



**Canadian Unitarian
Council presents**



Engaging with **Solidarity**

A starting point for collective
thinking and community building

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Introduction



Solidarity work is the ongoing practice of showing up for each other in ways that are rooted in justice, humility, and shared liberation.

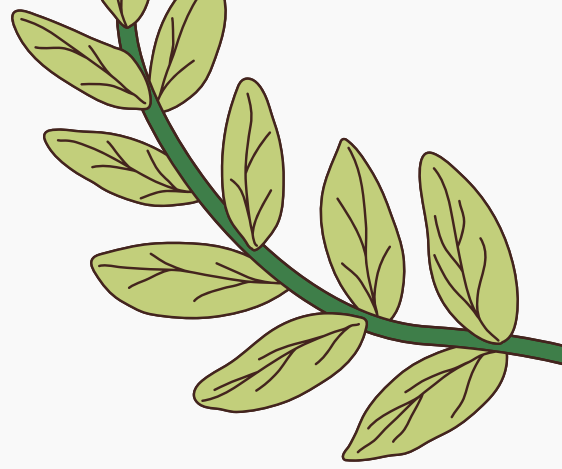
It means taking action alongside others, especially those who experience harm, oppression, or marginalization—even if their struggle isn't one we face ourselves. It asks us to listen more than we speak, to stay in community through discomfort, and to move from intention to impact.

Solidarity is not about charity, saviourism, or guilt—it's about building trusting relationships, collective power, and deeper belonging. It's about learning that our struggles are interconnected, and so are our freedoms. Solidarity is a relational action. It's about asking, again and again:

“How do we live out love in public?”

As Unitarian Universalists, we are called to live out our principles in tangible ways. Solidarity is how we practice the values we preach. It's how we embody the belief that each person has inherent worth and dignity, and that we are part of an interdependent web of existence.





Solidarity work invites us to imagine and build a world where we don't just survive—we thrive, together. It has many facets and requires a nuanced and intersectional approach which is beyond the scope of this tool kit.

In this container we will focus on a few subjects, knowing this work is ongoing. In truth, each tool kit developed in this dismantling barriers position deals with solidarity in some way shape or form, and I encourage you to engage with other materials to help with the expansive approach that helps us be in solidarity with one another.

So many of the CUC tools for this work already exist and work in harmony together - the UU expressions podcasts, the Inclusivity Forums, the Anti-Racism Study groups and the Dismantling Barriers tool kits are all glimpses at different approaches to solidarity frameworks as they all build on each other towards our collective and mutual well being.

I hope this inspires you to revisit some of the other offerings the CUC has to embolden your spirit towards a solidarity mindset.



Engaging With This Toolkit



So how can we engage with this tool kit ahead?

Inside you'll find lots of reflection questions and creative exercises that can be engaged with alone, in small groups, or as congregations. There's no single way or "right way" to use this tool kit, What's important is engaging with humility, openness, and care.

For personal reflection, you might use this tool kit:

- as a journaling or art prompt series over several weeks
- to explore your own identity, values, and relationships to solidarity work
- as a grounding support when you feel overwhelmed and unsure about how to show up

For small groups, you might use this tool kit:

- in youth groups
- in justice teams or working groups
- in small group ministry
- as support in book clubs, covenant groups, and learning cohorts

Each section can be used as a stand alone or woven into a multi session arc. In this format, we recommend choosing 2-3 reflection questions per meeting followed by a grounding or creative tool.



Engaging With This Toolkit



For congregation wide engagement:

- a seasonal theme for worship and workshops
- a resource for multigenerational justice education
- a guide for creating or renewing community covenants
- a starting point for building relationships across lines of power and difference

This can be introduced during services, in youth and young adult programming, during board and staff retreats, and during justice campaigns.

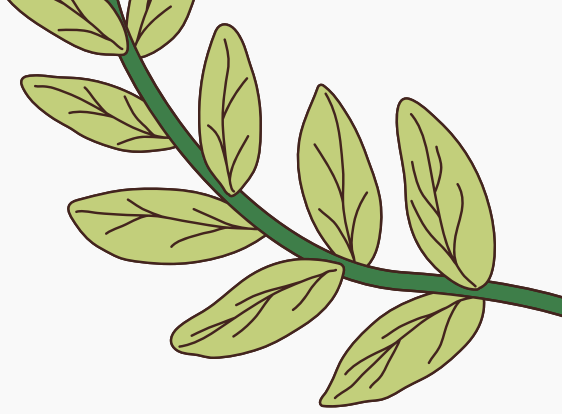
When using this tool kit either for small groups or large groups, having a strong facilitator to provide structure and support is important.

Your facilitator should be someone who can help create a container for people to feel vulnerable, explore growth, and engage in active listening and learning with each other.

Solidarity work isn't easy, but it should be rooted in care, dignity, and collective commitment. We can't guarantee a safe space because we can't control everything around us. But we can help to create safer spaces where people feel brave, bold, and comfortable.



Creating Safer Spaces



Why do I say safer instead of safe?

it really is impossible for us to control all the factors of a space, but we can try our best to create best practices and engage in deep listening to respond to peoples needs.

Safety from one person to the next will always be different. Plus, we do have to recognize that many of us still wrestle with what it is to be unsafe versus uncomfortable.

While we engage in the nuances of those reflections, here are some things we can work on to help facilitate safer spaces;

- Use community agreements or covenants that invite accountability, honesty, care, and reciprocity.
- Encourage “both/and” thinking instead of “either/or” thinking
- Accept and acknowledge that we are all learning, and learning includes unlearning.
- Talk about how harm and discomfort aren’t the same. That discomfort can be a sign of growth, while harm is something that needs repair.
- Make room for silence, integration, and reflection....not just talking.



Facilitator Support



What makes a strong facilitator?

They don't need to be an expert on the subject, but they do need to be ready with a few skills and qualities.

A strong facilitator;

- Creates a container without controlling the room
- Makes space for multiple truths and experiences
- Practices deep listening and asks clarifying questions
- Guides curiosity, humility, and care
- Models vulnerability without centering themselves
- Does NOT have all the answers, but helps to open up conversations

A strong facilitator will move through tension and welcome discomfort as a teacher, not a problem to shut down.

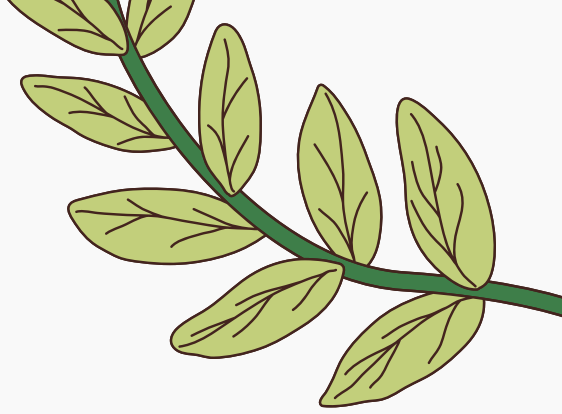
Facilitators don't take conflict personally, but welcome it as a growing edge when it arrives (which it will).

When conflict arrives, the facilitator will;

- Slow down the conversation
- Practice the sacred pause
- Check in with those affected
- Redirect harmful patterns with care
- Name power gently, but clearly
- Stay grounded in shared values



Facilitator Support



The Sacred Pause

*a somatic sex education skill for
empowered choice & voice*

1) When making or receiving a request, take a moment to **stop and breathe**

2) **Scan your body** - if receiving the request, are you feeling a **yes, no, or maybe?** If making the request, **what are you sensing from the other person?**

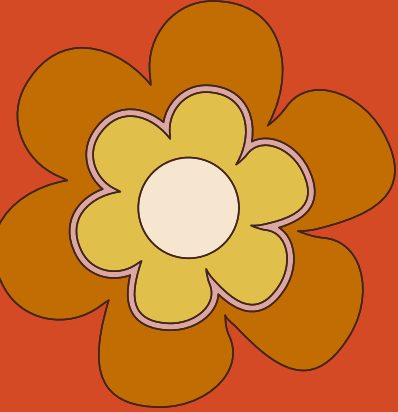
3) Make a decision based on **empowered choice and voice** - will you move forward, stop, or do something else?

Graphic by
Kai Cheng Thom

This was created by Kai Cheng Thom, even though it's created as a sex education skill, the sacred pause is transferable to many conversations.



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Terms

Solidarity: – Acting with others for justice, out of mutual care and shared values, not charity.

Mutual Aid: – Voluntary, reciprocal support in communities, especially when systems fail us.

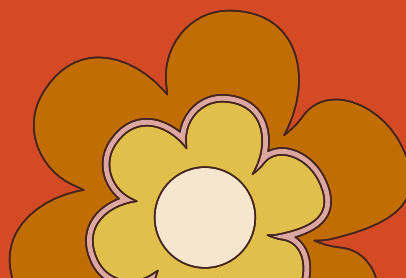
Economic Justice: – A world where all people have what they need to live and thrive, not just survive.

Accessibility: – The practice of making sure everyone can participate fully, with dignity and ease.

Cultural Safety: – Environments that are spiritually, emotionally, and physically safe for people of all identities, especially those who are often marginalized.

Collective Liberation:– The truth that our liberation is bound up together; none of us are free until all of us are free.

Transformative Justice: – Approaches to harm that prioritize healing, accountability, and community care over punishment or shame.





Getting Grounded

As we dive into what can be emotionally charged subjects, I encourage you to use the tools available to you for staying grounded while engaged.

The following slides include some tools to help with accountability practices, naming feelings, and moving through transformation.

If you want more resources, I encourage you to explore the Canadian Unitarian Council's Inclusivity Forums. These are forums filled with different content to explore around how we relate to each other.

[You can find the inclusivity forums by following this link here.](#)



RESPONSIBILITY COVENANT

To create space for those with less relative privilege than me, I will...

WELCOME

Welcome people to share what's on their hearts in a way that is authentic to them and receive their offering with gratitude.

ENGAGE

Engage my body, mind, spirit, and emotions in learning and embrace different perspectives.

INQUIRE

Inquire into discomfort that arises when my security, worldview, privileges, traditions, protocols, and values are challenged.

ASK

Ask questions with the intent to deeply understand the person's views and resist the urge to make it about me, and what I think I know.

RESIST

Resist urges to debate, analyze, censor, criticize, project, dismiss, minimize, moralize, silence, and perform etc., to deal with my discomfort.

EMBRACE

Embrace discomfort as an invitation to focus inward on personal transformation. If needed, I will seek out emotional support to process my feelings in a private setting.

This tool is best used with the [Guide for Facilitators or Community Leaders](#).

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Destructive

- Attacking the other, attacking the relationship
- Fight/flight, overwhelmed, panicked, enraged
- “It’s me or them, and I choose me”



THE WINDOW OF TRANSFORMATION

Embodied Conflict Response Model by Kai Cheng Thom©

Inspired by Dan Siegel & Pat Ogden’s “Window of Tolerance”

- Hearing and integrating feedback, curious and compassionate with boundaries
- Stretched, challenged, expanding the edge of emotional capacity
Your paragraph text
- “I can honour your truth and honour mine”



Performative

- Prioritizing maintaining relationship over integrity
- Overwhelmed, insecure, deceiving self or other, “appease”
- “Giving in to get along”



Fragile/Collapse

- Collapsing into shame and blame, feeling victimized
- Stuck or immobilized, “freeze”



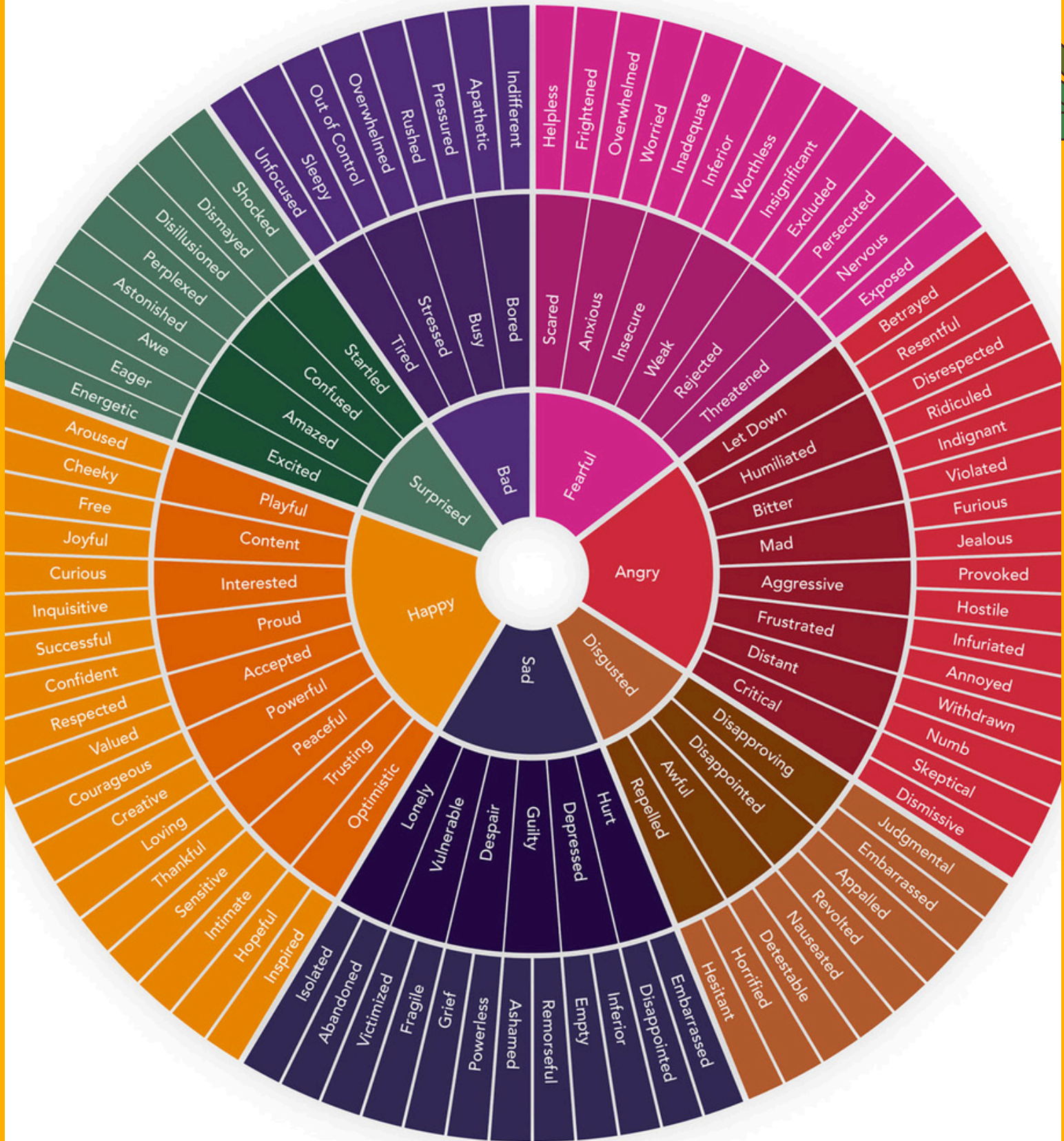
Nervous System Activation



Window of Transformation
From Kai Cheng Thom
Inspired by Dan Siegal and Pat Ogden’s
Window of Tolerance



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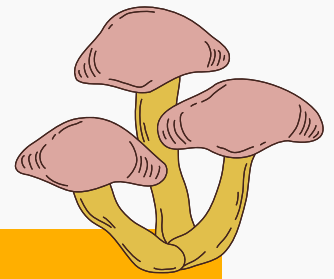
The Feelings Wheel by Gloria Wilcox

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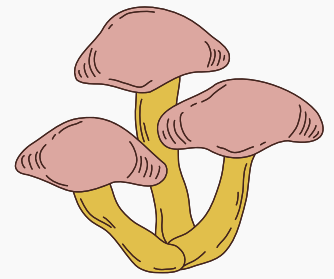
A Reminder on Defensiveness

When we engage in solidarity, we are confronted with our egos. Our understanding of power dynamics, of systematic oppression, of how we've contributed to the suffering of others and the real changes we need to enact. That's uncomfortable. Defensiveness and discomfort is normal, it's a sign that we have something to unpack and maybe reconsider how we navigate.

It's ok to take a breath, it's ok to make mistakes, it's ok to feel like you want to hang on to what you know. Move at the speed of trust, and engage in the work of relationality and abundance.

This is spiritual work. To reflect on our roles in this world and act to change them for the benefit of those around you.

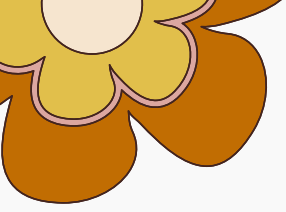




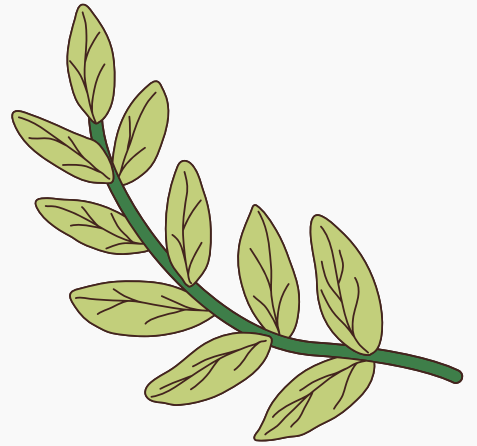
Creative Prompts

- What does my discomfort teach me?
- What have I gained from the systems around me?
- Where can I view discomfort as a chance for expansion?
- What does safety feel like to me?
- Where do I perceive having power?
- What would change with a shift in power?
- How do I react when I'm called out/in?
- How can I stay engaged when I feel defensive?*
- Write a letter to your past self, what do you wish you knew about racism 5 years ago? what advice would you give your past self?
- Write a letter to your future self, what do you hope for yourself in 5 years?



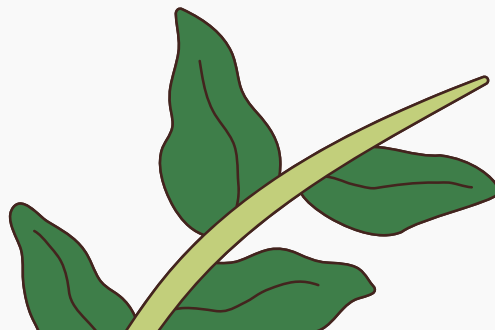


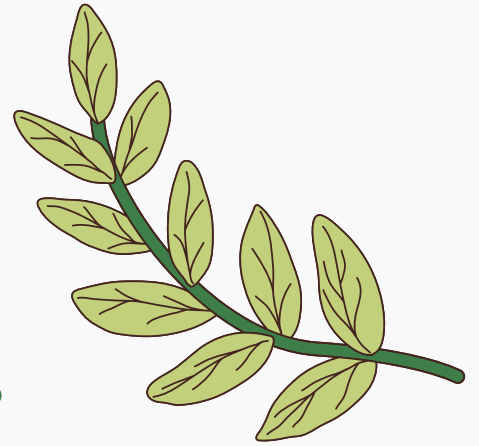
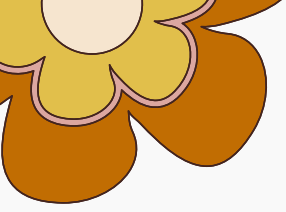
Section 1: Power & Perceived Power



Power is the ability to influence, affect outcomes, access resources, or shape the environment around us—whether we realize it or not. Power is not inherently bad, but when it's unacknowledged or abused, it can cause deep harm in relationships, communities, and systems.

Perceived power is just as important. Sometimes, we may be seen as powerful (due to race, role, education, confidence, age, etc.) even if we don't feel powerful. Other times, we may hold unspoken influence and not recognize the impact we have on others. Power shows up in both visible and hidden ways. Learning to notice and reflect on how power moves through us and around us is part of living in alignment with our values of dignity, equity, and collective care.





Naming Power

Interpersonally:

Who interrupts/ who is interrupted?

Who speaks freely?

Who stays silent?

Who gets emotionally validated? Who is dismissed?

Who offers accountability? Who assumes blame?

In Leadership:

Who gives feedback? How is it given or received?

Who controls information?

Who makes decisions that affect the team?

Who is seen as “professional”, “capable”, “responsible”?

What roles are contracted? Full time? Part time?

In Community

Whose traditions and needs are prioritized?

Who is centered in rituals, leadership, or public facing roles?

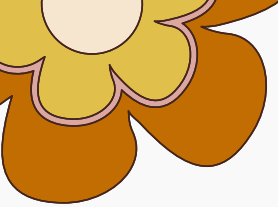
What roles are volunteer?

What narratives are followed?

How are boundaries held?

How does accountability show up?

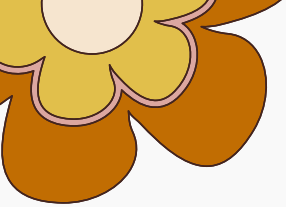




Reflection Questions

- Where do I hold formal or informal power? (think identity, experience, education, financial security, cultural connection, etc)
- How do I show up in leadership? What patterns or habits do I notice?
- Are there times I've underestimated my impact?
- When have I felt powerful or powerless? What contributed to that experience?
- How do I respond when someone perceives me in a position of power?
- How do I respond when someone sees me as having more power than I feel I do?
- How does my tone shift depending on who I'm with?
- How do I empower myself?
- How do I use the power I have?
- How can I use my power to create more safety and equity for others?
- What does shared leadership or co-creation look like in my spaces?
- Am I open to feedback? Am I open to feedback from those with less institutional power than me?





Power Mapping

1- Draw a circle in the middle of a blank page with your name and role in it

2- On the rest of the page draw circles with names, roles, institutions, systems, or identities that influence your life. *Include both people who have power over you and who you have power over.*

3- Connect the circles!

Solid lines — clear, direct power

Dotted lines shared/collaborative power

Wavy lines ~~~ unclear or shifting power

4- Reflect:

What patterns do you see?

What feels strong? What feels disconnected or fragile?

What could be shifted for more balance, safety, and trust?

What surprises me about what I see?

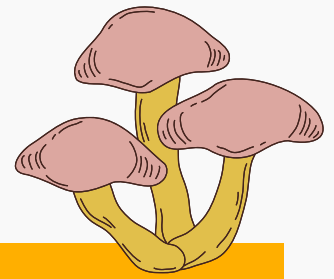
What's one small shift that could help my power dynamics be more intentional? More relational?

What new opportunity do I see?

Where do I feel respected?

Where do I feel small? Where might I be unseen?



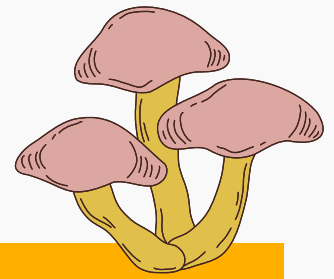
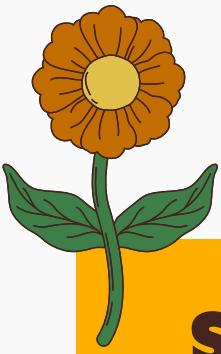


Section 2: Economic Justice

Economic justice is the vision and practice of creating a world where everyone's basic needs are met, wealth is shared fairly, and no one is left behind because of poverty or class.

It asks us to look beyond charity and toward systemic change: questioning how capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy shape who gets resources—and who doesn't. It challenges the idea that some people "deserve" more because they work harder or were born into the "right" circumstances.

There are several aspects to consider when we talk about economic justice, including; the topic of reparations based on systematic racial or gender based inequities, productivity culture and the culture of labour, and of course the western inclination towards individualism.



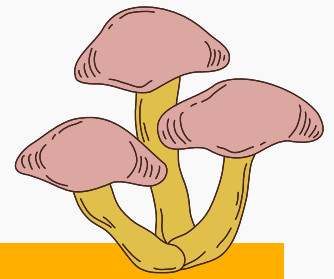
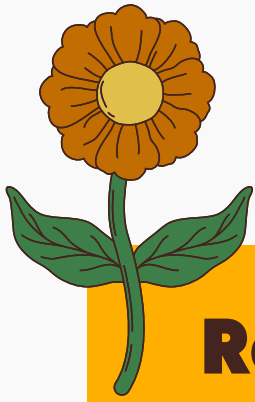
Section 2: Economic Justice

For Unitarian Universalists, economic justice means asking:

How do we redistribute power and wealth in ways that align with our values of dignity, compassion, and interdependence?

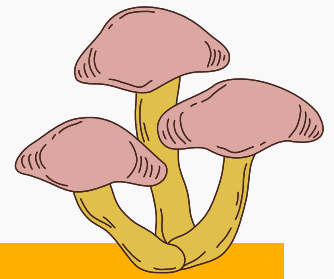
This work invites us to practice mutual aid, support workers' rights, advocate for fair wages, share resources, and build economic systems rooted in care, not profit.

It also calls for us to engage in conversations on how we can be ethical in our labour in congregations and asks us to question power dynamics, equity wages, security, our perceptions on who has/deserves wealth, and more.



Reflection Questions

- What assumptions do I hold about money and worth?
- What considerations do I make when I consider donating money?
- How do I feel about mutual aid versus donating to an organization? Why do I feel that way?
- How can I sustainably be involved in economic justice with my community?
- How do I feel asking for financial support?
- How does scarcity versus abundance show up for me?
- Where does wealth and poverty show up in my congregation or community? How do we talk about it—or avoid it?
- What are my beliefs about money, productivity, and deservingness? Where did those beliefs come from?
- How can I support a culture where everyone is safe to name financial needs without shame?



Tangible Actions

In Your Life:

- Set up regular giving to grassroots mutual aid efforts or low-income organizers. (if you're able to do so in a sustainable way and have the means to do so, please see chart on wealth distribution)
- Challenge a scarcity mindset and consider the impact of small but consistent donations and actions
- Talk openly with trusted folks about class, scarcity, and shame around money.
- Notice when your desire to help comes from guilt vs desire/joy.

In Your Congregation:

- Create a Solidarity Fund that members can access with no judgment or red tape.
- Ensure all events have free or pay-what-you-can options.
- Include discussions of class and economic justice in worship and RE.
- Reimagine congregational budgets: Are you investing in justice, care, and access? Who's being prioritized—and who's being left out?



Recurring contribution	\$1-\$25	\$25-\$50	\$50-\$100	\$100-\$250	\$250-\$400	\$400+
This end of the scale is for those who are unable to or struggle to meet their basic needs, and have little to no expendable income.			The middle of the scale is for those who are able to meet their basic needs, and have some expendable income.		This end of the scale is for those who are comfortably able to meet their basic needs, and have ample expendable income.	
<p>Pay less on the scale if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive public assistance, support dependents (children, parents, anyone else relying on your money),• Don't have savings,• Are formerly incarcerated,• Do illegal work for survival,• Have significant debt that interferes with being able to access your basic needs,• Have less access to money because of abuse,• Have a chronic illness or disability that impacts your ability to earn money,• Have immigration-related expenses,• Are an elder with limited financial support, and/or are unable to access healthcare.			<p>Pay more on the scale if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have few or no dependents,• Have savings, investments, inherited money, and/or retirement accounts,• Can ask people in your life for money,• Own the home you live in or rent by choice,• Own commercial or rental properties,• Travel recreationally,• Have access to family money and resources in times of need,• Work part time by choice,• Have more possible earning power (even if you aren't using it right now) from: being able bodied, having a college degree, social networks, family connections, gender, race, etc., and/or are able to access health care.			

This payment scale was made to show how people can participate in mutual aid at any level. Offering a consistent dollar a month can be a support. This scale was created by the artist and activist, Envy the Clown.



Section 3: Accessibility



Accessibility means creating environments—physical, emotional, digital, and spiritual—where everyone can participate fully and with dignity.

It's not just about ramps and large print (though those matter!). Accessibility is about deep care: recognizing that people have different needs, and that no one should have to fight to belong. Rooted in disability justice, accessibility work challenges ableism—the system that devalues disabled people and treats certain bodies and minds as “normal” and others as broken. Accessibility politics also overlap with respectability politics, desirability politics, feminism, the fat liberation movement, Black liberation, Indigenous liberation, and more.

Together these movements advocate for support services and respect of the inherent worth and dignity of every person to have a say in how their bodies are treated both in personal settings and institutional ones. The reality is that we all need accessibility aids, and even if our needs are “minor” now, or even non existent, one thing for certain is that we will all need accessibility services at some point in our lives. Advocating for them is advocating for those around you and for your own futures.

Practicing accessibility is an act of love. It says:
“Your needs are not a burden. You are welcome here—as you are.”



Reflection Questions



- Whose needs are currently being considered in my space? Who does that leave out?
- What do I understand about invisible disabilities?
- What do I understand about how neurodivergence is expressed in people of different genders?
- What is masking? What is unmasking? Where am I on this spectrum?
- Have I ever assumed someone "just wasn't interested" instead of wondering if they were excluded?
- What barriers exist in how we gather, communicate, or worship?
- What assumptions do I hold about who "shows up" or "participates" in a community?
- Where might our congregation unintentionally exclude people with different access needs?
- How can we shift from asking people to "fit in" to redesigning spaces that honour all bodies and minds?



Tangible Actions

In Your Life:

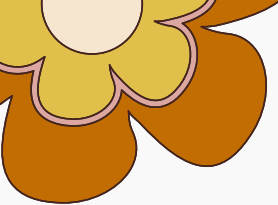
- Learn about disability justice from people with lived experience who offer their knowledge. The CUC inclusivity report section on accessibility is an amazing resource.
- Use image descriptions and accessible fonts in your communications, check out online accessibility guides to ensure best practices
- Be mindful of scent, noise, and overstimulation in shared spaces.

In Your Congregation:

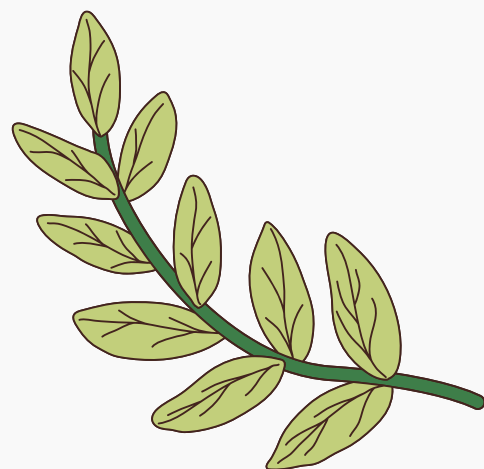
- Build access check-ins into your meetings: “What do folks need to fully participate?”
- Include disabled voices in leadership, planning, and speaking roles.
- Ask people what they need and believe them. Prioritize their expertise.
- Are events scent-free? Is there ASL, captions, rest spaces, or quiet rooms? Are Zoom links easy to find? Are the bathrooms accessible?
- Include line items for accessibility like ASL interpretation, childcare, transportation, or flexible seating whenever possible. When not possible, name it.

Check out this resource from the Canadian Unitarian Council’s Inclusivity Forum focused on disabilities





Section 4: Cultural Safety & Human Dignity



Cultural safety is the practice of creating spaces where people of all cultures—especially those from Indigenous, Black, racialized, migrant and marginalized communities—feel respected, understood, and safe to be themselves without fear of harm, erasure, or tokenism.

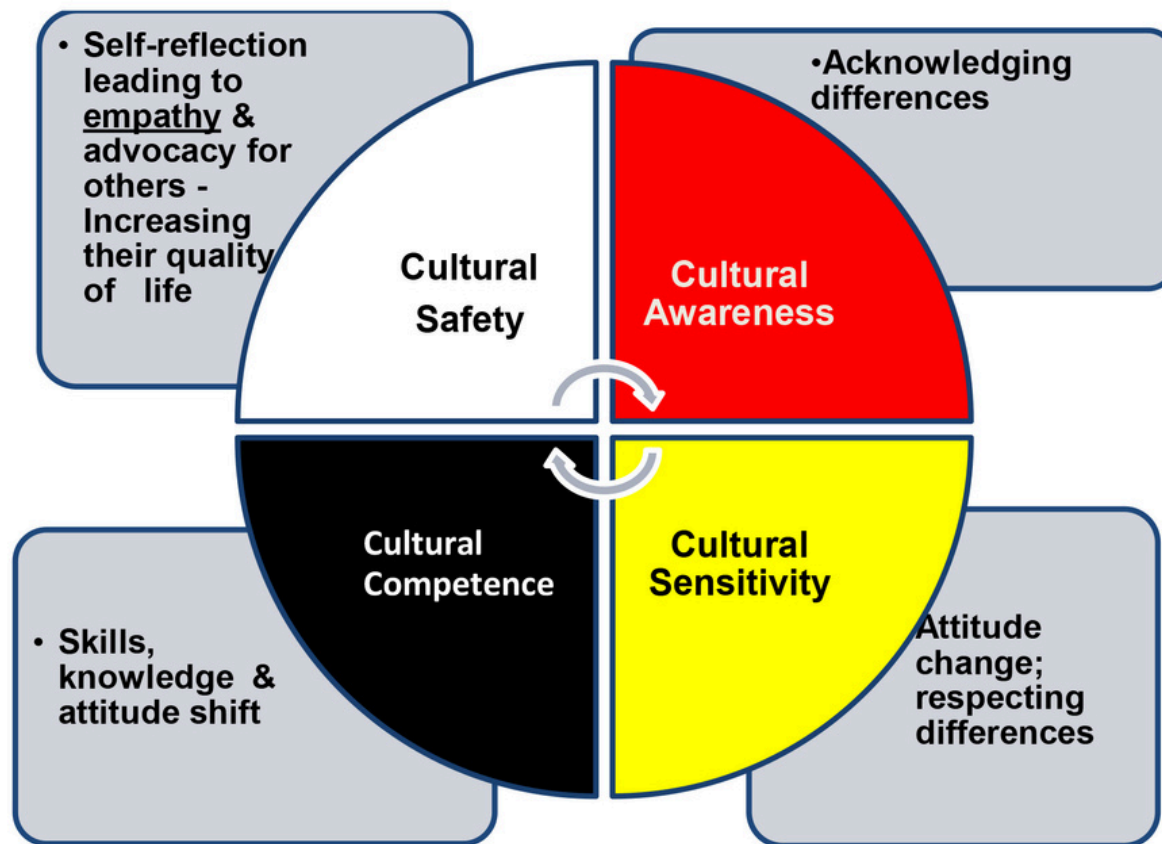
It goes beyond inclusion or “diversity” to actively dismantle racism, white supremacy, colonialism, and cultural appropriation. It means naming harm, interrupting it, and building trust through action—not just intention.

Cultural safety is about affirming that your culture, language, spiritual practices, and ways of knowing are sacred—and should never be made small to make others comfortable.

This work is deeply spiritual. It reminds us that honouring someone’s culture is part of honouring their humanity.



THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL SAFETY

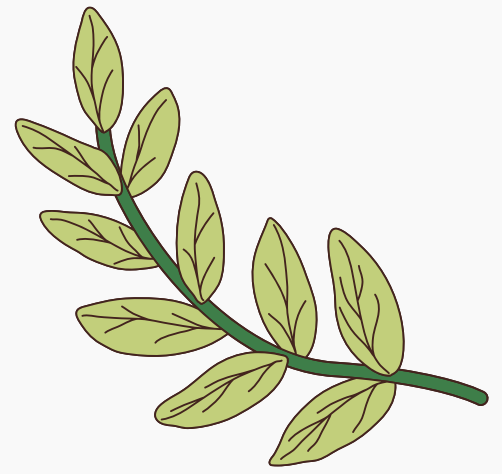
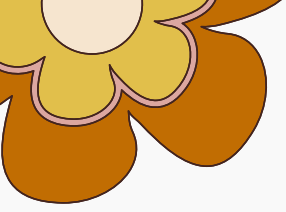


When someone is in a culturally safe space, it is they themselves who determine that they are being understood in their cultural context and lived experience. Those around them express empathy (understanding) and NOT pity. Empathy is the experience of 'feeling with someone' and is generated when one is able to 'walk in the other person's shoes'. This is a process of learning about another person's lived experiences within their socio-historical context and is achieved through training, education, self-reflection, and the courage to change one's thinking and behavior.

The process of cultural safety is depicted here on the Medicine Wheel, which is a wholistic view of living and the life cycle according to many First Nations peoples. The cultural safety process starts with cultural awareness, acknowledging that there are cultural differences between you and others. Cultural safety begins in the eastern direction (color red) of the Medicine Wheel, as this is where new life and new beginnings are located in the life cycle. This process moves around the Medicine Wheel from the east (color red) to the south (color yellow), west (color black) and full circle to the northern (color white) direction.

Acknowledgement: Anishnawbe Health, Toronto

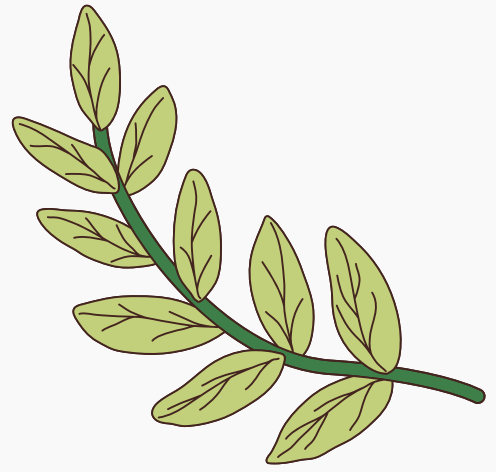
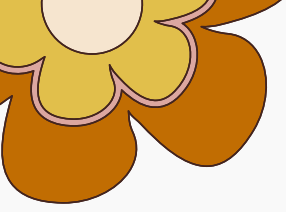




Reflection Questions

- Do I expect people to "educate me" about their culture or identity?
- What does safety feel like to me?
- What does it mean to truly welcome someone's difference, not just tolerate it?
- How do we handle harm when it happens? What does repair feel like to me?
- When have I felt pressure to assimilate or hide part of who I am? When have I expected that of others?
- How has colonialism and supremacy culture shaped the land I live and worship on?
- What is my role in making my community a place where no one has to check parts of themselves at the door?





Tangible Actions

In Your Life:

- Learn to apologize without centering your own discomfort or lingering on the harm.
- Examine who's in your circle, who's not, and why.
- Uplift voices from different cultural backgrounds, especially Indigenous, Black, and racialized folks.
- Lead with curiosity and compassion, start researching the cultures that surround you so you can ask informed questions without putting all the burden on others to explain themselves.

In Your Congregation:

- Include land acknowledgments that are paired with action (like supporting local Indigenous orgs).
- Develop a covenant of care that centers cultural humility.
- Make time for story-sharing across generations and cultures in your community.
- Be cautious of tokenism, celebrate voices from around the world year round...not just in february, march, and october.






Section 4: Collective Liberation

Collective liberation is the belief that none of us are free until all of us are free. It's about recognizing that our struggles are intertwined—and so is our freedom. It is also a staple point in imagining and co-creating a sustainable future because it calls for us all to be involved in the building.

It asks us to move from individualism and “allyship” into solidarity, mutual transformation, and shared responsibility. It's not about saving others. It's about joining together to build something new.

Collective liberation is what happens when we see our fates as bound up with one another—not in theory, but in practice. As Unitarian Universalists, this is where our interdependence becomes action.

It's also joyful. It reminds us that justice work isn't only about struggle—it's about deep love, play, healing, and dreaming new worlds into being.





Reflection Questions

- Where am I being called to show up, even when it's uncomfortable?
- How do I practice "being in it for the long haul"?
- What would it mean to love my community in active, tangible ways?
- Who do I believe "deserves" freedom, safety, or care? Who might I leave out without realizing? What do I have in common with who I'm leaving out?
- When do I see my liberation connected to someone else's? When don't I?
- How can we center joy, art, and connection in our justice work?





Tangible Actions

In Your Life:

- Choose one campaign or group you will commit to showing up for consistently.
- Practice “deep canvassing”: Have real, values-based conversations about justice with people in your life. Get curious about those around you! Let them in so you can see where your struggles overlap.
- Support the leadership of marginalized folks (youth, young adults, people of the global majority, trans folks, people with accessibility needs) and get comfortable exploring new modes of leadership.

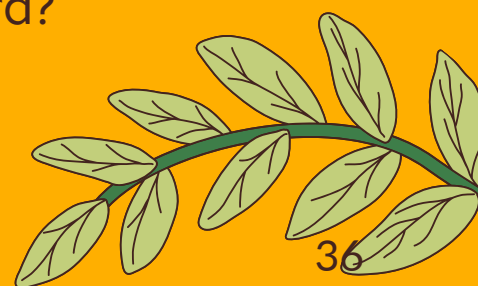




Tangible Actions

In Your Congregation:

- Develop justice partnerships with groups already doing the work (not reinventing the wheel).
- Regularly evaluate who holds power and how decisions are made.
- Make solidarity a spiritual practice—weave it into worship, song, prayer, and covenant.
- Spend time in spaces that centre voices you don't often hear. Listen deeply and with humility.
- Celebrate, laugh, sing, and rest as part of your liberation practice.
- Ask how your justice work connects across race, class, disability, gender, and more.
- What agreements can your group or congregation make to support shared liberation, even when it's hard?





Transformative Justice

Transformative Justice (TJ) is a way of responding to harm, violence, and injustice that centres healing, accountability, and community transformation—without relying on punishment, policing, or prisons.

TJ asks us to shift the question from:
“How do we punish this person?” to
“What do we need to heal the harm, prevent future harm, and shift the conditions that allowed the harm to happen?”

It’s not just about reacting to harm—it’s about building the kinds of relationships, communities, and systems where harm is less likely in the first place. That includes addressing the roots of oppression: racism, ableism, poverty, colonialism, gendered violence, and more.

TJ reminds us that none of us are disposable, and all of us are capable of growth, repair, and change. It’s not easy, and it takes time—but it offers a vision of justice that aligns deeply with Unitarian Universalist principles: dignity, compassion, equity, and interdependence.





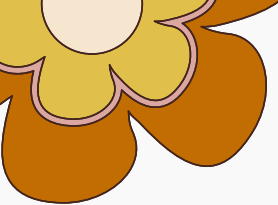
Reflection Questions

- What messages have I received about justice, punishment, or forgiveness? How are those shaped by systems of power?
- When I've caused harm, what kind of support helped me take accountability?
- How can I help create spaces (in my life, congregation, or community) where people can be honest about harm and still be held in love?

Ways to Engage

- Learn from community models: Research local or global groups doing transformative justice or community accountability work.
- Start small: Practice having repair conversations in your daily life. That might mean naming harm, apologizing meaningfully, or creating boundaries with care.
- Shift language: Instead of "calling out," explore what it means to call in or call forward—with both courage and compassion.
- Develop or revisit covenantal conflict guidelines that focus on restoration rather than punishment or exclusion.





Scenarios



Scenario 1:

At a congregational meeting, a newcomer shares an idea for changing the structure for how the community organizes their welcoming table. When she speaks she is clear, but seems nervous. When she finishes, there's a pause and no one responds. Later in the meeting, someone with long standing leadership experience restates the idea and everyone agrees with enthusiasm.

Discuss:

Why might the newcomers suggestion have been dismissed?
How does positional power, identity, and familiarity shape whose voices are heard?
How could you intervene in a moment like this to help shift the dynamic?

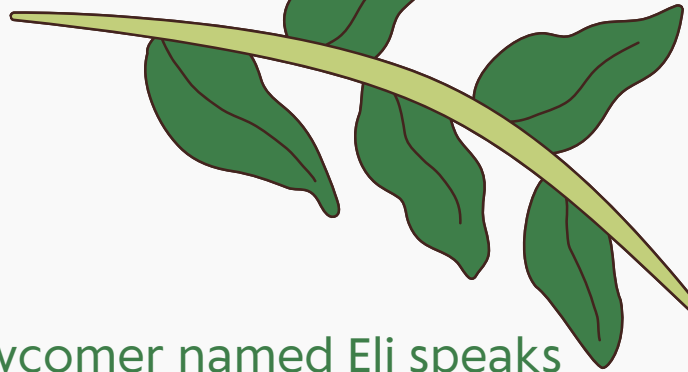
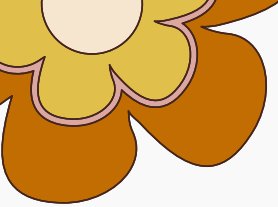
Scenario 2:

At coffee hour, a member named Jane who uses a wheelchair quietly asks if someone could move a chair so they can access a table. One person quickly jumps up to help, but someone else comments on how they "could have asked more nicely". Jane later feels uncomfortable advocating for themselves.

Discuss:

What power is being asserted here? What power is being denied?
What proactive steps could be taken to shift the culture towards care and dignity?
How can accessibility needs be met without defensiveness?





Scenarios

Scenario 3:

At a multigenerational gathering, a newcomer named Eli speaks slowly in English, taking pauses to translate from French. They share a meaningful story at check in but someone jokes “We’ll be here all night!” A few people laugh, Eli goes quiet for the rest of the session.

Discuss:

What kind of power and privilege showed up in this situation?
What could a facilitator or peer done differently in the moment?
What practices can help create spaces where language diversity is welcomed, not mocked?

Scenario 4:

A youth member on a committee suggests using some budget for a mutual aid fund that helps youth and families struggling with rent, food, and transportation. An adult committee member replies “It’s not our job or a good use of our budget”.
Later, the youth wonders: isn’t justice part of our faith?

Discuss:

What power was asserted in that response?
What values are in conflict here? (charity vs. solidarity, maintenance vs. transformation)
How can people make their voices heard when their ideas are dismissed?





Reflecting on our Unitarian Principles

1. Recognizing the Inherent Worth and Dignity of Every Person

- How do I affirm dignity in others, especially when we disagree or come from different backgrounds?
- When have I unintentionally dehumanized or overlooked someone's full humanity?
- What does it mean to treat people with dignity when they are in crisis or struggling?

2. Justice, Equity, and Compassion in Human Relations

- Where in my life or community is there a lack of justice or equity?
- How do I respond when someone asks for accommodations, reparations, or change?
- What might compassion look like as a practice, not just a feeling?

3. Acceptance of One Another and Encouragement to Spiritual Growth in our Congregations

- How do I make space for others' ways of being spiritual, even when they are unfamiliar to me?
- How might collective growth challenge the ways I've always done things?
- Where can I release the need for control in favour of deeper connection?

[Find out more on our website cuc.ca](http://cuc.ca)



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Reflecting on our Unitarian Principles

4. A Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning

- Who have I historically centered when seeking out “truth”? Who do I need to listen to more?
- How do I balance personal curiosity with communal responsibility?
- What truths have I resisted because they might require me to change?

5. The Right of Conscience and the Use of Democratic Process

- How do power and privilege shape whose voices get heard in decision-making?
- Am I open to being challenged when someone’s conscience leads them to disagree with me?
- How do we make decisions together that honour everyone's voice, not just the loudest?

6. The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty, and Justice for All

- What does global solidarity mean to me?
- Where does my liberation intersect with struggles beyond my country or culture?
- What is one step I can take to support justice movements beyond my immediate context?
- What does this principle tell me about cultural safety?

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Reflecting on our Unitarian Principles

7. Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence

- How does my life reflect interdependence rather than isolation or competition?
- What do I learn from nature about care and reciprocity?
- When have I forgotten my connection to others? What brings me back?

8. Individual and Communal Action that Accountably Dismantles Racism and Systemic Barriers to Full Inclusion

- How do I take responsibility when I cause harm, especially across differences?
- What systemic barriers exist in my congregation, community, or self—and how am I helping to dismantle them?
- What would it look like for inclusion to be the default, not an afterthought?
- What does the word “accountably” bring up for me? Are there ways for me to soften into it?

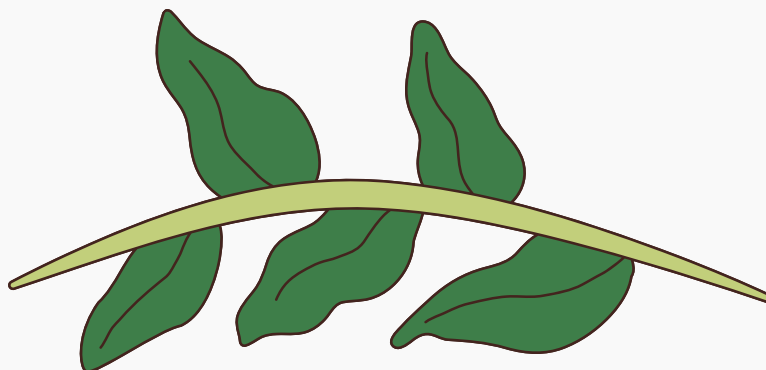
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Extra Reflection Questions

- When was a time you felt truly seen and supported? How can you offer that to someone else?
- What privileges do I hold? How can I use them in service of equity and justice?
- How do I respond when I am told I've caused harm? What helps me stay open?
- What does care look like when it's mutual—not top-down or transactional?
- What rituals or practices help me stay grounded when doing hard justice work?
- When is a time I've felt repair after conflict? How did it go?





Creative Practices

-Solidarity Collage:

Use images/words to represent what solidarity looks and feels like to you.

-Accessibility Audit Walk:

Walk through your building or website and list barriers. Dream about changes.

-Justice Tree:

Draw a tree. Label the roots (values), the trunk (practices), and the branches (actions).

-Accountability Journal:

Reflect on moments where you've learned, grown, or repaired relationships.





Creative Practices

Group activity:

- 1) Get into groups of 2-3
- 2) Think about a time you helped someone.
- 3) Take turns sharing the story you thought of.
- 4) Retell the story with the focus on the other person's experience and strengths.

Example:

First story: I helped someone by donating to their gofundme campaign.

Reframe: Someone I know was very brave and shared their vulnerability with the world and requested help during a hard time. Because they were transparent and authentic and overcame their guilt or shame and asked for help I was able to support them in a hard time)





Resources

- Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice – Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- Mutual Aid – Dean Spade
- Emergent Strategy – adrienne maree brown
- Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment – Leticia Nieto
- Podcasts: How to Survive the End of the World, Project Nia, Healing Justice
- CUC's Inclusivity Forum
- UU (Unitarian Universalist) Expressions Podcast
- Dismantling Barriers Burnout Toolkit, Black History Month tool kit and Inclusivity and Bylaws tool kit available on CUC website
- CUC responsibility covenant
- bell hooks *All About Love*
- Kai Cheng Thom, *I Hope We Choose Love: A Trans Girl's Notes From the End of the World*
- Kai Cheng Thom, *Falling Back in Love With Being Human*
- <https://www.equalaccess.org/>

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