

***Building Your Own Theology***

*Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston, VA*

*Fall 2014*

Rev. Dr. Barbara Coeyman  
Interim Minister

Information

Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays September 23, 30; October 7, 14  
7:00 – 9:00 pm

Meeting Place: UUCR Sanctuary

Materials:

Richard S. Gilbert. *Building Your Own Theology*. (2nd ed.) Boston: UUA, 2000  
(available from UUA bookstore; online [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org); follow links to bookstore)

Any notebooks, journaling materials, etc. you may wish to bring

Contact Information:

Barbara Coeyman  
cell 978-809-9750  
[minister@uureston.org](mailto:minister@uureston.org)

Participants in Course:

Outline of Course

Meeting One

- BC I A: Session One (Gilbert): Liberal Theology Defined
- BC I B: Session Two: Spiritual Autobiography

Meeting Two

- BC II A: Session Three: Liberal Religious Experience
- BC II B: Session Four: Human Nature
- BC II C: Session Five: Ultimacy

Meeting Three:

- BC III A: Session Six: Unitarian Universalist History
- BC III B: Session Seven: Ethics

Meeting Four:

- BC IV A: Session Eight: Making Meaning:
- BC IV B: Session Nine: Focusing Your Own Theology
- BC IV C: Session Ten: Creating Credo

Covenant, written September 2014 by BYOT class

suggestions

1. I agree to respect confidentiality. Anything of a personal nature that I hear in this room stays in this room. (If I want to underline confidentiality of my sharing, I will feel free to do so.)
2. Respecting the overall structure of class sessions, I will feel free to share, not bound by particular time limits.
3. I will engage in active listening while others are talking. This includes focussing on the speaker (note-taking recall points for later discussion permitted) and no cross-talking.

## A Spiritual Timeline

Assignment for Session II: September 30, (BC II A, II B)

Session I: Review materials from session I:

1. **I A: Liberal Theology** defined: p. xiv-xvi
2. **I B;** Continue to work on **spiritual timeline:** p. 4-6, 8-9.

Session II: Read ahead in preparation for Session II

1. **II: A:** Gilbert, p. 12 - 23:**Liberal Religious Experiences:** On these pages, Gilbert offers examples of what he calls 'peak,' 'valley,' and 'plateau' religious experiences. Pick one example for class and explain why you categorize it as either peak, valley, or plateau. Also, offer one example of your own of a religious experience and offer some description of its category, in your view.

2. **II: B:** Gilbert, p. 27 - 29: **Human Nature:** What is your basic understanding of human nature? That is, where do you start from in explaining or defining human behavior?

**3.II: C: Ultimacy:** Gilbert p. 35 - 37: Review, study, contemplate the theologies listed on Gilbert p. 35 - 38 and begin to formulate ideas for how your own personal theology is based on one (or more) of these 'standard' theologies.

Assignment for Session III: October 7 (BC III A, III B)

1. Continue to work on spiritual autobiography
2. Review Class 2 handout (p. 44-48): Personal Beliefs and Attitudes
3. **UU History:** Complete the UU history 'test' on p. 49 - 51: BC III A (p. 49-52; purple sheets). If you have time, complete this test first, before you read the essay 'Unitarian Universalist Origins,' by Mark Harris, to test your current knowledge of UU history. We will go over the 'test' class as a way of reviewing UU history. Bring questions, comments, etc. As you have time, an essay from the Universalist Herald by Richard Trudeau offers helpful explanation of the differences between Unitarian and Universalist spirituality.
4. **Ethics:** Read BC III B: "Ethics: p. 62-65: (green sheets) Think about what determines moral positions, for you, for society generally. We will consider some case studies in Session III.

## Assignment for Session IV: October 14 and/or October 21 (BC IV A, IV B)

1. Continue to work on spiritual timeline and shape into Credo statement. Accept this invitation to share with the class your Credo statement as you wish.

2. Read Gilbert, p. 70-72: **BC IV A: Meaning Making** (yellow sheets)

Is there meaning to life? Is there particular meaning to human life? How do you formulate meaning in life? Do you make meaning, or do you allow meaning to come to you? Complete worksheet 5: The Purpose in Life Test (p. 78-81)

3. Read Gilbert: p. 77, 91-92: **BC IV B: Focussing Your Own Theology** (orange sheets)

Make a statement about your own theology --- as you will have arrived at it my Session IV. Do James Fowler's stage of faith inform your own theological statements? How are you doing, creating your own Credo? You may want to refer to NPR's 'This I Believe' segments.

4. Complete worksheets p. 87-88: "Ways to Live;" p. 89: "Values Survey." How does this personal introspection add to your emerging Credo?

4. If you wish to discuss possibilities for summer worship service(s), please try to attend the class on October 21 with Rev. Barbara

5. Final comments, etc?