



Embracing Social Class Inclusion: *A Worship Service*

UU Class Conversations

Creating beloved community as we explore class and dismantle classism through the lens of our UU Principles

Service Title: Why Talk about Class?

If you ask most people in the United States – and most UUs – about their class background, they will tell you that they are middle class. This is true whether the person is a medical doctor, an hourly worker barely getting by financially, a 30-something with multiple vacation homes, or an Ivy League graduate. Different class backgrounds, as is true of other core characteristics, give us different individual treasures but also different points of reference and points of view.

Class is often the elephant in the room for us as UUs when we try to create and sustain thriving, welcoming faith communities. Talking about class helps UUs get real about privilege and access by building on our faith community's ongoing diversity and anti-oppression work – from race to gender to sexual orientation – by exploring the little considered, and almost taboo, subject of class. This service infuses this exploration with our UU history, principles and spiritual traditions.



Chalice lightings

In these hard times, by Maureen Killoran

In these hard times, let us look first to the response of love. In the midst of challenge, may our chalice flame bear witness to the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. In the midst of uncertainty, may our chalice be a beacon of encouragement, that our values may guide our choices. Let us look first to the response of love.

OR

The Promise and The Practice: Chalice Lighting #2, by Adrian L. H. Graham

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/promise-and-practice-chalice-lighting-2>

We kindle a flame of power, illuminating the Holy in each of our faces.

We recognize in the flame a passionate commitment to our shared faith.

We are held and carried from day to day, week to week, in the shining of the light.

This flame is mine, as well as yours.

We are brought together on this day, called to growth, to expansion, within its glow.

What does your heart know while beholding this holy fire?

Opening Reading/Opening Words

Across a Great Divide, by the Rev. Alicia Roxanne Forde

it feels like We are eyeing one another across a great divide a divide i sometimes call:

"class, race, ethnocentricity, theological perspective and its implications for how
We practice,

how We live, how We be." if you be You and i be Me
if We speak truth in love – with love,
if We act, relate with integrity
if We unite our spirits...open, and aching, and whole, and wanting, and giving... then the work
We engage, the communities We create, the power of who We can be holds a great promise
a great hope
for us and our wider communities...
and this...matters.

Children's Story/Time for All Ages

Beautiful Hands by Barb Pitman

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/windows/session14/143879.shtml>

Responsive Reading

#639 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

OR

#609 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

OR

#576 in *Singing the Living Tradition*

If you use this reading, please add:

“If you are rich and I am poor,

It will not matter.”

Reading

Cabbagetown, by Rev. Karen Hutt

“My Mom said it would be a short drive to my cousin’s house, because she would take a shortcut through Cabbagetown, just outside Atlanta. As I looked out the window, searching for cabbages along the highway, I saw long row-homes on sandy red clay. I saw an old mill, and lots of old cars, and men milling about and women standing around them, and children playing in red dirt. That was the first time that I laid eyes on ‘these kind of people’ – and my curiosity kept my head pressed against the window in the back seat.

It was late, and my Dad was finishing up work at his office in Philadelphia, downtown – and a man came up to him on Broad Street, with tussled blond hair, and asked him if he could spare

some change. I was stunned that this man was asking *my* father, for money. I stared at him, very disappointed – and mostly disappointed at my father, as he gave him the loose change in his pocket that I had begged for, just an hour earlier. As the man walked away I stared at him curiously, wondering why *this* man was a beggar?

My great-grandfather, whose father was an enslaved person, liked to tell stories. One day he was telling us a story about something and he looked to all the adults in the room and said, ‘well, you know they ain’t nothing but poor white trash’ – and everybody chuckled, and I laughed hard along, even though I didn’t know what I was laughing at until years later in South Boston (Mass.). There, I was working with white youth living in public housing. One afternoon I went into the home of one of the kids who was having a tough time, and I wanted to meet Mom. His Mom welcomed me in and she directs me to sit down. I look down and see I am about to sit on the whole front seat of a Mustang, that was serving as a couch. I sat down very carefully, as if traveling in a foreign land, waiting for some social cues – if I should sit a certain way, in this chair, this couch that I had never seen... how could I guide my moves in this strange place I had landed?

These were the people I brushed up against, drove by, heard about, and wondered about. These were the *other* white people. These were the white people that I and everyone around me had nothing but disdain for. They were the butt of our jokes, as we watched *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Hee-Haw* as kids. Later, they morphed into *Honey Boo-Boo* and *Duck Dynasty*, and they became sort of pop-culture junk food for me and my friends as we drank craft beer at art openings. This was one group of people that my upper-middle class friends and I could all agree on: that we were better than them.

Sermon or Personal Reflections

For personal reflections two (2) congregants share their personal class stories, 400 words or so each

The following sermons are provided as possible inspiration for your sermon writer. We encourage writing original material, as this will be more tailored to and powerful for your congregation.

By Grace or By Works: Healing Across the Social Class Divide

<https://www.uuclassconversations.org/resources/worship-resources/>

Rev. Dr. Andy Burnette, Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation

What Would a Class-Inclusive Congregation Look Like?

<https://www.uuclassconversations.org/resources/worship-resources/>

Betsy Leonard-Wright, Annual Shinn Service, First Parish UU of Arlington, Mass.

Closing Reading/Closing Words

James I, adapted by Toni Vincent (SLT #732)

Be ye doers of the word, and not merely hearers, those who look into the perfect law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget, but doers who act.

May you be blessed in your doing.

May you find the way and the courage to realize the dream that still lives within you. Amen.

Blessed Be.

Our Time, from the U.N. Earth Charter

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

Hymns

#113 Where is our holy church

#125 From the crush of wealth and power

#134 Our world is one world

#148 Let freedom span both east and west

#1012 When I am Frightened

#1017 We are Building A New Way

#1018 Come and Go With Me

About UU Class Conversations

UU Class Conversations helps members of congregations and UU organizations explore class and classism through a Unitarian Universalist lens. Expanding on our faith's ongoing diversity and anti-oppression work, our interactive workshops, consultation and online resources build on UU principles to provide a better understanding of the role that social class plays in our lives and that of our congregations and organizations.

We help UU congregations, organizations and individuals from across the United States – from New Hampshire to Washington state and from Arizona to Michigan – discover the gifts they bring from their class background, bridge class differences, and begin to build more class-aware, class-inclusive faith communities.

For more information on UU Class Conversations or to schedule a webinar/workshop, please contact us at info@uuclassconversations.org.