

# Unitarian\*Universalism in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe

## *Angelica Archangelica*



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\* The asterisk used in this curriculum in Unitarian\*Universalism stands for “and/or” to include Unitarian, Universalist and Unitarian Universalist groups that are part of our international movement. The flower shape of the asterisk helps remind us that we are part of an ever-changing garden.

## Unitarian Universalism in Scandinavia & Eastern Europe: Angelica

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*Please note that if you are accessing The Garden of Unitarian\*Universalism from the Internet, the Small Group Worship Order of Service is a separate document and must be downloaded separately, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>*

## **Unitarian\*Universalism in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe: Preparing for this Unit**

This unit is divided into two sessions. Session 1 explores the history, context, beliefs and practices of Unitarian\*Universalists in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Session 2 is a Small Group Worship service in a covenant group format in honor of the Unitarians and Universalists of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

Facilitators should look over the entire unit to be prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the unit. Decide which session(s) or parts of a session to cover, which activities to do, and how long to spend on each part.

For each session, facilitators should make copies of the readings and accompanying questions and hand them out in advance of the meeting time, or ask group members to access the material online at <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>. This gives participants time to read and reflect on the material before sharing with the group.

The group or facilitator may choose one or more activities from the list under Harvesting (p. 19) to do after discussing the readings. These activities have been designed to honor other ways of learning, to create informal ways to make connections with one another and to add variety to the group meetings.

Some groups may prefer to cover this unit in one meeting to discuss the readings first and then moving on to participate in a Small Group Worship, depending on their time frame, how the class is set up (whether it is a weekly class, a workshop or a retreat) and the interests of the group. The group may include an additional Harvesting activity between the discussion and the Small Group Worship service, or after the Small Group Worship service, or at a separate meeting time. Some groups may prefer not to do the additional activities and just do the readings and accompanying questions for reflection and discussion. We have tried to allow for flexibility.

## Unitarian Universalism in Scandinavia & Eastern Europe

### I. History, Context, Beliefs and Practices

#### Preparing for Session 1

- \_\_\_ Make copies and hand out in advance the article, *A Faith, By Any Name, Would Smell as Sweet* (p. 5 and p. 15-16) and accompanying pre- and post-reading questions, or have members read the material online at <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- \_\_\_ Make at least one copy of each article about the five Scandinavian and Eastern European UU groups to give to individuals to read and summarize (p. 6 –14).
- \_\_\_ Make copies and hand out *The Tool Shed: References and Resources* (p. 20-22) in advance.
- \_\_\_ Choose, or have the group choose, in advance, one or more activities from *Harvesting: Additional Activities* (p. 19) to do after your discussion or Small Group Worship service. Prepare materials needed for the chosen activities.
- \_\_\_ Invite members to bring items from Scandinavia or Eastern Europe for display.
- \_\_\_ Arrive early to set up your room.
- \_\_\_ Set up a chalice. Have matches handy.
- \_\_\_ Bring a world map or globe on which to locate the countries being covered.
- \_\_\_ Display a bouquet or a photo of *Angelica Archangelica*.
- \_\_\_ Have Scandinavian or Eastern European music playing in the background or the music of Edvard Grieg. Grieg and his wife were Unitarians from Norway.
- \_\_\_ Look over the instructions for facilitating the session in order to be prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the session.

#### Facilitating Session 1

1. Welcome participants.
2. Chalice lighting: *We have gathered here to light the chalice with a flame that symbolizes freedom - of expression, faith and other individual liberties. Flame that brings light, helps us to see, and fends off the darkness. Flame that warms us up when it is cold, either outside or in our hearts. Let's have a moment of meditation. –Aki Pulli, Finland*
3. Check-In/Announcements: Give everyone in the room an opportunity to tell their names and a high or low point of their week.  
Make announcements about today's session. Choose an additional activity from *Harvesting* (p. 19) for next time, if appropriate.
4. Allow members to quickly and silently reread the article and look over their notes.
5. Ask members to share their answers to the exercise, *Tilling*, p. 5. Do they agree with and/or find any problems with the definitions of *religion* and *philosophy* given? How do they define religion?
6. Ask members to share what they learned about their chosen U\*U group.
7. Ask members how they define religion and philosophy and how they would categorize Unitarian\*Universalism (Hoeing, p. 15-16).
8. When discussion has wound down, extinguish the chalice: *Lai butu miers pasaule (Latvian) May peace prevail on earth.*
9. Gather for an *Additional Activity* from *Harvesting*, p. 19 (if your group decided to do so): designing chalice symbols, starting a “blog”, folk dancing, cooking or more.

## The Unitarian\*Universalists of Scandinavia & Eastern Europe

### Handout: *A Faith, By Any Name, Would Smell as Sweet*



#### Tilling

*Religion* is defined in one dictionary as the belief in and worship of a god, gods, or superhuman power, or any such system of belief and worship. Do you agree with this definition? Do you find any problems with this definition? How do you define *religion*?



#### Planting

Read the following introduction to the articles on the history, context, beliefs and practices of Unitarian\*Universalist groups from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. After reading the introduction, choose a country you would like to learn more about and read the accompanying article. Be prepared to summarize and share what you learn with the group. Please note that some articles are longer and more detailed due to availability of information.

### *A Faith, By Any Name, Would Smell as Sweet*

*Angelica archangelica*: to some it is a weed; others cherish it as a lovely flower and find its medicinal properties useful. Many enjoy its sweet perfume. Angelica can withstand adverse environments and thus grows well in Scandinavia and the cold climates of Eastern Europe. Unitarian\*Universalism in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe is like Angelica. It offers a fresh sweet fragrance to those for whom the State religion has grown stale and to those whose religious lives were suppressed. For U\*Us in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, our religion is powerful medicine, an antidote to religions that have offered them little meaning or comfort. But, of course, there are still those who don't consider Angelica a lovely plant to be cultivated in the garden. And there are some who don't consider Unitarian\*Universalism a religion though it does bring spiritual richness and meaning to the lives of those who call it their religion.

Unitarian\*Universalism in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe looks different in different countries. But U\*Us in those countries (with the exception of Latvia) all have one thing in common. They have all had to deal with, or are dealing with, getting their faith defined as a religion. Narrow definitions of religion have kept Unitarian\*Universalism in some of these countries from being considered anything but a philosophy or charity. In most of these countries, there are advantages to being a recognized religion. Unitarian\*Universalists seek this recognition and the legitimacy that comes with it. It's a difficult environment to live and grow in but like Angelica, Unitarian\*Universalism continues to seed, grow and, tended by loving hands, even thrive in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe despite the sometimes adverse conditions. In this unit you will read about U\*Uism in Russia, Latvia, Finland, Norway and Iceland. New groups have recently formed in Estonia and Croatia. You can learn about them by going to <http://www.icuu.net/news/index.html> and <http://free-zg.t-com.hr/uu-hr/indexen.htm>.

Though Unitarian\*Universalist groups and their faith may be called philosophies, charities or something else by their countries' governments, the ICUU and its member groups recognize them as co-religionists, brothers and sisters in a shared faith. They are welcomed flowers in our Garden.



(Chalice symbol used by Russian Unitarians, <http://www.uuottawa.com/world%20emblems.htm>)

### Unitarianism in Russia

Russia, in northern Asia, borders the Arctic Ocean between Europe and the North Pacific Ocean and is the largest country in the world. Christianity came to Russia in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in the form of Eastern Orthodoxy. Before the Russian Revolution of 1917, the main religion was Russian Orthodox. Following the Revolution and until the 1990s, Russia was a Marxist country where all religion was banned. Today Russia has nearly 9000 registered religious associations; over half of them are Russian Orthodox. Muslims make up the second largest group. Then, in descending order, are Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Evangelicals, Old Believers, Roman Catholics, Krishna, Buddhists, Jews and Unified Evangelical Lutherans ([www.russianembassy.org](http://www.russianembassy.org)). Unitarian Universalism is not considered a religion in Russia at this time but it does have a presence in Russia.

The Moscow Unitarian Advocates was founded in 1994. An American minister, Paul Sawyer, was then in Russia in a missionary role. The Reverend Sawyer managed to gather together Russians who had had any contact with Unitarian Universalists in the United States. It was quite an impressive number. He stayed for four months and met with the group several times (Hill, 2002). After he left, some group members left as well, but there remained those who held fast to the values of Unitarian Universalism and who were committed to building a community. Over time they have shared their thoughts, their ideas and their faith with trusted friends who hold similar values.

Some time after Sawyer's departure, a Canadian Unitarian couple came to work at the Anglo-American School of Moscow. They proved an inspiration to the fledgling Russian UU group, as did other Unitarian Universalists who came to Russia to visit or work for a time. Russian UU, Nina Nazarenko attended leadership training in Boston and in Klingburg, Germany in 1996 and that proved both stimulating and encouraging for the group.

Nina Nazarenko wrote in 2001,

"This is the time when people are searching for answers. People need each other more than ever. During the Communist time life was predictable. The main things, necessities, were provided, such as medical help, also work and a minimum salary. People did not know that life could be difficult. People want to think for themselves. Traditionally Russians are Orthodox Christians but [some] are not very inspired with this religious approach because it does not give them answers to their questions. Still people continue coming because they need support. Life outside is severe and frustrating, and when our small UU group comes together people feel different... People need each other. But for us there's no time. People don't have the education or the money to build a sustainable group."

Nina Nazarenko notes that the Russian Unitarians need books, worship materials, music, "maybe chalices because for Russians, symbols are very important. People, even though they don't consider themselves to be Russian Orthodox, wear crosses traditionally" (Nazarenko, 2001).

The Moscow Unitarian Advocates is a founding member of the ICUU. There are two congregations, one in Moscow and one in St. Petersburg. As of 2004, there are approximately 15

members, ages 16 to 50. They hold services twice a month. Most services are lay-led although some UU ministers from other countries have participated in the Guest Minister Project and have led services. Sermons are also sent by email to members. Unitarianism in Russia is not an official religion. Russian law requires a 15-year probation period for new religious organizations. The Unitarians in Russia hope to register first as a secular organization and after a year of “positive educational work, to apply for registration [as a religion]” ([www.iccu.net](http://www.iccu.net), 2004). Although they may at times feel discouraged, the Unitarians in Russia are a hardworking, dedicated group.



(Chalice designed by Scott Abbotts, USA, not an official symbol of Latvian Unitarians;  
<http://www.uua.org/CONG/chalices/>)

### **Unitarian Universalism in Latvia**

Latvia is situated across the Baltic Sea from Sweden, lying next to Estonia and Finland to the north, Lithuania to the south and bordered on the west by Belarus and Russia. For much of its history Latvia has been dominated by other countries and cultures, which has influenced the development of religion in Latvia.

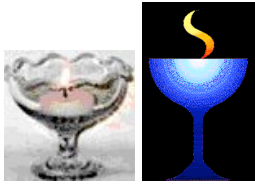
In ancient times, there were native religions in Latvia that viewed all of creation as “a harmonious entity, to be respected and honored” (Barlas, 2000). Christianity was introduced in the early 1200s and blended with some of the native beliefs. Like much of the rest of Europe, Catholicism came with conquering armies. The Protestant Reformation in Latvia started in Riga in 1521 and soon spread. Lutheranism in particular took hold, in part because of Swedish domination in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Since 1918, when Latvia became a free republic, the principle denominations were Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox. Latvia was occupied by the Nazis during WWII and taken over by the Soviet Union in 1944. During the years of Soviet occupation, religious freedoms were suppressed.

In 1991, Latvia reestablished its independence after the breakup of the Soviet Union and religious life returned. Latvia’s constitution provides for freedom of religion. There is no state religion. The main religions continue to be Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox. There are also smaller groups of Baptists, Old Believers, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Methodists, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hare Krishna, Mormons and, yes, a very small group of Unitarian Universalists. Much of the population of Latvia is not associated with any religious group (U.S. Dept. of State, 2002).

The government does not require the registration of religious groups; however, the 1995 Law on Religious Organizations gives religious groups certain rights and privileges when they register, such as status as a separate legal entity for owning property or other financial transactions, tax benefits for donors and more lenient rules for public gatherings (U.S. Dept of State, 2002).

According to the Law on Religious Organizations, any 10 citizens or permanent residents over the age of 18 may apply to register a church. Congregations, such as the Unitarian Universalists, functioning in the country for the first time that do not belong to a church association already registered must reregister each year for 10 years. A decision to register a church is made by the Minister of Justice (U.S. Dept of State, 2002).

Unitarian Universalism is recognized by the Latvian government. The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Latvia started in Riga in 1993. According to an article in the *Gazette Montreal* dated June 2, 2001, Maija Ozolina, a professional dancer in Riga, “was introduced to Unitarianism by a fellow dancer from New York. She pulled together a nucleus of Latvians, largely people active in the arts,” to form a UU fellowship (Shepard, 2001). The group consists of 15 to 20 people who meet regularly every week in an art school ([www.icuu.net](http://www.icuu.net)). They were able to send a representative to the ICUU general meeting in Prague in May 2003. Ms. Ozolina feels that “Unitarianism could help people in Latvia to open their minds” (Shepard, 2001).



(Chalice and chalice symbol of the Finnish Unitarians,  
<http://www.uuottawa.com/world%20emblems.htm>)

### **Unitarian Universalism in Finland**

Finland's location, nestled between Sweden and Russia, has played an important role in shaping its history and religious culture. Finland was part of the Swedish kingdom from the Middle Ages until 1809, when it became part of the Russian empire. It wasn't until 1917 that Finland gained its independence.

Originally the native peoples of Finland worshipped nature and ancestors. They developed rituals around the rhythms of nature, the hunt, ancestors and guardian spirits. Christianity arrived in Finland by the end of 1000 C.E. but it was not until the early 14<sup>th</sup> century that a majority of provinces were incorporated into the Catholic realm (Pulli, 2005). The Protestant Reformation reached Finland in the 1520s brought in part by Finnish scholar Mikael Agricola who studied in Germany under Martin Luther. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century western Finland was firmly Lutheran and in 1617, the state outlawed conversion to Catholicism.

The Greek Orthodox Church influenced the eastern part of Finland where it had taken root in the Middle Ages. Due to shifting borders with Sweden and a movement to convert the Orthodox population to Lutheranism, many Orthodox followers crossed over the border to Russia to practice their faith. Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia from 1809 to 1917, which strengthened the Orthodox Church in Finland.

Until the 1889 Act on Nonconformity, every Finn had to belong to either the Lutheran or the Orthodox church. The first law on religious freedom came into effect in 1923. It allowed individuals the right to belong to any religious denomination or none at all. A new law, which came into effect in 2004, makes it easier for people to leave the state church; they no longer have to give a month's notice nor do they need to deliver their letter of resignation in person.

Finland is predominantly Lutheran today but because of the strong individualistic nature of its culture, it is basically a secular society (Lee, 1996). The role of the state churches (Lutheran and Orthodox) in Finnish life is in marking key moments: baptism, marriage, burial and, for many adolescents, confirmation (<http://countrystudies.us/finland> 2004). Confirmation is required to get married in a state church and to be a godparent.

Membership fees to the two state churches are automatically deducted from a Finn's income tax. Fees average 1% to 2% of yearly income and go directly to the state churches. Census information for deducting this percentage is based on baptismal records. A number of Finns are leaving the state churches because of the automatic tax deduction. Other religious organizations unable to use the income tax system to collect fees, must ask for out of pocket money from their members. Although this is usually substantially less money than the automatic deduction taken by the state churches, most Finns are not in the habit of making this kind of out of pocket expenditure and hesitate to do so, making it difficult for small churches to grow (Pulli, 2005).

About 90% of the Finnish population considers itself Lutheran; about 1.5% belongs to the Orthodox Church. The Catholic Church was officially reinstated in 1929 and has about 8000 members today.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a number of Protestant churches established themselves in Finland including the Pentecostals (who number about 50,000), the Baptists, the Methodists, the Salvation Army, the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists. Their combined membership remains under 1% of the total population but they are growing. There are about 30 other registered religious communities in Finland; however, Unitarian Universalism is not among them because in order to be considered a religious community, Finnish law requires a creed. Unitarian Universalism in Finland is considered a "religious charity." Finnish UUs would like to have dual status as a religious community and a religious charity so that those UUs who are also members of a church such as the Lutheran Church, which doesn't recognize membership in more than one church, can be active in both religious groups.

There are five founders of the Suomen Unitariuniversalistinen Seura (the Finnish Unitarian Universalist Society). Each learned about Unitarianism quite separately from the others. Later they discovered one another (Pulli, 2005). Regular, informal meetings of Finnish UUs began in August 1996. Two founding members participated in ICUU-sponsored leadership training in Klingburg, Germany in November 1996, which led to the first Finnish UU worship service held on December 1, 1996 (Pulli, 2005).

There are currently about 25 active UUs in Finland and another 20 or so less active individuals. In Helsinki, regular meetings are held the first Sunday of each month in the Quakers' meeting room, a small studio close to the city center. Other, less regular meetings take place in members' homes; these include bimonthly informative meetings and interfaith meetings with liberal Muslims and others. There are also UUs meeting in the cities of Kuopio and Turku. In addition, the Finnish UUs have active email discussion groups. As in the United States, among the members there are UUs who are Christian, pagan, humanist and other persuasions. The UUs of Finland are very proud to identify themselves as a tolerant religion (Pulli, 2005).

The Finnish UU Society became a full member of the ICUU in 2003 and is also a member of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), an interfaith group of liberal religious organizations. The society has published two books in Finnish. The first, titled *Free Faith – Thoughts of Unitarian Universalists and Quakers*, contains articles on the history of Unitarian Universalism and on religious liberalism in general, Free Religious and Quaker principles, as well as personal ideas of faith by Finnish Unitarian Universalists ([www.netlife.fi/~nl02067/uu/](http://www.netlife.fi/~nl02067/uu/)). The most recent book is a translation of the Catechism of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church. They are currently working on translating Steve Edington's and John Sias's pamphlet, *100 Questions that Non-Members Ask about Unitarian Universalism* (Pulli, 2005).

Much to the delight of the Finnish Unitarians is the recent discovery of Unitarian texts translated into Finnish in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as texts of Finnish-born North American Unitarian ministers that served in mainly Finnish-speaking congregations. Plans are being made to publish these texts to serve as historical documentation of the continuity of the Finnish UU movement (Pulli, 2005).



(Designed by Steve Bridenbaugh, USA, not an official symbol of Norwegian Unitarians;  
<http://www.uua.org/CONG/chalices/>)

## Unitarianism in Norway

Norway sits at the top of the European continent with the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Sweden to the east and to the south across a strait, Denmark. Norway's nearness to Sweden and Denmark effected the establishment of the Lutheran church as its state church.

Religion in ancient Norway was based on nature worship and on Norse mythology. The conversion of Norway to Christianity, starting in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, occurred because of contact with Christian Europe through trade and Viking raids. Anglo-Saxon, German and Danish missionary activities also helped Christianity to gain a foothold in Norway ([www.emb-norway.ca](http://www.emb-norway.ca), n.d.). The conversion to Christianity in the form of Roman Catholicism "took 200 years and was marked by much bloodshed" (Kagda, 1995), but the last wooden idol remained until burned during a revival campaign in 1837. Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation came to Norway in the 1520s. The Lutheran church became the established state church of Norway in the late 1530s as part of the Kalmar Union with Denmark and Sweden.

Today the Evangelical Lutheran religion is the official State Church of Norway. Although there is no separation of church and state, a 1964 amendment to the Constitution gives all inhabitants the right to exercise their religion freely ([www.emb-norway.ca](http://www.emb-norway.ca), n.d.).

About 86% of the population is considered as belonging to the Church of Norway, but only about 10% attend church services or other church-related activities more than once a month. "Norwegian religious expression is largely private; whereas most individuals state that religion is important to them, this is not generally expressed through active religious participation in organized communities" ([www.emb-norway.ca](http://www.emb-norway.ca), n.d.).

About 8.7% of the population belongs to other religious communities, while 5.6% do not belong to any religious community at all. The largest religious and life-stance communities outside the Church of Norway are the Humanist Movement, represented by the Norwegian Humanist Association with close to 70,000 adult members and Islam with approximately 78,000 members. The Pentecostal Movement and the Roman Catholic Church have about 46,000 members each; the Evangelical-Lutheran Free Church around 21,000; the Jehovah's Witnesses over 14,000; and the Methodists almost 13,000. Religious groups with fewer numbers are Baptists, Buddhists, Jews, Greek Orthodox, Anglican Church, Hindus and others (Statistics Norway, 2004). As of 2004, Norwegian Unitarians number about 28 members ([www.e.unitarforbundet.org](http://www.e.unitarforbundet.org), n.d.). Unitarianism is not yet recognized by the government as a religion.

Currently there are two freethinking Unitarian movements in Norway, the Unitarian Association (10 members), created in May 2004, and some liberal Protestants within the Church of Norway (18 members). But Unitarianism isn't a new religion in Norway. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kristofer Janson learned of Unitarianism while in America where he came across the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and other American Unitarians, and established and led several congregations in Minnesota: The Nora UU Church in Hanska survives to this day. (See <http://mankatofellowship.org/nora/index.html>). He returned to Norway in 1895 and founded the first Unitarian church in Oslo. Janson also helped to establish a Danish Unitarian church. Edvard

Grieg, the composer, and his wife Nina Grieg were both Unitarians and Nina was very active in the Danish church after his death.

Our knowledge of organized Unitarianism in Norway comes mostly from writings by and about three people: Kristofer Janson (1841-1917), Hans Tambs Lyche (1859-1898), whose wife Mary Tambs Lyche, studied at a Unitarian seminary in her native USA, and Hermann Haugerud. They were the intellectual leaders of the Unitarian community in Norway at the time ([www.e.unitarforbundet.org](http://www.e.unitarforbundet.org), n.d.). When Janson quit as minister in 1898, Haugerud took over. He published a magazine called *The Unitarian* in 1906-1907. Apparently Haugerud did not have the personality necessary to keep the group going and by 1930, the census recorded only a small number of Unitarians about which almost nothing is known. But Unitarian beliefs have endured in Norway and have seeded themselves again in the form of the Unitarian Association (UA).

The Unitarian Association shares the faith of the Transylvanian Unitarians, “inspired by the never-ending reformation started by Francis David in the 16th Century and also by Szekler Sabbatarians...” or “spiritual Jews” of Transylvania. {Sabbatarianism originates from the 17th century in Transylvania. It is not Christian or Jewish, but a special mixture of the two (Thiel, 2004)}. The Unitarian Association recognizes non-Christian Unitarianism as part of the modern Unitarian family while adhering to the original Unitarian religion as it developed in Transylvania. They are in close association with the Unitarians in Transylvania ([www.e.unitarforbundet.org](http://www.e.unitarforbundet.org), n.d.). The basic theology of the Unitarian Association is:

God is one. God is spirit.

Jesus was a human, now dead, and is regarded as a great spiritual teacher.

The Bible is literature and has to be understood as such.

There is eternal life for everyone.

We all have to create our own understanding of God, nature and ourselves. No dogmas.

Faith and religion may change as part of our understanding of God, nature and ourselves.

([www.e.unitarforbundet.org](http://www.e.unitarforbundet.org), n.d.).

Although the Unitarian Association does not identify itself with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in the USA, it does affirm the seven UUA principles.

Members of the UA come together in their homes to celebrate their faith. “There is no fixed liturgy but normally the Unitarian chalice or Sabbath candles are lit and the service takes place during dinner, in this way re-living the communion celebrated by the first Christians” ([www.e.unitarforbundet.org](http://www.e.unitarforbundet.org), n.d.).

In addition to Christian holy days, UA members also observe Jewish holy days. In 2004 the UA held its first annual meeting where it elected its first pastor and established a publishing firm. The UA also manages two online discussion lists: one for Scandinavian Unitarians from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Norway; and one for members and friends of the Petrosani Unitarian Christian Church Diaspora. They maintain partnerships with the Béla Bartók Unitarian Church in Hungary and the Petrosani Unitarian Church in Romania and are an associate member group of the ICUU.

The Norwegian Unitarian Association applied for registration by the State in May 2004. Their application was rejected because Unitarianism is not a religion as understood by the Government. They protested this decision, arguing “that our Unitarianism is plain Christianity” (<http://www.icuu.net/news/>, 2004). In May 2005, the UA was able to register as a Unitarian free church in Oestfold county in Norway under a 1969 law concerning religious societies.



(Chalice design by Pacific Unitarian Church of Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, USA, not an official symbol of Icelandic Unitarians; <http://www.uua.org/CONG/chalices/>)

### **Unitarian Universalists of Iceland**

The island nation of Iceland lies in the North Atlantic Ocean just south of the Arctic Circle between Greenland and Norway. Iceland was settled by Vikings from Norway in 874 C.E. In 930 C.E., the settlers set up an elected government, the first such government in the world. In the year 1000 C.E., the citizens voted to accept Christianity (Roman Catholicism) as the national religion. Up until that time, people followed the Norse traditions. Christianity was introduced into Iceland through trading, Viking raids and new settlers.

Two hundred years of peace and freedom ended when powerful clans began battling for power in 1230. The Icelandic government asked Norway's king to help restore law and order and in 1262, Iceland lost its independence and became a colony of Norway. In 1380, when the royal family of Norway died out, Norway and its holdings fell under the control of Denmark. In the 1500s, the Protestant Reformation against the Catholic Church began in Europe. Denmark accepted the teachings of Martin Luther and, after much bloodshed, Iceland was forced to follow Denmark's lead, becoming a Lutheran country in 1550. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a long political battle for independence. By 1940 Denmark and Iceland had planned to discuss independence but Hitler had already invaded Denmark and so Iceland took over its own governing once again. In April 1944, in the midst of WWII, Icelanders voted to declare independence (Somervill, 2003).

Since 1550, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has been the state church of Iceland. There are other Lutheran groups in Iceland as well and together they make up about 96% of the population, although most Icelanders are not active churchgoers. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by Iceland's constitution, which also provides for government-collected taxes for church support. Taxes from people who do not belong to a church go to support the University of Iceland instead. There are many other smaller religious groups in Iceland, including Lutheran Free Churches, Catholics, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists and many more. Also growing in numbers is the Icelandic Ethical and Humanist Association (U.S. Dept. of State, 2003).

The Unitarian Universalists of Iceland are an unregistered religious group. No restrictions or requirements are placed on unregistered religious organizations, which have the same rights as other groups in society but they do not get taxed-based support. To become registered, a religious organization must, among other criteria, be well established within the country and have a core group of members who regularly practice the religion. The Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs handles applications for registration of religious organizations. The 1999 law provides for a three-member panel consisting of a theologian, a lawyer and a social scientist to determine the legitimacy of an application (U.S. Dept of State, 2003).

All registered religious organizations are required to submit an annual report to the Ministry describing the organization's operations over the past year. The law also states that the leader of a religious organization must be at least 25 years old and pay taxes in the country (U.S. Dept of State, 2003).

The present UU congregation in Iceland has "several dozen active members and a much larger group of sympathizers, people who would join immediately were [the UUs] registered with the state as a religious organization" ([www.icuu.net](http://www.icuu.net), 2004).

It is interesting to note that in the late 1800's, Icelandic immigrants brought a liberal Protestant tradition to the Canadian and U.S. northern prairies, which influenced the growth of Unitarianism in that region (<http://www.unitariancongregation.org/kelowna/iceland.htm>). There is a long tradition of cooperation between the Iceland State Church and the Icelandic Unitarians of Canada ([www.icuu.net](http://www.icuu.net), 2004).



## Hoeing

1. Share what you learned about a Scandinavian or Eastern European U\*U group with your study group.
2. Now read the following passage.

American Unitarian minister Fredric Muir defines religion as “a set of beliefs that gives meaning to your life.” The word religion comes from the Latin, *religare*, meaning to bind. The words *ligament* and *rely* come from the same Latin root. So, Muir points out, religion is a set of beliefs that binds your life together; it holds your life in place; it is something you can rely on to give meaning, purpose and direction to your life.

In answering the question, *Is Unitarian Universalism a religion?* Muir acknowledges that when looking for a religion, many people would like to see creeds, prayers, dogma and rituals, things associated with more traditional worship experiences. But even without these, Unitarian Universalism is still a religion. Everything we do as a religious people is about making meaning in life, about understanding the gap between what is and what could be. “We don't recognize a single person, scripture or creed as determining, sacred or essential to our way of religion. [But] Yes, we are a religion - the Unitarian Universalist way of religion whose theology is unitarian, its faith universalist, its worship creedless and its polity congregational. Like every religion, we have a unique way of ordering our lives together as a community [that gives direction and purpose to our lives]” (Muir, 1998).

The Reverend Peter J. Luton explains it this way, “Unitarian Universalism is a religious home that honors each person’s religious journey within the context of the interplay of human dignity and divine beneficence. We believe in religious freedom and the right and responsibility of each person to explore what he or she truly believes to be good and true and beautiful. Unitarian Universalism upholds the free and responsible search for truth and meaning and [we] will not be constrained in our faith by arbitrary and unchanging doctrines and dogmas” (Luton, n.d.). Unitarian Universalism is a religious home not a secular organization because it is a place where one explores the big religious questions, in community with others who are exploring the same questions.

3. What would you say to someone who says that UUism is not a religion?  
(Consider the definitions offered in the Order of Service for Small Group Worship – *Unitarian\*Universalists in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe*, which can be downloaded from <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>)
4. How is Unitarian\*Universalism a religious home for you?



### **Harvesting**

Has your group decided to do any of the *Additional Activities* from Harvesting (p. 19) following the discussion of the reading? If so, prepare any materials you might need.



## II. SMALL GROUP WORSHIP

### Preparing for Session 2

- \_\_\_ Make copies and hand out in advance the *Small Group Worship – Unitarian\*Universalists of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe* (p. 18), or have members read the material online at <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- \_\_\_ Download and copy the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship – *Unitarian\*Universalists of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe*, which is a separate file, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.
- \_\_\_ Choose, or have the group choose, in advance, one or more activities from *Harvesting: Additional Activities* (p. 19) to do after your Small Group Worship service, if appropriate. Prepare materials needed for the chosen activities.
- \_\_\_ Invite members to bring items from the Scandinavian and Eastern European countries represented to display at the Small Group Worship service.
- \_\_\_ Have a chalice ready for your small group worship service.
- \_\_\_ Look over the instructions for facilitating the session and the Order of Service so you are prepared and comfortable with the material and the flow of the session.

### Facilitating Session 2

Small Group Worship is designed to be a worshipful time for self-reflection and for connecting with one another. The Small Group Worship to honor Unitarian\*Universalists in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe is based on a covenant group format, which is now being used at many international U\*U meetings and conferences. (See Thandeka, 2002 in references). After creating the space and preparing the materials, simply follow the Order of Service.

### Space

- \_\_\_ Arrive early to set up your room. Create a worship space that is different from how the space usually looks.
- \_\_\_ Set up a chalice. Have matches handy.
- \_\_\_ Display a bouquet or photo of *Angelica Archangelica*.
- \_\_\_ Have music from Scandinavia or Eastern Europe playing in the background or music of Edvard Grieg. Grieg and his wife were Unitarians from Norway.

**Order of Service** If you haven't already, download, copy and have available the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship. It has been designed to be printed or photocopied front to back and folded. Read through it carefully so you can lead the service comfortably.

**Songs** If you are not familiar with a chosen hymn or don't have the music for it, feel free to substitute a different hymn that fits the theme of the service.

**Preliminaries** This is a time to make announcements and to ask for volunteers to help with the Small Group Worship tasks. If you will be following the group worship with one of the additional activities listed in *Harvesting* (p. 19), you may want to announce your agenda and what you need from the group.

**After the Service** If you haven't done so already, you may want to make plans to do one of the additional activities listed in this unit (See *Harvesting*, p. 19) following this Small Group Worship. There are many to choose from including blogging, designing chalice symbols, folk dancing, cooking and more.

**Handout: *Small Group Worship – Unitarian\*Universalists of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe***

After you have read the article, *A Faith, By Any Name, Would Smell as Sweet*, and shared information from the accompanying articles about individual UU groups in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, you are ready to gather in Small Group Worship.



***Small Group Worship***

Your facilitator will download and have ready the Order of Service for the Small Group Worship Service – *Unitarian\*Universalists of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe*, <http://www.icuu.net/resources/curriculum.html>.

Bring an item from one of the represented Scandinavian or Eastern European countries to display, if possible.

This Small Group Worship service is also based on a covenant group format that is now being used at many international U\*U meetings and conferences. (See Thandeka, 2002 in references). There is no article to accompany the Small Group Worship service, only an Order of Service, which is a separate file and will be downloaded and copied by the facilitator.

While participating in the Small Group Worship, listen deeply to the words of hymns, prayers and readings. Listen deeply to the words of others in your group as feelings and ideas are shared with one another.

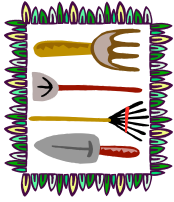




### Harvesting: *Additional Activities*

Below are activities that you might want to do later as a group or at home with friends or family.

1. Attend a Lutheran or Russian Orthodox service to get a feel for the dominant religions in the countries covered in this unit. Meet after the service to discuss some of the differences you think the U\*Us of these countries might have with these churches.
2. Cook and share foods from the countries covered in this unit. There are many great recipes available on the Internet including those at  
<http://www.galaxylink.com.hk/~john/food/cooking/scan/scan.htm>,  
<http://www.recipegoldmine.com/worldscand/scand.html>  
<http://www.simnet.is/gardarj/recipe.htm>  
[http://cookbook.rin.ru/cgi-bin/cookbook\\_e/national.pl?cuisine=30&nat=30](http://cookbook.rin.ru/cgi-bin/cookbook_e/national.pl?cuisine=30&nat=30)  
<http://www.ruscuisine.com/cooking-recipes/>
3. Learn some folkdances from Russia, Latvia, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Croatia or Estonia.
4. Take a look at some of the chalice symbols of UUs around the world at  
<http://www.uuottawa.com/world%20emblems.htm>. Also look at the chalice symbol of the UUs of Croatia at <http://free-zg.t-com.hr/uu-hr/indexen.htm>. Then try designing a chalice symbol for one of the U\*U groups covered in this unit. Consider what you learned about the group and what distinguishes it from other U\*U groups.
5. Learn more about Norwegian Unitarians Kristofer Janson and Nina Grieg in Don McEvoy's book, *Credo International: Voices of Religious Liberalism from Around the World*. (2003). (pp.161-168). Del Mar, CA: Humanity Press. *Credo International*. Available at [www.icuu.net](http://www.icuu.net).
6. We selected *Angelica Archangelica* to represent the Unitarian\*Universalists of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. If you were to symbolize each of the groups covered in this unit with a flower or tree, what plant would you assign to each group/country individually? Why?
7. The Internet has provided a wonderful way for members from some of the smaller UU groups to communicate with other UUs through discussion lines, email lists, blogs and websites; UUs in Sweden and many other countries have gotten sermons from a UU minister in Australia via email. The Church of the Larger Fellowship also keeps many isolated U\*Us informed and connected (<http://www.uua.org/clf/>). Make your own contribution to the global UU network. Start your own online discussion group or blog, or add links and information to your church's website to share what you've learned about international Unitarian\*Universalism with others in your congregation.
8. Many of the Unitarian\*Universalists groups covered in this unit translate into their native languages materials from other U\*U groups that they find particularly useful or meaningful. If you were asked what one thing you thought is most worth translating from materials in your U\*U tradition, what would you suggest? Why?
9. If members of your group have lived in, traveled to or had personal experience with any of the countries covered in this unit, set aside time when they can share what they know with the group.
10. Your own ideas.



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