

## Suggestions for Members (and Those Considering Membership)

# 1. *Be willing to be publicly identified as a Unitarian Universalist.* For example, be willing to tell your mother that you are a Unitarian Universalist; put a UU bumper sticker on your car; wear UU jewelry. When a neighbor or co-worker asks you what church you attend, respond with pride, the Unitarian Universalists of Gettysburg.

#2. *Be able to explain why you are a Unitarian Universalist.* I can imagine all kinds of explanations here: “I was brought up UU and found no reason to change.” “I took the belief-o-matic test on BeliefNet.Com and scored highest for Unitarian Universalism.” “I was brought up Catholic and my husband Jewish. UU is our compromise, and we upset both our families equally.” “I live on Stratton Street.”

#3. *Make Sunday morning attendance your default (for your kids, too).* You could call it a spiritual discipline. You could call it keeping faith with fellow members. You could call it a practice that unites the family.

#4. *Be an informed Unitarian Universalist .* Be conversant with our main ideas, with our history. Here are a few ideas and facts that come to mind: “We are noncreedal: we’re not required to believe alike.” “We are committed to the use of reason.” “We believe that all should be treated as persons of dignity and worth.” “Our concern is with this world, not whatever the next one turns out to be. Mother Earth has been good to us. Let’s not abuse her hospitality”

#5. *Generously provide financial support to your congregation.* But what, you ask, counts as generosity? That’s for each of us to decide, but keep in mind that for some of us \$100 a year is very generous, while for others of us, \$10,000 is not.

#6. *Participate in the life of the congregation.* Bring flowers, serve as a greeter or an usher, make coffee, sing in the choir, assist in the nursery, attend an adult education class, pick up trash, give a car-less person a ride to church, take soup to a shut-in, represent UUG at General Assembly, clean the toilets, help staff the rummage sale.

#7. *Treat others in the congregation with respect.* Nothing heroic, just common courtesy and common sense. Be understanding of others. Realize that there's more than one way to do things. Talk to people directly. Keep your promises. Do your share of the work. Don't take more than your share of the cookies.

#8. *Refrain from nonchurch activities that would embarrass this congregation.* In fact, our members do good things in our local community and in the wider world. Perhaps it would be better to state this affirmatively: *Behave so that your friends, neighbors, and coworkers, and those who hear or read of you, will say to themselves, "if I were looking for a church, I'd want to check out theirs."*

#9. We're not surprised when we're asked to help others, or to help the nation (by paying taxes or buying more stuff), or to help at our kids' school, or to help at church. But it should work both ways: *Be willing to ask for help if you need it.* We all need help from time to time. You don't need to be shy or embarrassed to share your problem or to ask for help. Ask other members; ask your ministers.

#10. *Don't make the decision to become a member (or to quit) hastily.* On the one hand, I want to make Unitarian Universalism widely available. There are many, many people out there who would be more spiritually and intellectually fulfilled by being part of our UU movement. On the other hand, I've seen too many people sign a UU congregation's membership book without having much of an idea of what they were getting themselves into, and then drifting away and dropping out.

#11. Being a UU isn't simply about having beliefs and values consistent with Unitarian Universalism, nor is it simply about having such beliefs and values and living your life in a way that reflects them, it is also about being part of a congregation, a religious community. Thus, since a successful congregation requires leadership, *Trust your leaders (but not blindly).*

#12. *Don't forget the big questions* – such as: “How does one find meaning in life?” “Is there room for God in your life?” and “Who or what is God, anyway?” “Death is an inevitable part of life – how do I feel about that?” “Why should I do what is morally right, even when it's inconvenient, or even when I could get away with something else?” “How do I live my faith, how do I put it into action?” “What's missing from our UU principles?” “Do I want my kids (grandkids) to become lifelong UUs?”

#13. If you've gotten this far and you're still on board, *now you're ready to spread the word, share the good news, invite others to join us*. But perhaps you're wondering what to say – here are three suggestions: (1) listen to the other person, (2) tell your own story, (3) share the handy slogan: thinking heads, helping hands, loving hearts.

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