



Transforming Times



The Journal of the
Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson

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CREDO

Credo
by Anne Jones,
Coming of Age Program 2005

There's a saying by Ralph Waldo Emerson that I really like. "Be yourself. No base imitator, but your best self. There is something which you can do better than another. Listen to the inward voice, and bravely obey that."

I think this saying portrays exactly what we have been learning in the Coming of Age program: how to be ourselves and make our own decisions about who we are and what we are going to do in our lives. Like Emerson says, we need to do what we really think is the right thing.

This goes for beliefs too. We need to believe in something that is true to ourselves and our own personal sense of right. This is another thing we have been working on in Coming of Age: deciding what we believe in, finding the path which is ours to follow. Personally, I don't know exactly what I believe right now, or exactly where I want to go. What I do know is that I have some core values I believe in that will never change: honesty, respect, responsibility, and love, to name a few. Even though I don't know precisely how my life is going to play out, I do know that Coming of Age has helped me on my way to becoming confident in my beliefs and myself. I know that as I move on and become an adult, I will use what I have learned and experienced to create a set of values and live a life that is right for me.

Times of difficulty and crisis are times when matters of belief and conviction are tested. Questions of ultimate concerns and ultimate values take on new urgency and meaning when things are hard. Hardship can bring about re-examination of even the most cherished beliefs. For some people, such a re-examination results in deeper commitment to deeply held beliefs. For others, the result can be a spiritual crisis.

Who am I? How do I discern what is true? What meaning does my life have? What will save me? What meaning will my death have?

These questions of life hold different answers when facing a lay-off or trying to figure out how to stretch a limited income further or living with a life-threatening illness or grieving the loss of a loved one.

The answers to the big questions of life form a credo – a statement of personal belief. At root, credo means, that to which I give my heart. During difficult times, a credo can be like an anchor in turbulent waters. During a spiritual crisis, the questions themselves can help to reorient your life.

However you are weathering these stormy times, your beliefs and values can be a source of comfort and sustenance. What will you give your heart to in times such as these?

Yours,
Diane

Transforming Times is organized around theological themes. Each theme plays a part in the development of a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The church's offerings are by no means limited to the themes. They do provide common ground for community conversation, a way to gain more meaning and depth. We want to hear many perspectives on each theme. You are invited to submit your original poetry, artwork, or short essays of 350 words or less. Be warned: seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!

September: Diversity	February: Justice
October: Hospitality	March: Discernment
November: Reflection	April: Credo
December: Contemplation	May: Ritual
January: Trust	June: Beauty

Credo
by Evan Keyes,
Coming of Age Program 2006

I believe that each day
the sun will rise and set.
something good and not so good will happen.
decisions will be made for better or worse
new ideas will be borne
mistakes will happen

I believe in
human kindness and compassion
respecting opinions other than my own
individual responsibility
laughter
beauty

I believe in the
helpfulness of friends
contributions to our society of other people
wisdom of our leaders
inherent worth of each person
potential of myself and others

I believe in the power of
music
the spoken word
the written word
silence

I believe in
the Golden Rule
a higher power whom I call God.

Agnes Paulsen



In this Coming of Age program, I have been shown new ways to look at and think about our world. I have developed my beliefs, through discussions and completely new experiences. We sojourners all completed a ropes course, which showed me that I could rely on myself more than I thought. We survived a camping trip that brought three feet of snow when we expected six inches, showing how well communities can work. I enjoyed these adventures, yes, but I think more importantly I learned from them. I learned to identify with what I believe. These are my more important beliefs.

I believe...

- People are good inside- people do not wake up each morning wanting to be mean; they wake up each morning wanting to have a good day.
- We as humans should take care of this planet which gives us life- we are a product of this earth; it deserves some respect.
- That I can affect the world- my fate is not pre-destined. I have choices to make. And those choices affect others.
- There is a sacredness of nature- there is something special to me about how nature just *is*. It is always there, has its own working system, and is completely independent.
- Creativity helps bring happiness- creativity is what spurs us to do something different with our lives. It makes life in general more enjoyable.
- People need companionship to be happy- I can enjoy most any activity if I enjoy it with others.
- Life always has a bright side- it is important to remember that life *is* good, that no matter how bad things are, there is something wonderful too.

There are still many things I do not know about myself, and some things I will never know. But that is the reason I want to be a part of this church. This community has been described as a church of seekers, and I would like to start my search for what is true and right to me.

To end, I would like to conclude with my favorite poem, which is not my favorite because it is humorous or really sad, but because it rings true with what I believe.

Empathy

By Amy Maddox

**He prayed- it wasn't my religion
He ate- it wasn't what I ate
He spoke- it wasn't my language
He dressed- it wasn't what I wore
He took my hand- it wasn't the color of my hand
But when he laughed- it was how I laughed
And when he cried it was how I cried**

Credo & Consensus

A few years ago Adult Faith Development offered a course with the above title challenging individuals to write their own answers to the big questions of life. Each person answered each of five questions and developed their own credo, or faith statement. As we went along, we also worked in table groups finding consensus among our answers. Below you'll find listed the commonality that we found. Here are the consensus statements developed by each group in response to the five questions.

The first question, **"Who am I?"** is the question about the nature of human beings.

- Humans are changing beings from within and without; having physical forms and are a part of a greater mystery.
- Humans are self-aware and have freedom of choice. Human behavior ranges on a spectrum from good to evil. Humans are part of the interconnected Universe.
- Human beings are part of the universal essence who have the ability to make choices and who are capable of changing the world. Humans are inherently worthy.
- Humans are conscious beings who have the ability to make choices that can be either good or evil.

The second question, **"How do I know what I know?"** is the question about authority.

- Human knowledge is gained from early socialization, education, interactions with others and our own intuition. Ultimately we have a choice in what we accept as truth.
- We're open to new ideas; we seek knowledge. We trust our intuition and our experience.
- Human knowledge comes from everywhere. Truth is revealed via experience, observation, intuition, perception, analysis, and meditation.
- Knowing is progressive and comes through our senses, our experiences, reason, imagination, and intuition.

The third question, **"Who or what is in charge?"** is the question about God or what has ultimate value.

- There is an ultimate Force that cannot be identified. However, each of us may choose to search for meaning within our own lives.
- An unknowable force or spirit that's present in everything is in charge.
- The energy of the Universe is a mysterious interconnectedness of which we are a part. We are a part of the creative energy of the Universe.
- Humans to a certain extent and in varying degrees are in charge, thus bearing responsibility for their power.

The fourth question, **"What is my purpose?"** is the question about the purpose of human life and sustained self-worth.

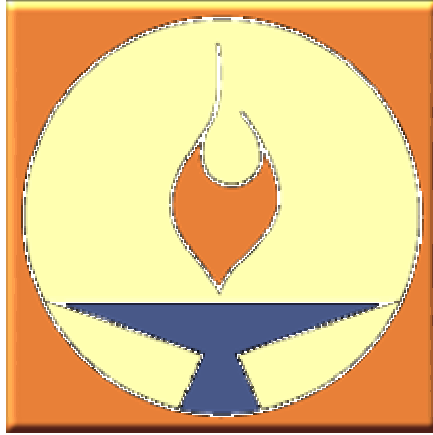
- My purpose in life is to foster relationships with others and to experience the wonders of nature, so as to bring about satisfaction, harmony, and happiness.
- Our purpose in life is to show up and to be a positive influence in our environment by the choices we make.
- Our search for meaning is influenced by the socialization of the society we were born into. However, we each have a choice of whether or not to accept our society's mythology.
- By allowing the Universal Force to flow through us, we use our creativity to bring love and joy to the human experience and all beings.

The fifth question, **"What does my death mean?"** is the question about what happens before my birth and after my death. It is the question about time.

- We don't know what our death means, it is a mystery. Our intuitive feeling is that our life force continues beyond the death of the physical body.
- My death means the end of this bodily experience. We have hopes and wishes and questions concerning this transition. My death will leave a void in those close to me and my spirit will live on in the memories of those who have known me.
- Death is final, but our spirit lives on.
- Death is our transformation from an electrical, chemical body to inert matter, which can nourish new life. Our influence lives on in the lives of others.

These are the responses of a few folks striving to clarify their own beliefs a few years ago. Do any of these answers fit for you? How would you respond to the questions? What do *you* believe? I hope many of you will take the opportunity this month to answer these questions (and others) for yourself, to consider issues of credo in worship, and to take up the shared conversation about our deepest beliefs in our Covenant Circle session.

Submitted by Lisa McDaniel-Hutchings



Credo
by Patrice Davison,
Coming of Age Program 2006

When I was first asked to write a credo I thought, oh great. I have to write a Theological paper about what I believe and why I want to join the church. But as time went on, I figured out that I didn't have to write a deeply thought out paper of my beliefs. The more important question was why I wanted to join the church. Frankly at first I was at a total loss. I've gone to the UU church since I was four, and wanting to join the church was sort of a given. I enjoy coming to church, and I've been through the coming of age program, so why wouldn't I join? My answer for that came to me through some discussions in class, and a sleepover with my friend.

The sleepover was right before my vision quest and my friend's mother wanted to know about where I was going. As I got into the details of WHERE and WHY I was going, she asked the ever difficult question, "So what religion are you?" I rambled on about a basic overview of our faith, the principles, etc. Then she asked, "So what do you guys do at church, pray?"

"Well," I explained. "Not really. See we let people believe whatever they want to believe, and since some people don't believe in god, we don't pray very much at church." I could tell she was shocked as she asked, "So do YOU believe in god?" I told her I didn't really, and that our church is accepting of that, as well as accepting in the belief of god. I think it was a lot for her to chew because the subject was soon changed.

What struck me was later that night when I was talking to just my friend about god. She said that she had started to not believe in god so much, but that she could never tell her family because she wasn't sure how they would react. I felt bad for her that she couldn't really tell people her beliefs because she wouldn't be accepted (and I don't think she would have been taken seriously either.) I knew that she would fit in to our church, but that her parents would probably never let her go.

That really makes me glad that I am a UU, and that I have the choice to do whatever I want to do, and that I can believe whatever I want to believe. I think a lot of people never get that kind of chance in their youth, and that if they did want to be a UU, they would have to wait until they are an adult. I am extremely grateful to be in this kind of a loving and welcoming community. I know that I don't have all those theological answers, and that my journey has just begun. That's why I didn't want to write a credo, because, I don't know what exactly I do believe in. But the fact that I don't know, is really the reason why I want to join the congregation.