

The Unitarian Church in the New World

In the United States, Unitarianism was preached in 1747 by the pastor of West Church in Boston. During the same period, Harvard College represented the most advanced thought on the Unitarian faith, and its Divinity School graduates were most influential in preaching the unity of God, the subordinate nature of Christ, and salvation by character. The first congregation to officially accept the Unitarian faith was in 1782 at King's Chapel in Boston.

Throughout the first four decades of the nineteenth century hundreds of the original congregational churches fought over ideas about sin and salvation, and especially over the doctrine of the Trinity. In 1819, Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing delivered a sermon called "Unitarian Christianity" and helped to give the Unitarians a strong platform. Six years later the American Unitarian Association was organized in Boston, Massachusetts.

Universalism was born on the belief of Universal Salvation, meaning that our forebears did not believe God would condemn some people to everlasting hell and others to heaven. The Universalist Church of America (founded in 1793) and the American Unitarian Association (founded in 1825) merged in 1961 to form the Unitarian Universalist Association. Universalism was a more evangelical faith than Unitarianism. In 1863, Universalists were the first denomination to ordain women to the ministry.

A lasting impetus grew out of this inclusive theology in both denominations to create a more just society. In 1961, the leadership of both groups decided to merge into a single entity as Unitarian Universalists.

Our Mission

Our mission is to be an inclusive spiritual community which serves families and individuals as a sanctuary, a beacon of enlightenment, and a call to service.

Our primary objective is to sustain a humanizing community of concern in which deep, troubling questions may be fearlessly addressed, the mind freed, and the soul nourished. We strive to be a caring community, supportive of the individuals within, involved in the world without.

West Shore is a Unitarian Universalist Association member congregation. Along with more than 1000 other societies in the Association, we covenant to affirm and promote the Principles and Purposes of the UUA.

Principles and Purposes

We covenant to affirm and promote . . .

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
Justice, equity and compassion
in human relations

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to
spiritual growth in our congregations;

A free and responsible search
for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and the use of the
democratic process within our congregations
and in society at large;

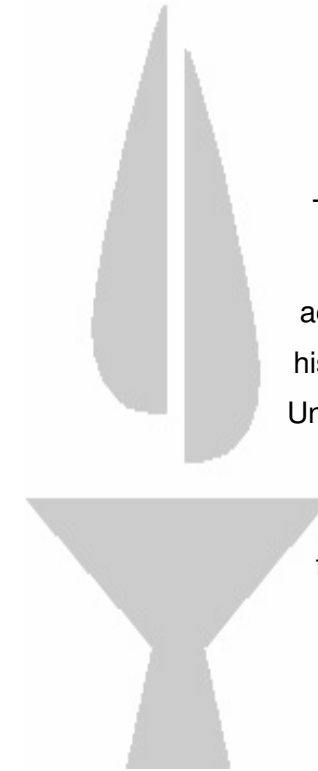
The goal of world community with peace, liberty,
and justice for all;

Respect for the interdependent web of
all existence of which we are a part.

ONE CHURCH  MANY PATHS
West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church

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History of Unitarian Universalism



The purpose of this
brochure is to
acquaint you with the
history and tradition of
Unitarian Universalism,
a voice of
liberal religion
for over 500 years!

ONE CHURCH  MANY PATHS
**WEST SHORE UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**

Unitarian & Universalist Philosophy & Beliefs

Members of Unitarian Universalist congregations stress individual freedom of belief and the free use of reason in religion. Unitarian Universalists are advocates of a united world community and support liberal social action with emphasis on equal rights for every individual to achieve fulfillment of life goals.

Is Unitarian Universalism a Christian faith?

While our historical roots are firmly planted in the Jewish and Christian traditions, Unitarian Universalism is a religion that keeps an open mind to the religious questions people have struggled with. We believe that personal experience, conscience and reason should be the final authorities in religion, and that in the end religious authority lies not in a book or person or institution, but in ourselves. We are a “non-creedal” religion: we do not ask anyone to subscribe to a creed. While some consider themselves liberal Christians in our churches, others find meaning in the texts of other sacred traditions, in literature, poetry and in the individual search for truth and meaning.

Our congregations are self-governing. Authority and responsibility are vested in the membership of the congregation. Worship is held regularly, the insights of the past and the present are shared with those who will create the future, service to the community is undertaken, and friendships are made.

Origins & Establishment of the Unitarian & Universalist Church

Historically, **Unitarians** believed in the oneness of God as opposed to the traditional Christian belief in the Trinity. Furthermore, they believed in the moral authority, but not the divinity, of Jesus Christ. Unitarians are characterized through history as free thinkers and dissenters, evolving their beliefs in the direction of rationalism and humanism. They are often referred to as heretics (the Greek word *heresy* means *choice*) Historically, Unitarians have denied the notion of the Trinity, and believed in one God. **Universalists** rejected the idea of a vengeful and punishing God, and instead, embraced the belief that all persons were capable of “salvation.” We need not be saved from God, but rather, from our own human selfishness, greed and anger.

The Unitarian Church was founded in Europe. In 1527, a man named Miguel Servet, geographer and editor, wrote several books questioning the validity of the Trinity and infant baptism. He was subsequently burned at the stake for heresy. Many in the Church disagreed with this action, and Servet’s views began to be more widespread in areas such as Poland and Transylvania where supporters of Servet’s thinking managed to gain religious tolerance from the ruling powers. A large number of Hungarian Unitarians embrace the principles of Rationalist Unitarianism, which today is taught at the John Sigismund Unitarian Academy.

In the United States, Unitarian and Universalist congregations have always shared these liberal religious beliefs. And as a matter of practical administration, in 1961 the Unitarians and Universalists joined together to form one national organization as Unitarian Universalists with headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts.

Notable Unitarians include William Ellery Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Joseph Priestley, Linus Pauling, Susan B. Anthony, Florence Nightingale, Charles Dickens, Frank Lloyd Wright, John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Ethan Allen, Paul Revere, Thomas Paine, Louisa May Alcott, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Schweitzer, Horace Mann, and many others who have attained exceptional achievements in academic, artistic, political, and business careers.

Spread of Unitarianism

Unitarianism as an organized church grew out of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century. The radical new Christian religious perspective took hold in the remote mountains of Transylvania in eastern Europe. Here, in 1568, during the reign of King John Sigismund, who became the first Unitarian monarch, for the first time in history, the edict of religious tolerance was declared.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Unitarianism appeared in several locations throughout Europe. Unitarianism traveled steadily westward from Poland and Hungary to Germany, Denmark, The Netherlands and Spain, crossing the channel to England, Scotland and Ireland.

As with other Protestant doctrines at variance with established Catholic Church beliefs, the Lutherans, Calvinists and other reformists were harshly treated. Persecution and repression continued throughout Europe and the British Isles through the end of the eighteenth century.