

# Classroom News

May 2022

## Monthly Theme Reflection

By: Ashley Cole

Hello everyone,

This month we explore the historical figures of Unitarian Universalism. How the work they have done, informed by their religious beliefs and practice of this tradition, can in itself be a source of Unitarian Universalist belief.

Those who have come before us are known as ancestors, 'ancestor' or 'ancestral' means belonging to or inherited from. There are some incredible ancestors of Unitarian Universalism. One place you might have heard some of their names is during the mystery buddies program. The code names used to disguise the identities of the participants are often the names of historic Unitarian Universalists. As people participate in the mystery buddies program they are also invited to learn more about the person whose name they are using. This is one way current Unitarian Universalists can appreciate the influence of others on this tradition.

Unitarian Universalist ancestors have transported this faith to new places and this month is an opportunity to explore who they were and how they continue to inform this tradition.

## May Theme - alternative UU Sources

Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from Unitarian Universalist history

### Head

**Story time** Have someone in your family read the attached reflection Ancestral Tree <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop3/tree> while imagining what the tree being described might look like. Share with your family any images that came up for you. Do you see yourself as a part of the tree? If so where on the tree were you?

**UU Ancestors** From the attached list of famous Unitarian Universalists, <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop2/186399.shtml>, select three you would like to learn more about and research them. What are some interesting facts you learned about them? Would you have guessed they were UU's?

### Heart

Colour in the attached drawing and reflect on the ways you feel connected to those who came before you. In what ways are we reminded of Unitarian Universalist ancestors in the programming, songs, services, etc. of today?

If you practice lighting a chalice, use these words  
We light this chalice to honour our past,  
for the founders and prophets of Unitarian Universalism  
who paved the way for our liberal religion in the world  
and also for the individuals  
who gave birth to our religious community here

### Hands

For further learning, here are some key facts about Unitarian Universalism: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop2/186402.shtml> Did you know this religion resulted from the merging of two, much older religions, both of which were originally Christian? And that merge began with the partnership between youth from both religions. Does this surprise you? What other facts surprised you?

**Tapestry of Faith** (<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry>) : **A Place of Wholeness**

(<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness>) : **A Program for Youth Exploring Their Own Unitarian Universalist Faith Journeys**

## Ancestral Tree

Part of A Place of Wholeness (<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness>)

By Greta Anderson (<https://www.uua.org/offices/people/greta-anderson>)

Have you ever thought of our faith as an ancestral tree? It can be awe-inspiring to see the numerous roots and branches that make up our religious family. The "roots" of the tree are the values we hold dear, such as reason, tolerance, and freedom, hope, faith and love.

These roots have brought forth many ancestors, carrying these values out into the world. Though they have passed before us, they are still somehow with the family, kept alive in memories and stories, or the values they passed on to us. This is the trunk, from which the tree gets its strength. It is what unites us, perhaps in name, but also those very stories, memories and values that endure.

Who are the ancestors who have supported this faith? Arius and Origen, Joseph Priestley, John Murray, Hosea Ballou, Olympia Brown, Louisa May Alcott, and Susan B. Anthony. There are other, more recent UUs, too, such as Adlai Stevens, May Sarton, Kurt Vonnegut, and Whitney Young. None of these ancestors asks us to be exactly like them. Rather, the tradition they represent offers us security, inspiration, and a place to start our faith journeys—or, if you will, our flight. You know many of the traditions our ancestors stood strong for: 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; and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The family tree of Unitarian Universalism was "watered" by various streams of thought and belief. Unitarianism holds that God is one. Universalism holds that everyone is "saved", not just a certain group. These are the two major streams of thought. But there are others. There are eastern and Pantheist traditions. These sources fed the writings of figures such as Emerson and Thoreau. More recently, there are neo-pagan streams that can awaken our senses to the natural world, and atheist streams, which can ground our thinking in rationality. All of our Sources keep the tradition alive and organic——ever growing, ever changing.

The UU community comprises the branches of the family tree, growing and changing to find the light, the multifaceted truth that we all seek.

On these branches are leaves, individual members of congregations. Each leaf is positioned at a unique place, to absorb the sunlight in his/her own way. These leaves give life to the tree even after they have fallen, nourishing the roots of our tradition with the reality of its members' truth-seeking, compassionate, justice-demanding, Nature-conscious faith.

The fruits of this tree are the writing and the music, the poetry, the conversations and the rituals that have developed as expressions of the tradition. The songs that we sing every Sunday, the lighting of a chalice, and the beautiful words we hear. The silence of our meditation. These are all fruits.

The fruits of this tree also include actions, such as the abolition movement or the work of Martha and Waitstill Sharp, who helped hundreds of Jews and other refugees escape Nazi persecution. It is also in the current "Standing on the Side of Love" campaign that is fighting oppression in all its forms, but especially oppression of immigrants and BGLT individuals and couples.

The congregation in which you find yourself is grounded, rooted in values and supported by a history of thoughtful, courageous, and unyielding people. It continues to grow and change, but will always be there to shelter and protect its members. You are the birds in the tree. You have taken in the fruits of the tree. Through music and stories and friendships and conversations and actions, you have absorbed the essence of the UU tradition, been nourished by it and what it has to give.

But the time will come for each of you to take flight. The tree and its fruits cannot tell you in what direction to fly. They can, however, give you hope, courage, sustenance, a place to look out and see the possibilities, and of course, a place to which you may always return home.

PREVIOUS: Taking It Home

(<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop3/167640.shtml>)

UP: Workshop 3: Roots and Wings

(<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop3>)

NEXT: Handout 1: Roots and Wings Interview Questions

(<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop3/167648.shtml>)

Download all of A Place of Wholeness (Word)

([https://www.uua.org/files/doc/p/placeofwholeness\\_column.doc](https://www.uua.org/files/doc/p/placeofwholeness_column.doc)) (PDF

([https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/p/placeofwholeness\\_column.pdf](https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/p/placeofwholeness_column.pdf)) ) to edit or print.

## About the Author

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# Handout 1: Famous Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists

Part of Building Bridges (<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges>)

James Luther Adams, John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Margot Adler, Amos Bronson Alcott, Louisa May Alcott, Horatio Alger, Jr., Steve Allen, Susan B. Anthony, Arius (256-336 CE), Roger Nash Baldwin, Adin Ballou, Hosea Ballou, P.T. Barnum, Bela Bartok, Clara Barton, Alexander Graham Bell, Henry Bergh, Tim Berners-Lee, Ray Bradbury, Andre Braugher, Antoinette Brown (Blackwell), Olympia Brown, Diahann Carroll, Alice Cary, Phoebe Cary, William Ellery Channing, Lydia Maria Child, e e cummings, Nathaniel Currier, Charles Darwin, George de Benneville, Charles Dickens, Dorothea Dix, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sophia Fahs, Fannie Farmer, Millard Fillmore, Robert Fulghum, Buckminster Fuller, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Gaskell, Horace Greeley, Edvard Grieg, Nina Grieg, Henry Hampton, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Samuel Hoar, Edith Holden, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., Julia Ward Howe, Thomas Starr King, Lewis Howard Latimer, Viola Liuzzo, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Horace Mann, Herman Melville, Maria Mitchell, Samuel F. B. Morse, John Murray, Isaac Newton, Florence Nightingale, Keith Olbermann, Theodore Parker, Linus Pauling, Beatrix Potter, Joseph Priestley, Christopher Reeve, Paul Revere, Malvina Reynolds, Ram Mohun Roy, Benjamin Rush, Albert Schweitzer, Pete Seeger, Michael Servetus, Rod Serling, Adlai Stevenson II, Lucy Stone, Emily Stowe, William Howard Taft, Henry David Thoreau, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Mary Augusta Ward, Josiah Wedgwood, Mary Wollstonecraft, Frank Lloyd Wright, N.C. Wyeth, Whitney M. Young, Jr.



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