to affirm its welcoming status in January 2005. The vote passed overwhelmingly.

Liberal religion: The word liberal does not refer to a leftist political agenda. Liberal comes from the same root word as liberty. Liberal means free: a free faith, for all to share.

Joys and Concerns: An opportunity in our services that we share each others significant life joys and concerns or sorrows as a way of building true community. This is a time for brief, simple sharing of important events, and not meant for making a political statement or recruiting for a cause. When a topic is of sensitive nature, we ask all to be mindful of what they share. Our ministers are available to discuss something that might not be appropriate to be shared with the congregation.

Flaming Chalice: As other faith traditions may have a cross or Star of David as their symbols, Unitarian Universalists have the flaming chalice. The symbol was used in World War II as a symbol of the Unitarian Service Committee, and over time, became the worldwide symbol for the UUSC and the UUA.

Information from UUA.org