

Beyond the Mountain: Joining Hands with the People of Haiti

Workshop 1: The Work of UUSC

Total time: two hours

Theme: connections

Objectives

- Learn about the work of UUSC and the UUA and how their collaboration puts UU faith into action all over the world.
- Recognize what makes UUSC unique in its approach to humanitarian aid.
- Define and explore marginalization through personal experience.
- Witness the work of an “eye-to-eye partnership” that focuses on the needs of women.



Opening (5 minutes)

Materials needed

- Poster of the Seven Principles
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnal
- Optional: chalice, candle, and lighter

Preparation

If a poster of the Seven Principles is not available, write them on newsprint or use hymnals.

Description

If you choose, light a chalice. Share opening reading #462 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.¹

In your own words, say to participants: “Welcome to Beyond the Mountain: Joining Hands with the People of Haiti. During these five workshops, we will explore the human-rights work of the UUSC-UUA joint initiative in Haiti. We will learn more about Haiti’s history, culture, and recovery from the devastating 2010 earthquake. In every workshop, we’ll witness stories of hope and provide opportunities for you to contribute to the efforts of Haitian recovery.

“The justice issues in Haiti are extreme, but we recognize that Haiti is not alone in suffering from mass inequities. Here in our own community, we see some of these same issues reflected in daily life. Working for justice isn’t just about helping others — it is also about how we can help ourselves. After all, our UU faith asserts that what affects our neighbors affects us all in the interconnected web that is our universe. This belief follows directly from our seventh principle. In the next activity, we will look more closely at how the justice-making activities of UUSC and the UUA enable us to put our faith in action.”



Activity 1: Our Faith in Action (40 minutes)

Objectives

- Learn about the work of UUSC and the UUA and how their collaboration puts UU faith into action all over the world.
- Recognize what makes UUSC unique in its approach to humanitarian aid.

Materials needed

- “Who Is UUSC?” video (available on resource DVD or online)
- DVD player and television, or a computer with access to the Internet, projector, and screen to watch the video online
- Newsprint
- Markers (at least two different colors)
- Tape
- A poster of the Seven Principles

Preparation

Prepare one sheet of newsprint with the heading “The Work of UUSC.” Prepare another sheet with the heading “The Work of the UUA.” If a poster of the Seven Principles is not available, write them on newsprint.

Description

Part 1

Post the “The Work of the UUA” sheet. Ask the group to brainstorm faith in action or justice-making activities of the UUA.

Examples: Standing on the Side of Love’s campaigns for marriage equality and immigration rights, partnerships with the UU United Nations Office and the Holdeen Project, support for gay and lesbian individuals in Uganda, and sustainability issues. List these actions out on the newsprint, leaving space underneath for notes.

After you have a number of contributions, go back and ask participants what connections they see between the justice-making actions of the UUA and our principles. Note these answers on the newsprint in a different color marker. Point out that though the UUA has an international office and supports justice in other countries, much of the work is focused on domestic issues. Mention that the UUA does not work alone: it partners with affiliate organizations, like UUSC; other nonprofits, such as the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice; and, most importantly, with its member congregations.

Part 2

Tell group members that they will watch a video about UUSC. Ask them to make note of any new understandings they gain from the video — either programs sponsored by UUSC, UUSC’s philosophy, or how UUSC goes about doing its work. You will discuss these afterwards.

Show the 10-minute video.

Ask the group this question: “What strikes you as significant about the work of UUSC — philosophy, practice, and programs?” On the sheet of newsprint labeled “The Work of UUSC,” list individuals’ answers, leaving room between items on the list.

After you have a number of contributions, go back and ask participants what connections they see between the justice-making actions of UUSC and our principles. Note these answers on the newsprint in a different color marker. Point out that though UUSC does work for justice in the United States, a great deal of its work is with partners in other countries.

The Haiti initiative is a joint effort between the UUA and UUSC to support Haitians in creating the world *they, the Haitians, dream*

¹ Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: UUA Publications, 1993).

about. The UUA-UUSC partnership works because the two organizations have the same goals and hold similar values. Both are great ways that UU members put their faith in action.

UUSC represents this initiative on the ground through its work with partner organizations in Haiti. These partnerships work because the organizations have similar values. After all, our UU values — as participants have noted from our principles — are not ours alone. People all over the world value connection, freedom, and respect for each and every person.

Activity 2: Connecting on the Margins (30 minutes)

Objective

Define and explore marginalization through personal experience.

Materials needed

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Tape

Description

Part 1 (10 minutes)

Invite participants to think of a time they felt overlooked, ignored, or disempowered by society or their community — one they are comfortable sharing. Acknowledge that this might be difficult for some. If anyone is having trouble, suggest they think of a time they had an opinion that was in the minority. If someone is still having trouble, suggest they reflect upon what it might mean that they cannot recall an experience of marginalization.

After one minute, instruct participants to find a partner. Each partner will have two minutes to share the experience and how it made them feel. After two minutes, announce that pairs should switch so the other partner can share. When two minutes are up, instruct each pair to agree upon one word that describes both of their experiences. Ask each team to share their words and list them on the newsprint.

Discuss the list, looking for common themes and repeated words. Say to the group that one way they could understand the experiences they shared is what it feels like to be marginalized. Work with the group to take the words on newsprint and shape them into a definition of marginalization. It does not need to be official, as long as participants understand the concept of marginalization. However, the following dictionary definitions may be useful in guiding this activity: “to relegate or confine to a lower or outer limit or edge, as of social standing” (*American Heritage Dictionary*) and “to make feel isolated and unimportant” (*Collins English Dictionary*).

Make sure everyone understands what is meant by a “marginalized community.”

Part 2 (20 minutes)

Make the following points:

- Marginalized people have less power to access the resources they need to survive and thrive.
- Whole communities of people can be marginalized.
- People are often marginalized not because of something

they did, but because they hold a particular identity. Divide the group into two teams. Give each team newsprint and ask them to go to different sides of the room.

Ask one team to brainstorm a list of communities that are marginalized in the United States or your area because of an identity they hold or are perceived to hold.

Ask the other team to imagine which Haitian communities might be marginalized because of identities they hold or are perceived to hold, based on the team’s knowledge of the country. (Say that you know the lists will not be exhaustive.) Give this part of the activity five minutes.

Bring the group together and ask each team to present their list.

Compare the two lists. Allow the teams to add to their lists if they see a community on the other list that they think belongs on theirs, too. Circle communities on both lists. Ask, “Do you think some of the experiences of the circled groups will be the same in Haiti as they are here? In what ways? How might they be different?”

Say, in your own words: “We know from the stories we shared that all of us have felt what it is like to be marginalized, isolated, and not included. We have all at times felt powerless and have had to struggle to make our voices heard. UUSC recognizes that communities on the margins are in even greater danger of not having access to resources during times of crisis. Therefore, UUSC’s work in Haiti focuses on supporting marginalized communities as they identify and work toward getting their needs to survive and thrive met. One of these communities is women. In the next activity, we will meet one of UUSC’s partners in Haiti that works in solidarity with women.”

Activity 3: Spotlight on Partners — KOFIV (40 minutes)



Objective

Witness the work of an eye-to-eye partnership that focuses on the needs of women.

Materials needed

- A computer with Internet access, projector, and screen or a television and UUSC’s *Beyond the Mountain* DVD.

- Jewelry-making supplies (see “Preparation” below), as follows: For a beaded bangle, you’ll need wire or twine and beads in many colors (black, red, blue, white, purple, green, silver, and gold), shapes, and sizes. For a cuff bracelet, you’ll need felt or another fabric. Consider using denim from old jeans or leather from old belts. You’ll need fabric markers, small mosaic and mirror tiles, swatches of fabric or small felt pieces in many colors (black, red, blue, white, purple, green, silver, and gold), fabric glue, and other materials.

Preparation

The supplies you provide will depend on the type of bracelet you want participants to make. Cuff bracelets can be made with bands of leather, denim, or other stiff fabric, and they leave the maximum room for decorating. You will need large snaps, screwdrivers, and a good leather or fabric glue, as well as fabric markers and decorations. Instructions for making cuff bracelets are available online: eHow instructions on leather cuff, eHow instructions on cuffs made from various materials, and a YouTube video on making cuffs from old belts using Velcro instead of snaps.

Also, be sure to test your equipment for accessing the video about the Commission for Women Victims for Victims (known by its Haitian acronym KOFVIV).

Description

Part 1 (20 minutes)

Remind participants that UUSC works through eye-to-eye partnerships. Ask the group to help you unpack what this means. Ask, “Why do you think this program is named Joining Hands with the People of Haiti?” Make sure that the group understands that UUSC seeks partnerships with grassroots organizations comprised of local people who decide for themselves what is best for their community. The local organization communicates the kind of support they need and UUSC communicates how it can best give such support. It is a collaborative model of working *with* the people of Haiti, not *for* the people of Haiti.

Go to the video “KOFVIV,” available online as part of the Haiti Curriculum: Beyond the Mountain playlist at youtube.com/uusc4all or on UUSC’s *Beyond the Mountain* DVD. Say, in your own words: “In every workshop, we will meet one of UUSC’s partners in Haiti. Remember the marginalized groups we discussed in the previous activity? Each of UUSC’s partners is seeking justice for at least one marginalized community. One group whose vulnerability has increased since the earthquake is women. Today, you will hear from a partner that supports women.”

Watch the short video at the above link.

Ask the following questions one at a time, allowing several minutes for each to be answered:

- How is KOFVIV working to help women meet their needs and recover from the effects of the earthquake?
- KOFVIV is a Haitian acronym for the Commission of Women Victims for Victims. Why do you think they have been successful in getting women to speak out about gender-based violence?
- What inspired you about the work of KOFVIV?

Make sure the following points are made:

- KOFVIV was started by women to help women.
- KOFVIV works with women in the camps for displaced people. These camps were established to house people displaced by the earthquake. The population living in the camps has decreased, but more than one year later, there are still about one million people living there.
- KOFVIV works primarily through agents. Agents work in specific camps and get to know the families living there. KOFVIV provides training and support for dozens of agents all across Port-au-Prince.
- Women in the camps have unique issues. Gender-based violence, including rape, is a major problem in the camps. UUSC works with KOFVIV to help women get access to medical care and legal advice.
- Many young women, without a source of income and in need of protection, have resorted to prostitution — either by force or choice. Some victims of gender-based violence see prostitution as their only recourse. KOFVIV, with the support of UUSC, has developed a program to train these women in new skills, including the jewelry and art making you saw in the video.
- These women are also working to make the camps safer through educating communities, working with the police, installing better lighting, and recruiting male allies. As a marginalized community, they often cannot bring about change through official means. Instead, they work together to find ways to build relationships that can help bring about the changes needed.

Invite any other reflections.

Part 2 (20 minutes)

In your own words, say the following: “The women of KOFVIV have discovered that working together makes them stronger and more hopeful about their future. Our next activity is an experience in working together. You are invited to partner with one or two others to use the jewelry-making supplies to create bracelets that reflect the spirit of the women of KOFVIV. Different colors of beads or felt or different patterns of swatches represent different aspects of the women’s spirits. For example, black could represent determination, gold could represent the hope that keeps them afloat, and purple could represent their strength. You might also use the colors of the Haitian flag: red, blue, and white. When you’re finished, you may wear the bracelets yourselves or give the bracelets to important women in your lives. While you’re making the bracelets, you may want to share stories of courageous women with their partners.”

Closing (5 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: chalice, candle, and candle snuffer
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnal

Description

If applicable, extinguish the chalice. Share closing reading #463 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.²

² Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: UUA Publications, 1993).



Alternate activities

Children's activity (60 minutes)

Objectives

- Explore marginalization by reflecting on one's own experience.
- Understand how UUSC relates to partners.

Materials

- Instructions for role plays (see description below)
- Assorted props
- UUSC general fact sheet

Preparation

The role play will be more interesting if you use props. For the first role play, props could include plates and photographs of food cut out from magazines. If you cut out food photos, include pictures of pork. The second role play could use tools and the photos of food.

Description

This activity is a way to help elementary-age children and junior-high youth understand the work of UUSC. Part 1 allows participants to discuss what it feels like to be marginalized. Part 2 asks children to role-play different ways of helping others.

Part 1

Brainstorm with children about what Unitarian Universalists believe about how we should treat each other. If there is a poster of the Seven Principles nearby (adult or children's version), reference it. The first principle, in the children's version, says, "We believe that each and every person is important." Use this or any comments from the brainstorm that speak to the Unitarian Universalist value of inclusion to discuss marginalization.

In your own words, say the following: "As UU people of faith, we do not believe it is okay to exclude people from activities because of their gender, race, ability, age, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, or any other identity people hold. Can you remember a time that someone ignored you, would not play with you, would not let you join in activities, or said mean things to you because of their identity? Share what happened and how you felt. You don't have to share if you are not comfortable doing so — it is always okay to pass."

Part 2

In your own words, say the following: "Sometimes people are denied opportunities because of their identity — their race, gender, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, or other identity. This is injustice. As Unitarian Universalists, we do justice work because we believe we have a responsibility to create a more just world. What examples of justice work have you seen or heard about our congregation doing?" Take a few examples.

Continue: "Another way we work for justice is by supporting the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). Some of you have helped UUSC by donating to Guest at Your Table. UUSC puts our UU faith in action all over the world by supporting people who cannot get access to what they need to survive, particularly those who are shut out because of their identity."

Invite participants to take part in role plays to illustrate how this works. Use the examples below or create your own.

Role Play 1

You'll need five volunteers for the following roles:

- Two Students
- A Server
- A New Student with visual impairment
- A Helper

Give all roles their instructions, reading it for them if needed.

Instructions for Students

One stands in front of the New Student and one stands behind. They enter the lunchroom, get in line, tell the server what they want for lunch, and go sit down.

Instructions for Server

Serve each child food from the steam table. Move the line along quickly.

Instructions for New Student

You are visually impaired. It is your first day at school. You are in line in the lunchroom. You can follow the other children in line to find your tray, but you do not know what your food choices are. You are Jewish and cannot eat pork. You are not sure what to do.

Instructions for Helper

You see that the New Student needs help. You rush over, take the person's tray, and tell the server to give the New Student the same things you are eating.

After the role play, ask the New Student how this felt. Ask the group if they can suggest better ways to make sure the New Student gets the lunch they want. They should include either the Server or the Helper giving the options and letting them choose. Role-play these suggestions.

After a successful role play, tell the group that this is how UUSC works: they meet with people who are working for justice and ask the following questions: What do you want? What do you need? How can we help? UUSC supports the needs of children and youth; women; people living in poverty; gay, lesbian, and bisexual people; the differently abled; and racial and ethnic minorities.

Role Play 2

You need volunteers for the following roles:

- A few Orphans
- A pair of Siblings
- An Aid Worker
- A few Orphanage Workers
- Volunteers
- Several Partners

Give all roles their instructions, reading it for them if needed.

Instructions for Orphans

There has been an earthquake, and your parents have died. You are all alone, sad, hungry, and scared.

Instructions for Siblings

There has been an earthquake, and your parents have died. You are all alone, except for your sister/brother. You are sad, hungry, and scared.

Instructions for Aid Worker

You arrive to help. You have resources: money, food, supplies, and Volunteers who are willing to help when notified. Do your best to help.

Instructions for Orphanage Workers

Your country has suffered an earthquake. Your homes were destroyed. You are sad, hungry, and scared. Despite this, you want to help the children. Start an orphanage with others in your group. Work with the Aid Worker and Volunteers to fill other needs.

Instructions for Volunteers

When the Aid Worker notifies you, you go help.

Role-play the situation, starting with only the children and adults at first; send the Aid Worker in after a couple minutes. Aim for a role play that demonstrates children and adults deciding what they need and working with the Aid Worker and Volunteers to achieve their goals. Do not forget that, in addition to food, everyone will need shelter and a feeling of security (or less fear). Keep the role play going until everyone realizes how best to work together to fulfill the needs of the people who experienced the earthquake.

Variation on Role Play 2 for older participants

Use these instructions for older participants to first demonstrate a way of helping others that is not consistent with the UUSC's work.

Instructions for Orphans

There has been an earthquake, and your parents have died. You are all alone, sad, hungry, and scared.

Instructions for Siblings

There has been an earthquake, and your parents have died. You are all alone, except for your sister/brother. You are sad, hungry, and scared.

Instructions for Aid Worker

You arrive to help. You have resources: money, food, supplies, and Volunteers who are willing to help when notified. You are very experienced, and you feel you know what is best for this community. No one gets your resources unless they do what you think should be done.

Instructions for Orphanage Workers

Your country has suffered an earthquake. Your homes were destroyed. You are sad, hungry, and scared. Despite this, you want to help the children. Start an orphanage with others in your group. Work with the Aid Worker and Volunteers to fill other needs.

Instructions for Volunteers

When the Aid Worker notifies you, you go help.

After the role play, ask, "Is this the best way for the Aid Worker to support the people who have lived through the earthquake?" Invite children to create a role play that demonstrates the UUSC approach of asking communities what they need and how they can help.

If time permits and there is interest, children can create their own role plays. Afterward, process the activity by asking children to summarize how UUSC works for justice. Make sure to include that they listen to their partners on the ground and work with them to achieve goals set by the partners. Also, make sure the group knows that individuals can support UUSC by volunteering and donating money or other resources. Distribute copies of the UUSC general fact sheet.

Partnership map activity

Materials needed

- A computer with Internet access, projector, and screen

Preparation

Test equipment.

Description

If you have access to a LCD projector, computer, and screen, view the UUSC partnership map. Point out the various countries where UUSC is currently working. Click on a few spots and ask volunteers to read the descriptions. Remind participants that UUSC works with local partners to address the needs of marginalized communities.

Ask the following questions:

- Can you identify some of the marginalized communities UUSC supports?
- What are some of the common issues confronting communities in various countries?

Want to know more?

Watch and discuss the UUSC slideshow "Haiti: One Year Later," available at uuscs.org/haiti/slideshow.

Visit uuscs.org/resources/2164 for more information on UUSC's work with Haiti. You will find worship resources, interviews, blog posts, and other articles.



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