

CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP  
COMING OF AGE GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS  
OVERVIEW

Coming of Age helps youth discern for themselves what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist, individually and as part of the larger faith community. It involves individual activities, family participation, and working with a mentor.

**PURPOSES:** Coming of Age is a way:

To encourage youth to explore what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist;

To help youth move into the adult role of identifying and acting on personal beliefs and values;

To recognize and publicly honor the movement of a youth from childhood to adolescence within the Unitarian Universalist tradition.

**THE CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP'S COMING OF AGE PROGRAM**

Coming of Age can be available to any youth. This particular program is designed for CLF families, but it can also be adapted by small groups and in other settings. The activities are written for one youth working with a mentor, but can be expanded for a group of youth.

The resources suggested are on the CLF web site directly or through links to other sites. Additional resources that can enhance the program are suggested but are not required.

The program provides a suggested outline of activities, but there is plenty of room for flexibility. The COA process can take place in seven weeks or seven months—seven years is almost certainly too long (although a full year would probably work just fine).

**OVERVIEW**

This overview includes several distinct parts.

**Part I: Exploring the meaning of Coming of Age**

**Part II. The program**

*UU Heritage*

*Leadership*

*Social Justice*

*Theology/Beliefs*

*Spiritual Practice*

*Vision Quest*

*Worship*

**Part III. Individual Statement regarding being a Unitarian Universalist.**

**Part IV. Celebration**

**Part V. Evaluation**

**EXPLORING THE MEANING OF COMING OF AGE**

It is important to begin the Coming of Age process with a conversation that invites parents, the youth and, ideally, the mentor, into clarity about what the program is for, and what each person's part in the process will be. You might wish to shape the conversation as follows:

*Centering* Light a chalice. Begin with these opening words (From Generation to Generation, #649 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)

In a house which becomes a home, one hands down and another takes up the heritage of mind and heart, laughter and tears, musings and deeds.

Love, like a carefully loaded ship, crosses the gulf between the generations.

Therefore we do not neglect the ceremonies of our passage: when we wed, when we die, and when we are blessed with a child;

When we depart and when we return; when we plant and when we harvest.

Let us bring up our children.

It is not the place of some official to hand to them their heritage.

If others impart to our children our knowledge and ideals, they will lose all of us that is wordless and full of wonder.

Let us build memories in our children, lest they drag out joyless lives, lest they allow treasures to be lost because they have not been given the keys.

We live, not by things, but by the meanings of things. It is needful to transmit the passwords from generation to generation. *Antoine de St.-Exupery*

### *Set the stage*

by asking questions of all parties such as:

What do you hope will come out of this process?

What are you afraid might happen in the process?

What do hope will be included as part of the process?

### *Goals for the program*

Listed below are some things that are generally goals of a COA program. After reading through them aloud, brainstorm additional goals of youth, parents and/or mentor.

In a Coming of Age program a young person generally will:

Discuss, reflect on, and clarify his or her personal religious beliefs as part of lifespan faith development.

Develop knowledge and appreciation of the wide diversity of belief within the Unitarian Universalist tradition.

Have opportunities for independent thinking, assuming responsibility, decision making and exploration of values.

Put faith into action in his or her own life and community.

Have recognized and celebrated the passage from childhood to adolescence.

### *Overview of the program*

The CLF Coming of Age Program consists of seven units, each of which provides the COA participant with the opportunity to explore some aspect of a mature religious life, including both beliefs and practices. The seven units are:

*UU Heritage*

*Leadership*

*Social Justice*

*Theology/Beliefs*

*Spiritual Practice*

*Vision Quest*

## *Worship*

The program will include the creation of a statement of belief and will conclude with worship and celebration planned by the COA participant.

### 5. Discussion of *program logistics*

*Ages:* Ages at which the program is offered vary from Grade 6 through Grade 12. The activities need to relate to the age and interests of the participants, and you may wish to discuss as a family what is the best age to undertake this program and why.

*Length and timing of the program* can range considerably. The curriculum for the program breaks in to seven pieces, but you may wish to devote more time to planning and carrying out some units than others..

*Mentors:* Mentors are adults who work with the COA participant throughout the process, inviting conversation, supporting exploration and providing the support of an adult with a perspective from outside the family. Ideally, the mentor would be a committed Unitarian Universalist with whom the youth feels comfortable. However, if a UU is not available, an adult who is open and non-judgmental, and who will encourage the youth to come to his or her own conclusion on matters of belief can be a good alternative. In considering mentors, the youth may wish to make a list of qualities that they are hoping for in a mentor, and perhaps a list of adults they would like to ask. Ideally, mentors would be available to meet in person, but it is possible to conduct a mentoring relationship over the phone and/or via e-mail. If a mentor from a local UU church or small group is not available, you may wish to consider members of the extended family, family friends or parents of friends. The mentor facilitates the learning and supports the mentee through the program. Ideally, in addition to helping the youth work through the various units, the mentor would also be available for general support and conversation, as well as some fun activities. It would be helpful for the mentor to do as many of the readings and review of online resources that are noted or specifically included as possible.

Safety procedures and practices are always a good idea, and might include:

- References for mentors, including their ability to work with youth and background in Unitarian Universalism;

- A policy that the youth and the mentor meet in areas where they may be seen by other people (versus in a room with a closed door);

- An opportunity for the parents to meet with the mentor, especially if the person is not well known to them;

- Contact information that is current, and reliable; and

- An understanding of what steps are to be taken if there is a threat of harassment or harm by or to any party.

If transportation is involved, legal requirements of driving and insurance must be considered. Destination and arrangements need to be clear and known to the family.

Guidelines need to be agreed upon when youth and mentors are interacting electronically. Consider this as similar to meeting in open areas, that is, visible to other people.

The guidelines for the mentor relationship need to be known to everyone involved in the program, and need to be documented and signed by the mentor and youth.

*Commitment:* Participants and mentors must have a commitment to the entire program. This means that the program planning includes consideration of time commitments and what schedule adaptations might be necessary to make room for other commitments.

If there is more than one youth participating, it would be helpful to have a person coordinate the overall program details.

*Closing:* After asking for final questions, you may wish to close with this reading:

The world of youth... the world of adulthood...  
A gap? Yes... but a gap which can be overcome.  
Youth envisions the possible, insists on freedom, seeks out play, hopes for improvement.  
Adulthood accepts limitation, insists on responsibility, requires work, foresees mishap.  
**THERE IS A GAP, BUT THIS GAP CAN BE OVERCOME**  
Youth lives in the present, trusts in the future, resents authority, laughs at change.  
Adulthood remembers the past, prepares for the future, upholds authority, strives for stability.  
**THERE IS A GAP, BUT THIS GAP CAN BE OVERCOME.**  
Youth rejoices in friendship, celebrates the spontaneous, finds exceptions to rules, sees the world through itself.  
Adulthood sets conditions upon relationship, evaluates impulse, establishes rules, sees the world beyond itself.  
**THERE IS A GAP, BUT THIS GAP CAN BE OVERCOME.**  
The world of youth... the world of adulthood...  
These worlds can touch, these worlds can share.  
Each is incomplete without the other.  
Together they create an emerging whole.... beginning with the family, continuing into community reaching outward to humanity and the home which is Earth.  
**THE GAP MUST BE RESPECTED—AND OVERCOME.** *Harold Rosen*

## **PROGRAM UNITS**

For background information on facets of a balanced youth program, you may want to visit the UUA's youth web page at <http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/online/6aspbal.htm#worship>. Another helpful resource is the pamphlet *Youth on Fire* by Kasey Melski, which can be found at <http://www.uua.org/pamphlet/3093.html>. Finally, in considering the overall goals of your Coming of Age program, you may wish to take a look at the vision statement of the UUA's Lifespan Faith Development curriculum at <http://www.uua.org/clf/re/mission.html>.

In this program plan, each component unit addresses the following:

- Brief definition of the unit
- The Unitarian Universalist Principle(s) and/or Source that relates to the unit
- Definition of the focus of the unit, and what is to be accomplished
- Activities for the unit
- Questions to consider for Statement of Beliefs
- Resources for the unit

The outline of the unit can serve as a curriculum, so that the COA program is simply a matter of completing the component parts. However, if you prefer, the units can merely serve as a guide as you design a program that is custom-made for your family or small group.

## **INDIVIDUAL STATEMENT OF BELIEFS AND ETHICS**

Over the course of the Coming of Age program, the participating youth will be asked to come up with a statement of his/her beliefs and ethical commitments. The component parts include questions designed to lead to the creation of pieces of this statement, the final version of which will be read as part of the final celebration.

## **CELEBRATION**

Coming of Age programs end with some form of recognition and celebration. Generally the youth share aloud the statement of belief created during the course of the program. Parents often speak some words about the young person and their changing place in the world as they enter adolescence. Other family members may also contribute words or music to the ceremony. The celebration is a time to bring all the component parts of the program together in some form that articulates what the participant has learned, both about others and him or herself. The participating youth will design the worship that concludes the program. It may include a written statement, a collage, a scrapbook of collected pictures, words, and mementos from program projects, a video or audiotape from your projects, and/or a demonstration, as well as music, silence, meditation, readings or other worship elements.

Although this process is designed for the participant youth to plan the ceremony which celebrates the end of the program, parents, mentors and others may wish to plan a party to follow. Inviting friends, extended family and, if possible the larger UU religious community into this ceremony and celebration is an important part of the process. Each family, group or congregation is different, but the goal is the same—to bring the program into the context of the larger faith community, to welcome the youth into the community in a new way.

## **EVALUATION**

At some point following the celebration, it is suggested that those involved in the original planning convene again to review how the program went. The focus would be on looking at:

- the strengths of the program as it was implemented—what went well—and
- areas that felt overlooked or ways to continue this kind of learning for the future.

In reality, all of us are coming of age throughout our lives, so some discussion of how one continues to explore and deepen religious understanding and ethical commitments would be an important part of the process.

## **RESOURCES**

*The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide*, Skinner House Books. This publication includes essays on our faith, heritage, worship, religious education, ministry and important dates in Unitarian Universalist history. Available from the UUA Bookstore ([www.uua.org/bookstore](http://www.uua.org/bookstore)) \$7.

*Singing the Living Tradition*, Beacon Press, 1993 Available from the UUA Bookstore ([www.uua.org/bookstore](http://www.uua.org/bookstore)).

Youth Office publication, *Coming of Age Resource* - \$10 Printable Version (Large Download as a PDF <http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/index.html>.) This packet contains the full outline of four successful Coming of Age programs from the 1990s. While slightly outdated, the collection serves as a good jumping-off point for creative COA teachers and DREs. People looking for additional resources about Coming-of-Age programs may also want to subscribe to an [email list for COA facilitators](mailto:lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/coa-l) <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/coa-l>

*Religion in Life: A Program of Study, Reflection and Action in Religious Living.* Available in the UUA Bookstore, \$8. This was originally designed to meet the requirements of the Religion in Life medal for Boy Scouts, but is not gender specific.

*Religion in Life: Girls.* Available in the UUA Bookstore, \$8. Designed to meet the requirements of the Girl Scout Emblem program, but is not gender specific.

On-line general references (with additional references throughout the program):

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and enter Coming of Age UU to see a number of approaches to programs and celebrations.

The UUA is just beginning (as of June, '05) to field test new COA resources, so you may wish to search the UUA website ([www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org)) for additional materials that may be available.

CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP  
UNIT ONE  
UU HERITAGE

**Why?** An important way of understanding who we are is to understand where we come from. Unitarian Universalism comes from a long and distinguished history of individuals and organizations that struggled to live out our values of open mindedness, equality and compassion.

**Unitarian Universalist Principle:** A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

**Unitarian Universalist Source:** Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish?**

Learn about those who have brought us here as Unitarian Universalists.  
Examine the ways UU values have been lived by committed individuals.  
Add your own outcomes.

**What do I do?**

Read a brief history of Unitarian Universalism. A good starting place is 100 Questions Non-Members Ask About Unitarian Universalists <http://www.uunashua.org/100quest.shtml>, Chapter 5.

Research a man or woman from Unitarian and/or Universalist history who speaks to you. You can find a huge number of short biographies of important Unitarians and/or Universalists at <http://www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/>, searchable by name or by area of interest. You can also find many short bios at <http://www.famousuus.com/>.

When your research is complete, make a presentation to your family and/or mentor. The presentation could take any of a variety of forms—a speech you read; a poster with pictures, a timeline and important facts or quotations; a dramatic presentation in which you dress up as your historical person and speak in their voice, a Powerpoint presentation with pictures and information from the Web; a collage...use your imagination.

**What do I reflect on for my statement of belief?**

What UU values did this person live out? Do you share those values?  
What spoke to you, impressed you or moved you about this person's life? How might that effect choices you make in your own life?  
Do you think any person could be a hero, or just a few specially gifted folks?  
If someone were reading about you after you died on a UU historical website, what would you like them to read?

**What are some additional resources for this component?**

UUA Website, history section <http://www.uua.org/aboutuu/history.html>  
Overview of UU history and additional links from Beacon Unitarian Church  
<http://www.beaconunitarian.org/uuhistory.html>  
UU Questions to Ponder (Available at [www.clfuu.org/re/coa](http://www.clfuu.org/re/coa))

CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP  
UNIT TWO  
LEADERSHIP

**Why?** Moving into adulthood means taking on leadership, owning our ability to make things happen in the world. Making things happen in the world requires a variety of important skills, including breaking a complicated process into smaller steps, figuring out what resources are needed and which are available, and working with other people to achieve your goal.

**Unitarian Universalist Principle:** The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish?**

Figure out what steps are needed to complete a significant project.

Experience the joys and hardships of leadership.

Build a sense of empowerment through action.

Add your own outcomes.

**What do I do?**

Come up with a project you can lead that will do something to make the world a better place. This project could be on behalf of an organization, such as the UU Service Committee or a local animal shelter, or it could be on behalf of individuals such as homeless or homebound people in your community. Your project should be large enough in scale to a) require more people than you to make it happen and b) require at least ten hours to organize and complete.

**Create a timeline for your project**—what steps need to happen when?

**Recruit participants for your project**—who will you need to work with you, what will they need to do, how will you invite them to participate and what will you do to thank them for their help?

**Identify resources needed for your project**—what stuff do you need to make it happen?

Where are you going to get this stuff? How are you going to pay for it?

**Clarify goals for your project**—who will benefit, what will the benefits be, and what will be different because of your efforts?

**How will you evaluate your project**—how will you know if you've succeeded?

Note: Carrying out this project is Unit 3, Social Justice.

**What do I reflect on for my statement of belief?**

What leaders do you admire? What makes them leaders?

Think about the ways you interact with people in different settings: home, school, with friends, etc. Do you see yourself as a leader in any of these settings? If not, would you like to?

What would you need to do differently to be more of a leader?

What three or four qualities do you think are important in a good leader?

**What are some additional resources for this component?**

Ways for youth to take on leadership in UU congregations

<http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/online/getinvolved.html#congregational>

Project ideas <http://www.nylc.org/projectexamples.cfm>

An extensive bibliography of books on youth leadership

<http://www.youthleadership.com/resources1.html>

The Youth Leadership Institute <http://www.yli.org/>

CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP  
UNIT THREE  
SOCIAL ACTION

**Why?** Unitarian Universalists believe that we have the power to make a difference in the world, and that human beings are most fulfilled—most fully human—when we are working for the greater good. Social action can take shape as *social service*, doing something immediate to make someone's life easier or happier; *social justice*, working to change the structures of society for the better; or *social advocacy*, speaking up and lobbying in solidarity with groups who are oppressed or ignored by society.

**Unitarian Universalist Principles:** Justice, equity and compassion in human relations. 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.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish?**

Complete a project that will do something to make the world a better place.  
Understand your capacity to change the world.  
Add your own outcomes.

**What do I do?**

Carry out the project that you designed in Unit 2.

Before you begin consider:

Why did I choose this particular project? What do I want to change about the world? Why?  
What does taking on this project say about what matters to me?  
What do you need to know/do to make sure that you are working *with* those you are serving rather than imposing your ideas of what someone else needs?  
Who do I hope to come into closer relationship with through this project?  
Who do I risk offending through this project? How can I minimize this risk?

After you are done reflect on:

What did I feel while doing the project?  
What did I feel when I was done?  
What changed about the world as a result of my actions? What changed about me?  
How, if at all, did my view of the world change through this project?  
Who did I come to know? How, if at all, did they change my point of view?  
Do I feel like I made a difference?  
Do I feel like I want to do more?

**What do I reflect on for my statement of belief?**

Do you feel hopeful about the future of the world? Do you feel hopeful about your ability to make the world a better place?  
Do you think that people, at heart, are basically loving and generous or greedy and self-serving?  
Who do you think people are obliged to serve and support—themselves? their families? their communities? their nation? a people? all living beings?

**What are some additional resources for this component?**

UUA Website, Social Justice Home Page <http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/>  
UU Service Committee <http://www.uusc.org/info/mission.html>  
CLF RE Listings, Ethics/Social Justice and look for your age  
[http://www.uua.org/clf/re/list\\_ethics.html](http://www.uua.org/clf/re/list_ethics.html)

“Types of Social Action” by Dan Harper, from *Quest* <http://www.uua.org/clf/quest/2003-07.html#REsources>

UUs for a Just Economic Community website <http://www.uujec.org/>

CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP  
UNIT FOUR  
THEOLOGY/BELIEFS

**Why?** Unitarian Universalists do not have a creed or a dogma—there is no one set thing that all UUs believe. This means that each of us is responsible for deciding for ourselves what we think are the best answers for life’s biggest questions. Our answers may change over time, but part of moving toward adulthood is to think about what answers are true for you at this time, rather than unquestioningly accepting the beliefs of family and friends.

**Unitarian Universalist Principles:** Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish?**

Find out some of the religious beliefs that those around you hold.

Explore your own religious beliefs.

Add your own outcomes.

**What do I do?**

Attend a worship service at a church, mosque, temple or other house of worship that is unfamiliar to you. After the service consider, if this were your only experience of religion, what (if anything) would you have been taught to believe about:

God

Jesus/Mohammed/Buddha/another religious leader

the nature of human beings

death

the way to live a good life

Interview a Unitarian Universalist. It’s OK to do this by phone or even e-mail, or you may want to interview a parent. Write down at least five questions for your interview beforehand. Some examples of possible questions include:

Do you believe in God? If so, what is this God like? If not, what is the largest thing that you believe in?

Do you think there are absolute rules about right and wrong behavior, or does it change depending on the situation?

Who is your most important religious teacher?

What do you think happens when we die?

Do you think people are basically good, bad, or somewhere in between?

Are there any guidelines you use, like the Ten Commandments or the UU seven principles, in making choices about your behavior?

What does “salvation” mean to you?

Do you pray? What does prayer mean to you?

Interview someone who is not a Unitarian Universalist whom you respect. This might be an adult such as a teacher, scout leader, coach, etc., or might be a friend your age. Ask them the same questions you asked the UU whom you interviewed.

**What do I reflect on for my statement of belief?**

Ask yourself the same questions you asked your interviewees.

**What are some additional resources for this component?**

CLF RE Listings [http://www.uua.org/clf/re/list\\_spiritual.html](http://www.uua.org/clf/re/list_spiritual.html)

From 100 Questions About Unitarian Universalism <http://www.uunashua.org/100quest.shtml>,  
Chapters 1, 2 and 3

A set of theological questions and answers from a conservative Christian point of view (*not UU*)  
[http://www.desiringgod.org/library/theological\\_qa\\_index.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/theological_qa_index.html)

A Unitarian sermon on theology

[http://www.uce.ca/ministry/sermon\\_archive/kiely/20000206standing.htm](http://www.uce.ca/ministry/sermon_archive/kiely/20000206standing.htm)

A values voting exercise (Available at [www.clfuu.org/re/coa](http://www.clfuu.org/re/coa))

A values survey (Available at [www.clfuu.org/re/coa](http://www.clfuu.org/re/coa))

An exercise in identifying strength of values (Available at [www.clfuu.org/re/coa](http://www.clfuu.org/re/coa))

Scenarios about ethical issues (Available at [www.clfuu.org/re/coa](http://www.clfuu.org/re/coa))

CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP  
UNIT FIVE  
SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

**Why?** Across time and around the world, people of different religions have developed different techniques for quieting the mind and coming to a still, centered, place – what some would call opening to the Spirit, others would call moving toward Enlightenment, and many others wouldn't care to name, but practice anyway. As Unitarian Universalists we are free to explore different spiritual practices in search of a discipline which will allow us to listen to the still, small voice within.

**Unitarian Universalist Principle:** Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish?**

Experience a spiritual practice.

Find a technique that helps you get centered when life is stressful.

Learn to listen to your interior voice.

Add your own outcomes.

**What do I do?**

For one week, spend at least 20 minutes each day in a spiritual practice. Possibilities include journaling, prayer, meditation, yoga, chanting, walking meditation, reflective reading of sacred texts (ancient or modern), gratitude journal, deep breathing, etc. Whatever the practice, it should provide the experience of centering, finding quiet, and listening to the voice within.

See resources below for suggestions about spiritual practices.

**What do I reflect on for my statement of belief?**

How do you feel before and after 20 minutes of spiritual practice? Would there be more of a difference if you continued a daily practice for months or years?

Do you believe that there is something inside of you that can be relied on to lead you to good choices if you learn to listen?

What brings you a sense of peace and well-being?

**What are some additional resources for this component?**

Walking meditation, especially labyrinth walks <http://www.uua.org/clf/kidtalk/2005-06/index.html> Nurturing Your Spirit section

Chanting <http://www.uua.org/clf/kidtalk/2005-05/index.html> Nurturing Your Spirit section

Meditation <http://www.susankramer.com/TeenMeditation.html>

<http://www.uua.org/clf/kidtalk/2005-04/index.html> Nurturing Your Spirit section

Gratitude <http://www.uua.org/clf/kidtalk/2005-03/index.html> Nurturing Your Spirit section

Examples of prayer in an online prayer circle

<http://www.beliefnet.com/prayer/commemoration.asp?milestoneTypeID=6&milestoneID=16440>

Yoga

[http://healing.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=healing&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fabout.beliefnet.com%2Findex%2Findex\\_1004.html](http://healing.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=healing&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fabout.beliefnet.com%2Findex%2Findex_1004.html) (Click on the animal pictures for yoga poses)

CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP  
UNIT SIX  
VISION QUEST

**Why?** In many tribal cultures it has been traditional for youth of a certain age to honor their movement toward adulthood by going on a vision quest or “walkabout.” The vision quest is an experience of independence and a time of complete openness. Without other people and their expectations around, the person on a vision quest seeks inside him/herself and in the natural world for signs, symbols and ideas to guide future life choices

**Unitarian Universalist Principle:** A free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish?**

Experience independence and complete responsibility for yourself.

Connect with inner self and world of nature.

Gain ideas about where you hope or imagine your life path will lead.

Find a symbol or totem that can be an ongoing source of strength, insight and identity.

Add your own outcomes.

**What do I do?**

COA participant, parents and mentor should work together to plan for the vision quest. The quest could be as intense as a day and overnight (or longer) fasting in the wilderness, or as simple as three hours spent alone in a city nature preserve or a large and quiet back yard. It could involve a solitary leg of a family backpacking trip or an afternoon spent alone as part of a camping trip with the mentor.

Important aspects of the vision quest include:

**A break with ordinary reality** – it should take place somewhere outside the participant’s usual sphere.

**Time spent alone** – at least 3-4 hours, so that there is enough time to get a real sense of solitude.

**Quiet** – no iPods or boom boxes, and preferably no street noise or other people in the vicinity.

This is a rare chance to listen for the still, small voice within, rather than the ongoing racket of society.

**Reflection** – having a journal and writing implement is strongly recommended. The participant should be in search, whether for signs or a totem that appears in nature or for a sense of clarity that arises from inside.

**Challenge** – whether through fasting, walking or simply the unfamiliar practice of solitude, a vision quest should have some sense of challenge (without being actually dangerous).

This is not an outdoor nap, it is a rite of passage into a demanding life stage.

**Return** – while a vision quest is about solitude and independence, it is important to understand that one leaves on a vision quest in order to return to the family or community, changed by the experience. Whether it be the official Coming of Age worship and celebration or simply a special family dinner, the vision quest should end with some form of welcome back.

**What do I reflect on for my statement of belief?**

What about you is special?

Who are you outside of your relationships with family and friends?

Do the ways family and friends see you accurately reflect who you are inside?

What unique gift do you have to give the world?

What animal or plant might serve as your totem – a symbol of your inner self?

**What are some additional resources for this component?**

A bibliography of non-fiction books on rites of passage

<http://www.pages.drexel.edu/~ags25/mnonfiction.htm>

A UU sermon on vision quest <http://www.jjnet.com/jjtalks/visionquest.pdf>

CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP  
UNIT SEVEN  
WORSHIP

**Why?** Ummm...because Unitarian Universalism is a religion, and worship is what religions do. Also, there needs to be a properly ceremonial way to wrap up this program. More seriously, worship is the way we shape words, silence, and music into a shared experience of meaning. Worship means “to shape things of worth.”

**Unitarian Universalist Source:** Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life.

**What is the focus? What do you want to accomplish?**

Explore how UUs shape worship, given that we do not have a set liturgy.

Create a worshipful celebration of the Coming of Age process.

Express to family and wider community insights gained through the Coming of Age program.

Add your own outcomes.

**What do I do?**

With the support of the mentor and/or parents, the COA participant should plan the worship celebration of the completion of the COA process. (If there is more than one participant, they should plan and celebrate together.)

The structure of the ceremony is up to the participant, but here are some elements you may wish to include:

**Chalice Lighting**

**Opening Words**

**Opening Song**

**Reading**

**Meditation and/or Time of Silence**

**Statement from Mentor**

**Statement(s) from Parent(s)**

**Symbolic Act of Passage** (Possibilities are limitless, but could include parents giving gift to participant, mentor giving gift to participant, rope linking parent(s) to COA participant is untied, participant gives gift to parents or others, community lays hands on participant, game of Red Rover in which participants bursts through a line of linked hands, light a new chalice belonging to (or made by) the participant from the flame of an old one, participant walks through a tunnel made by the arched arms of all present...you can get creative)

**Music** (Could be sung by all present, or performed by someone present, or be a recorded piece that is special to the participant or which says something about the process)

**Statement of Belief from Participant**

**Closing Song**

**Closing Words**

**Extinguishing**

**What do I reflect on for my statement of belief?**

Well, you'll be sharing your statement of belief as part of this ceremony, so now is the time to go through the various answers you've written down and try to turn it into a unified statement.

**What are some additional resources for this component?**

A fabulous searchable on-line resource with UU opening words, chalice lightings, meditations, closing words and more <http://www.uua.org/worshipweb/main.html>

General words on UU services and ceremonies from “100 Questions”

<http://www.uunashua.org/100quest.shtml> (Chapters 7 and 11)

A pagan coming of age ritual <http://www.crystalforest1.homestead.com/KIDScomingofage.html>

(Note, a Google search on “coming of age ritual” will turn up many additional pagan COA rituals, some for boys, some for girls)

*Singing the Living Tradition* (the UU hymnbook, available from the UUA bookstore at [www.uua.org/bookstore](http://www.uua.org/bookstore))

Brief pieces about Coming of Age in different religions

[http://www.beliefnet.com/index/index\\_10191.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/index/index_10191.html)

Three things about me form – what would you want said about you? (Available at [www.clfuu.org/re/coa](http://www.clfuu.org/re/coa))