

Teacher's Guide to Exploring Paganism

By Joyce and River Higginbotham, copyright 2003

This Guide is designed to be a resource for anyone preparing to teach Exploring Paganism as a religious education course. It contains a complete course outline for eight two-hour classes to be used in conjunction with our book Paganism: An Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions, published by Llewellyn Worldwide. In this Guide we offer suggestions we hope will assist you in designing your class, setting a class schedule, and later, handling issues which arise during the course itself. We recommend you read the Guide completely before adapting the current outline to your needs.

Getting Started

One of the first things you must consider is where to hold classes. Most likely you will choose to hold them at your own or a neighboring UU church. We recommend using church facilities whenever possible, for a variety of reasons. The church is already available to you as a church member, it is an easy place for class members to find, and the setting is usually quieter than other locations. When you teach this class at your UU church you are also bringing the presence of earth-based religions--the Sixth Source of spirituality--into your congregation in a real and tangible way. Your class may be one of the first opportunities church members have ever had to explore earth-based spiritualities.

Disadvantages to holding classes at the church include potential scheduling conflicts with other groups and activities, and possible noise. When you schedule classes, try to avoid evenings with loud events, and spaces where you might be interrupted. You do not want people wandering in and out of your class space. This becomes critical during meditations, exercises, and other workings. Try to reserve the same room or space for the entire duration of the class so you do not have to be moving the students and your materials about. Pick a time when you can run all eight weeks in a row without interruption by holidays or other events. Avoid holiday seasons, especially late November and all of December, and the summer months when people are on vacation and busy with summer activities. We have discovered that good times to hold classes are the fall, spring, and right after New Year's.

If the class is meeting in the church during the evening, be sure to ask about getting in and out of the space. Will you need a key? Will a guard or administrator have to let you in and out? What happens if they're not there on time? Is there an alarm system for the church, and are you responsible for operating it? If so, learn how and practice a few times. What about lights and clean up? Learn everything you can about the expectations of the church staff, so they will want you to come back and teach there again.

If you must meet in a home, be sure the space is appropriate and the environment comfortable. You need to be sure the classes can be conducted without interruption from phones, dogs, cats, children, and other noise. Also keep in mind that unless all the students are

church members with whom you are familiar, you may be inviting a group of relative strangers into your or another person's home. Be sure that you and any other host are comfortable with this situation before beginning.

Regardless of location, be sure to advertise the class thoroughly and well in advance. If your church has a bulletin, ask that notices be run for several weeks starting a month or so from the starting date. If there is a newsletter, write a brief notice about the class and what people can expect. If you are really ambitious, try writing an article with some background about Paganism and earth-based spiritualities, and summarizing the course curriculum. Attached to this Guide are two sample articles you may use for this purpose. See Appendix A. Create a flyer and post it on bulletin boards in church. Ask to give an announcement about the class before the start of main service for two or three Sundays before the class begins. Ask friends and congregation members to spread the word. Post a notice to any chat or email lists you are on. Put flyers on store bulletin boards, in coffee shops, and on college campuses. Take flyers with you to Pagan events, festivals, and conventions. If you know that certain people are interested in the class, consult with them about their available days before deciding on scheduling. Don't do just one or two of these things to advertise your class, do all of them. Be sure people understand they do not need to be Pagan to take this class, they need only be curious about what Paganism is and what its spiritual philosophy promotes.

Be clear in your advertising, both on paper and by word of mouth, whether there is a fee for the class, and whether students are expected to purchase the book or other materials. Usually the class is taught for no charge when offered at UU churches as an adult religious education course. The students will want to purchase the book, however, to follow along and to read ahead for their homework. If your church has a bookstore, see if it can purchase the books at a discount. If it doesn't, you may wish to make a similar arrangement with a local bookstore. If you expect a large number of students, you may contact Llewellyn Worldwide directly for a discount rate on a bulk purchase. In any event, we highly recommend you ask students to sign up and pay for the books in advance so you will know exactly how many copies to order and not be left holding the bill if a student cancels. Don't forget to add in the cost of shipping, if applicable, when setting the amount a student owes for the book. Let the students know that if they need to cancel after the book order has been placed, you will remove them from the class roster but the book will be theirs to keep. Perhaps they will want to use it for a future class!

If there is a fee for the class or book which has not been collected from the students in advance, be sure to collect it at the first class. Do not allow a student to join the class after the end of the second week, as they have already missed too much. If there is a fee for the class, give full refunds for any student who cancels before the classes begin, or even after they have attended one or two classes. Beyond the second class, generally do not give refunds. However, there are occasionally good reasons why a student must leave a class, or perhaps you have asked them to leave. In those cases, pro rate the refund for those classes they will not attend. In our experience, you will not be asked for a refund very often, even from those students who pay and never show.

How many students should you take? We suggest you limit the class size to ten to fifteen people at most. With a larger class you will not be able to get input from every class member within the allotted two hours. If more students are interested, form a second class.

Structuring the Class

We recommend that you teach Exploring Paganism as an eight-week course. Feel free to use the attached eight-week outline as your own, or adapt it as you wish after you have read this Guide and understand the reasons for its current structure.

Each class is set up for a two hour time period. Try not to run over time, but if you should, find out what will happen. Is another group waiting restlessly outside the door for your space? Does the pastor or office administrator have to stay and lock up after you? Does the night alarm come on at a certain time? Be sure to honor any restrictions. Even if a class runs over, we suggest it not do so for more than a half hour, though visiting afterwards is fine. If you must leave the premises by a certain time, then leave; if the students don't want to stop visiting, suggest everyone meet at a local coffee house or someone's home to continue the discussion.

We limit the class length to two hours in order to maximize the attention span of the students. In addition, the activity level of the classes alternates between lecture and exercises, or listening and participation. This keeps the pace moving and holds the students' attention. We also provide a ten-minute break halfway through the class. Don't skip this break. Remember that for many of your students these are brand new ideas, and some of them are fairly complex. Even the simpler ideas may conflict with a student's childhood training, and the mental energy they expend wrestling with these new concepts can wear them out. Also, the break allows opportunity for less formal questions to the teacher and personal feedback. Another benefit is that some people learn best by speaking and processing new information with others. So students just talking among themselves at break can be an effective style of learning.

Schedule the classes a week apart for eight weeks. This gives the students time to think, practice what they've learned, read and do their homework, and form questions for the next class. You can try meeting every other week, though we have found the momentum more difficult to maintain. Meeting more than two weeks apart will probably not be successful.

Start each class on time. Do not wait to start until every student is present, as this will show them that no matter how late they are, you will accommodate them. The same for break. Make an announcement when class is about to begin again, and when it's time, go ahead and start.

There are several key points to remember about the structuring of classes. One is to keep participation at a maximum. Your lecture, or talking periods, should never exceed twenty or thirty minutes. Every class should begin with time for everyone to download what happened to them in the past week, if it relates to what they're learning. If they had homework, they should report on how it went. After every meditation you should allow time to process what happened, giving everyone a chance to speak. Offer feedback and reassurance. This process will take a good half hour. If you are running out of time, cut a lecture, not a meditation or other

participatory exercise. Participation is one key to an engaging and effective class. This is why we suggest limiting the class size, otherwise you cannot hear from everyone.

It is also imperative to break the ice at the beginning of the first week of class, and to begin immediately to create a sense of community among the class members themselves. Without this community spirit it won't matter how much participation time you plan, because no one will join in. This is why the class runs for eight weeks even though there are only seven Chapters in the book. The first class will be taken up with preliminaries and having the students get to know each other. Another reason this is so important is that throughout the class students will be asked to share their experiences and to some degree their personal history and beliefs with the class. Fostering a sense of trust will help all the members be more comfortable with this type of sharing.

We also believe it is important to begin the class with smudging or similar activity to help the student relax and set aside the concerns of the day and focus on the evening ahead. We can attest to a noticeable difference in the quality of those classes where we smudged every time, and those where we did not. However, smudging is smoky and you do not want to be setting off the church's sprinkler system or smoke detectors. There's nothing like the arrival of a fire brigade to disturb the flow of a meditation, and your pastor's patience. Before burning anything in a class, including candles, be sure to check and double-check with your pastor, administrator, and other staff that it is okay. In lieu of smudge, consider an incense cone or candle, or use music, a bell or singing bowl. The form of the centering really is not important, only that it require the involvement of each student in some manner and that it occur every week.

Prepare Yourself

Be sure you know the material inside and out. Do not read from this or any other book during your lectures! Know the subject you want to cover, make some notes, and do some additional reading. Your students will want to know what other Pagan authors have to say, and what other religions, psychologists, and scientists have to say. The more you know, the more doors you can open for your students.

The exception to this, of course, is if a class takes the form of a study group where everyone is going through the material together. In this situation, one person is not acting as the teacher.

As you do your lectures, include handouts and visual aids whenever possible. We always used a white board or chalk board, even when we had to provide it ourselves, which we usually did. We tend to doodle, draw, and illustrate what we're talking about, which is how we ended up creating certain concepts such as the God Map, the Iceberg, and the Cosmic TV. Most of the illustrations in this book began as real time sketches in our classes.

You may photocopy or make transparencies of any illustration or text in our book and enlarge or reduce it as necessary to make a good handout for the class. We suggest you eliminate or cover all the labels and comments around an illustration when using it for a handout. Give it to the students blank and have them fill in the important information, even though they

can open the book and see the completed illustration there. Remember, you want to engage them as much as possible and the act of writing in the names and associations on handouts is a method of helping students retain new concepts. Blank copies of the suggested handouts are available in Appendix C.

If you have never taught before, do some practice sessions with friends. Ask them to be the students and then run through an actual class. Get their feedback. This is especially true for leading meditations, discussed below, which is an art in itself. Practice on your friends first. They can tell you if you need to go slower or faster, or modulate your voice.

Leading Meditations

Some of the most powerful experiences your students will have in your class will come during the guided meditations. It is very important that the environment be secluded and quiet. If you can adjust lighting and eliminate any noise, all the better. If you're in someone's home, be sure kids and animals are away, occupied and quiet, and turn the phone off.

If you haven't done guided meditations before or for a long time, be sure to practice on some of your friends first. Listen to their feedback.

To help ensure a good experience for your students you need to keep your awareness on two things simultaneously: the energy of the meditation, and the reactions of your students. In other words, you need to be immersed in the meditation along with the students, while still speaking and keeping an eye on how they're doing. Our first teacher called this "split focus." It can take some practice, so don't worry if it doesn't happen right away for you.

If you can focus on only one thing at a time, then make it your students. If you are prepared for class, you've already rehearsed the meditation several times. You know the speed and tone you want to use. So let that part do its thing and keep your eye on your students. Are they uncomfortable or shifting around? Are they grimacing or looking confused? Have they fallen asleep?

If you're not sure how long to pause at key points in the meditation, then watch your students. They'll tell you by their body language. If they start getting restless, move on. Pauses of longer than two minutes, even at key moments, may be more than enough. However, that will vary based on the intensity and experience level of your students. A common mistake teachers make is to talk constantly during a meditation. You must give periods of silence for the students to do their own work.

Always end the meditation gently. Do not jar the students back to reality. Let them decide when to open their eyes, but be sure everyone is back. If someone is slow to come back, call to them gently until they open their eyes, but avoid touching them. If someone has trouble getting grounded once they are back, try having them put their palms on the floor, get something to eat and drink, walk around, and go to the bathroom. A couple of the meditations in the book recommend having blankets and snacks on hand just in case. Other than having snacks on hand for emergency grounding, however, do not serve food before or during the class as it will tend to

create a distraction and possibly a mess. Save social eating and visiting for afterwards, either at the church or a nearby restaurant or coffee house.

Be sure to allow plenty of time to process a meditation once it is finished, at least a half hour. Encourage, but don't force, everyone to share what happened and what worked or didn't work for them. The first class or two students may be shy and reluctant to share, but as time passes you'll discover that the difficulty is in limiting the discussion.

If a student taps into a repressed memory or trauma, or seems overwhelmed by an emotional or psychological issue, give what comfort you can at the moment but do not attempt to be their counselor. Encourage them to seek professional counseling. Do not allow them to be a disruption to the class, then or in the future. If their issues seem sufficiently severe, insist that they leave the class until they have completed some counseling. If they must leave the class, see that they get the refund coming to them.

Keep Control of Your Class

Maintain a firm and disciplined hand in your class. There are certain subjects you need to cover in a limited period of time. Stick to your schedule. Don't let the class degenerate into a social hour. Don't allow the louder, more strong-willed students to overpower the quieter ones. Make sure the shyer students are included and participate equally. Don't allow strong-minded students to become the teacher; that's your job. In class, be gentle but firm about who has the floor to speak, and for how long, what will be done when, and so forth.

Try not to embarrass any student in front of the group. If a problem persists, speak to the student privately at break or after class. You can always insist they leave the class if there seems to be no solution.

Above all, use your common sense and act like an adult. Do not lose your temper, miss class, throw a tantrum, become romantically or sexually involved with a student, pick a fight with your host church, play favorites, let your friends attend, invite the press to class, ridicule someone's efforts, discuss the class with others in a gossipy way, or share information a student has told you in confidence. Treat your students with respect, and they in turn will respect you.

Class Outlines

The outlines we provide below are essentially the same as those we have used in numerous Introduction to Paganism classes, with a special emphasis for UU religious education. In the left margin is a number which represents the approximate amount of time available for each segment. The total number of minutes for each class is 120, or two hours. The time limits are given as guidelines only. You can be flexible with them, but if you run over in one area you must make it up in another.

We also found it helpful to note actual time on the outline before class began. If the class started at 7, then we would note that a given lecture needed to begin around 7:30, the meditation at 7:50, and break at 8:10. We could become so involved in the work at hand that we would lose

track of time. Having the time written out beforehand helped remind us to move on. You may wish to try this too.

We tended to call the parts of the class either “lectures” or “activities”, so that at a glance we could see if we were headed into a talking or a doing part of the class. This does not mean that a “lecture” must consist of you droning on by yourself. It can certainly include group discussion. However, there is certain information you need to cover in order for the students to progress in understanding and for the activities to be as meaningful as possible. One way to approach the lecture is to present a cluster of ideas for several minutes, and then pause for four or five minutes to let the group respond. You can use the questions they ask and the points they raise to move you into another cluster of information sharing. If the students own the book and read the material ahead of time as part of their homework, then we can practically guarantee they will be near to bursting with comments and questions by the time class begins. In this case your lecture will be more of a review of key points they have already read.

In the first class, you and the other students will have an opportunity to get to know each other, to hear why each of them is in the class, and what they most want to learn. Take notes and study them later. The desires of the students may be all over the place, or they may be essentially the same. The latter is more rare, though we remember a class where every student but one was there to learn divination. This presented an interesting challenge since the introductory class does not focus on divination skills per se. However, to accommodate the students we re-designed standard activities and meditations, and occasionally created new ones, that worked on basic skills with a bias toward divination. Use your imagination and try to meet the needs and expectations of your students whenever possible.

You may find it helpful to create a class notebook. In our class notebooks we put all the class outlines in order and all the handouts we intended to use for each class. We would make enough copies of each handout for the students, and an extra for us to write notes on. Then when we began class, everything we needed was in one place.

We also took books with us that related to the subject that evening. If the topic was magick, for example, then we would take several books from our personal library on this subject and pass them around. This does several things. It exposes the students to other books and allows you to recommend the books you think are high in quality.

Panic Button

If you should find yourself at the end of a class outline with more class time to go, don't panic. In all honesty, we never encountered this problem--there was always too much information to share and too little time. However, if you discover you have time to kill, something just isn't working, or your mind goes blank, don't worry. You have a built-in escape valve. Every Chapter in the book has several sets of Questions to Discuss. Pick one or two of these, get a discussion going, and class will be over before you know it.

CLASS OUTLINES

Class 1

Class One at a Glance.

What you will need:

class notebook; dry erase board and markers if not supplied; enough copies of the Introduction for each student (see Appendix B); copies of book if students are to pick them up from you; key to church if necessary

UUA Principles and Sources addressed:

All (attached Introduction)

UUA Principles 1, 3 (student introductions)

Source 6 (What is Paganism?)

- 5 **Welcome Students and Introduce Yourself.** Who are you, why are you teaching, what the class will cover in general. Briefly cover needed materials—book, pens, paper, etc.
- 15 **Activity: Introducing Each Other.** Divide the class into pairs. In case friends have come together, ask them to choose someone they don't know. If there is an odd number present, you fill in. One person of the pair takes five minutes and tells the person about themselves--where they're from, what they do, what their history is, how they discovered Paganism, why they are in the class. The person listening should listen carefully, because later they will be introducing this person to the class. Time the five minutes, give a one minute warning, then have the pairs switch for another five minutes.
- 25 **Processing the Activity.** Go around the class, either randomly or in order, and have each member introduce the person they were paired with. At the end of the introduction, ask the person who was introduced if there's anything they would like to add. If it wasn't covered, ask why they are interested in Paganism and are taking the class. Respond to each student and at the end of their time thank them for sharing. Take notes for yourself, so you can study their reasons for being there during the week, and so that at the next class you can call the students by name.
- 20 **Discussion of UU Principles and Sources.** Hand out the Introduction attached below and have the students read it aloud. This means you will need to remember to photocopy it before class begins! This Introduction is not in the book; it has been prepared specifically for UU religious education classes. You can add variety to the reading by asking each student to read a paragraph or two. Try stopping once or twice for a brief discussion. Discuss further at the end. One way to start a discussion is to offer an opinion on the material and ask if anyone agrees or disagrees with you. The students may not be familiar with each other and may be

shy about sharing at first. Don't despair if this happens; things will improve as the classes go on. If you have a personal friend among the students, you might ask them ahead of time to be an ice breaker and jump in with the first couple of comments.

- 10 **Break.** Be sure everyone knows where the bathrooms and drinking fountains are, and that you will be starting up again on time.
- 25 **Lecture: What Is Paganism?** See the beginning of Chapter 1. Points to include: definitions, umbrella term, demographics, the various traditions, cultural misconceptions about Paganism. Share what Paganism means to you and encourage them to do the same. Identify the Principles of Paganism (p. 39) and invite comments.
- 15 **Activity: Grounding, Centering, and Smudging.** Teach a simple basic grounding and centering technique and then smudge. See the Teacher's Guide for cautions about smudging or burning anything inside of a church. Smudging is the burning of sage either in a bowl or on a smudgestick. Let class members smudge themselves. A fan or feather may be helpful with this. If smudge is not allowed, see if you can burn incense or a candle. If no flames are allowed, then bring a bell or singing bowl. As the item goes around, suggest that the students imagine themselves being cleansed and letting go of the things they don't need from their day. They can pull the smoke over themselves, to their heart, over their head. Suggest that they open themselves to the new information they receive in class. There should be no talking by anyone during this period.
- 5 **Homework.** Assign the reading of Chapter 1 and the journaling on page 42. Suggest the students try grounding and centering on their own during the week. Let them know you'll be asking how they did next class.

Class 2

Class Two at a Glance.

What you will need:

class notebook; dry erase board and markers if not supplied; blank wheel of the year handout from book (see Appendix C); blank camera handout (see Appendix C); books from your personal library relating to wheel of the year, rites of passage, and elements of ritual.

UUA Principles and Sources addressed:

Source 6 and Principle 7 (Wheel of the Year and Rites of Passage)

Sources 1 and 6 (Elements of Ritual)

UUA Principles 3, 4, 5, 6 (beliefs)

- 25 **Smudging. Download From the Week.** How did their homework go, did they have any success with the grounding and centering? Any questions from their reading? Encourage some sharing of their journaling.
- 25 **Lecture: Wheel of the Year and the Rites of Passage.** Hand out the blank wheel of the year. Have a chalk board or dry erase board on hand. Ask what earth-centered means. Then go through the Wheel of the Year (p. 20) with them--you draw on the board, they fill in their handout. Share personal anecdotes about seasonal observances and rituals you have been a part of. Ask for their experiences. Add the Rites of Passage onto the wheel according to where they fall.
- 10 **Break**
- 20 **Lecture: Element of a Typical Ritual.** Points to include: the parts of ritual (pgs. 30-33), ritual tools and altars, the directions, the elements, and correspondences (p. 33-37). Share some personal anecdotes.
- 20 **Activity: A Shift in Beliefs.** Have the students get quiet and listen to their breathing. Have them begin to think back over their life to a time when the world suddenly shifted for them. One day the world seemed a certain way, and the next it was all different. Something happened, something was said, and they realized that they couldn't believe something they used to believe. Give this five minutes. Then divide the students in pairs and ask them to choose someone different than they were with for introducing themselves. If there is an odd number, you fill in. Give three to four minutes for one person in the pair to share their experience with the other, then switch for another three to four minutes. Bring the group back together for a discussion.
- 15 **Lecture: The Nature of Beliefs.** Lay the groundwork for what they'll be reading in Chapter 2. Present some basic concepts about beliefs. Prepare a blank handout of the mind as a camera and walk through it with them. For some reason, the

concept that we are in control of what we believe was one of the most difficult concepts for our students to accept. This is why you're covering it here and again next week. We always lost students after covering beliefs, sometimes as much as thirty percent of the class. Don't be discouraged if this happens.

- 5 **Homework.** Assign the reading of Chapter 2 and the walking meditation from Chapter 1 (p. 23). Tell them they don't have to read all the meditations in the Chapters unless they want to because you'll be doing many of them in class.

Class 3

Class Three at a Glance.

What you will need:

class notebook; dry erase board and markers if not supplied; extra handouts for those who lost or forgot theirs; paper, pens, markers and crayons for drawing activity;

UUA Principles and Sources addressed:

UUA Principles 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 (beliefs and self-image)

- 25 **Smudging. Download From the Week.** How did the walking meditation go, and do they have any questions from their reading of Chapter 2? The students may have further reflections on the belief shift exercise from last class. They may also report that something unusual happened to them during the week. As the class progresses, one or more of the students may have unusual things happen to them. This is common, as they are beginning to be more self-aware, they're questioning old assumptions, and they're waking up deeper levels of themselves. The unusual events may involve other people, objects, or dreams. Offer appropriate reassurance and guidance.
- 25 **Lecture: More on Beliefs.** Pick up from where you left off last week. Briefly review the camera. Points to include: belief systems and structures, the difference between religions based in Search and Dogma. Touch on the Keys to Success (p. 69).
- 10 **Break**
- 25 **Activity: Meditation.** Lead the meditation from Chapter 2 called Self-Image as a Belief Filter (p. 49). Take fifteen minutes of the allotted time for a group sharing and processing afterwards.
- 30 **Activity: Drawing Your Self-Image Filter.** Bring paper, pens, markers, pencils, chalk, and crayons, and do the drawing exercise from Chapter 2 (p. 53). Give ten or fifteen minutes for this part, and use the remainder of the time for the students to share their drawings and what they mean.
- 5 **Homework.** Assign the reading of Chapter 3, and the journaling in Chapter 2 Pgs. 52 and 73) if they haven't already done it. Ask them to bring the materials they need to the beliefs braid mentioned in Chapter 2 to class next week.

Class 4

Class Four at a Glance.

What you will need:

class notebook; dry erase board and markers if not supplied; extra supplies for beliefs braid for those who forgot (yarn works well); book to read braid exercise from; blank God Map handouts.

UUA Principles and Sources addressed:

UUA Principles 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 (beliefs braid)

Sources 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and Principles 3, 4, 5 (God Map and meditation)

- 25 **Smudging. Download From the Week.** Ask about their homework. Did everyone bring supplies for the beliefs braid working? Bring a ball or skein of yarn with you just in case.
- 25 **Activity: Making the Beliefs Braid.** Page 64. For the longer statements, ask the students to repeat after you. On everything else let them set their own pace. If you finish early, go ahead and start the God lecture.
- 10 **Break**
- 35 **Lecture: God.** See Chapter 3. Points to include: God as an idea, address anxiety, types of beliefs about God, and the fact that Pagans can hold any God beliefs they wish. Hand out a blank God Map (p. 94). Take them through it and identify all its parts. Where would they put their religion of origin on the map? Where do they put themselves? Encourage some discussion.
- 20 **Activity: Meditation to Encounter Deity.** See Chapter 3 for the Encountering Deity meditation (p. 88). Give 10 to 15 minutes for sharing at the end.
- 5 **Homework.** Assign the reading of Chapter 4 and the journaling in Chapter 3 (p. 100).

Class 5

Class Five at a Glance.

What you will need:

class notebook; dry erase board and markers if not supplied; extra paper for journaling exercise; books from your personal library on pagan history to show students.

UUA Principles and Sources addressed:

UUA Principles 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 (journaling of beliefs)

Sources 3, 4, 5 and UUA Principles 4, 5, 6 (Satanism and Pagans)

- 25 **Smudging. Download From the Week.** Ask about the homework.
- 10 **Activity: Journaling Some Beliefs.** Ask the students the following questions, which come from the journaling in Chapter 4 (p. 129). Ask them to take out some paper and write down their answers. Give an appropriate amount of time between questions. “What do you believe about Satan right now? How do your current beliefs differ from beliefs you held in the past? What do you believe about evil spirits? Is there anything in the universe you fear spiritually?” Tell them to hold onto their answers for later discussion, but do not discuss them now.
- 30 **Lecture: The Pagan View of Satan.** See Chapter 4. Points to include: a brief history of the development of Satan as a concept, the witch trials and misconceptions concerning witches and Satan (pgs. 103-110), what Pagans believe about Satan (p. 102), what a Satanist is, and whether a Pagan can be a Satanist (pgs. 121-125). Invite discussion.
- 10 **Break**
- 25 **Lecture: More on Satan.** Cover the social and mythological roles of Satan Pgs. 11-120), and ask the students to identify any other roles they can think of. Write them on the board. Touch on the Keys to Success (pgs. 126-129).
- 15 **Activity: Discussion.** Open the floor to discuss their answers to the questions asked at the beginning of class. How do they feel about this whole subject? Does it have any impact on them or their spirituality? Identify some of their concerns and anxieties and give appropriate reassurance.
- 5 **Homework.** Assign the reading of Chapter 5. Ask them to finish the journaling in Chapter 4 (p. 129).

Class 6

Class Six at a Glance.

What you will need:

class notebook; dry erase board and markers if not supplied; extra handouts for those who lost or forgot theirs; paper, pens, markers and crayons for drawing activity; books from your personal library on physics and religion, and mysticism.

UUA Principles and Sources addressed:

Sources 3, 4, 5 and UUA Principles 4, 7 (living universe)

Sources 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and UUA Principles 3, 4, 7 (mysticism)

Source 5 and UUA Principle 7 (Cosmic TV)

- 25 **Smudging. Download From the Week.** Ask about homework. Has anything unusual been happening to them?
- 15 **Lecture: The Living Universe.** Discuss Pagan Principles 4, 5, and 6 in more detail. Compare to the current Western mindset. Identify the three sources of information about the universe which support the Pagan view of the Living Universe--science, personal experience, and mysticism.
- 15 **Activity: Meditation.** Do the meditation called Feeling the Space In and Around You in Chapter 5 (p. 143). Process very briefly.
- 10 **Break**
- 15 **Lecture: More on the Universe.** Begin with mysticism (pgs. 145-150). Points to include: what is mysticism, what mystical experiences can be like, how these experiences are similar despite the religious differences of the mystics. What are the mystics trying to tell us about the universe? Share an experience or quote.
- 15 **Activity: Meditation.** Lead the Consciousness in All Things meditation in Chapter 5 (p. 150). Skip the processing afterwards if you don't have time.
- 20 **Lecture: The Cosmic TV.** Use the Cosmic TV as your way to explain science's view of the living universe (p. 155-160). Know this material thoroughly first, and don't forget the footnotes to the Chapter. A thorough knowledge of this material will help you tie all the points together, such as the implicate, explicate, holomovement, holograms, and blinking on and off, to the TV analogy.
- 5 **Homework.** Assign the reading of Chapter 6 and the journaling in Chapter 5 (p. 162). Ask the students to bring a drum, rattle, or other noisemaker to the next class. Also ask them to do the drawing part of the exercise in Chapter 5 called Expressing Your Experience with the Universe (p. 153), and bring the drawing with them to the next class.

Class 7

Class Seven at a Glance.

What you will need:

class notebook; dry erase board and markers if not supplied; extra drums or noisemakers (dried seeds in juice bottles works well); check with church about the noise and whether it will be a disturbance to other groups—if so, move to a different classroom or go outside; books from your personal library on magick.

UUA Principles and Sources addressed:

Source 1 (drumming and personal experience)

Sources 1, 3, 6 and UUA Principles 4, 7 (magick, iceberg, and pager)

- 25 **Smudging. Download From the Week.** Ask about their homework. Did they bring a drum or rattle? If you have extras at home, bring some just in case. Did they bring their picture?
- 20 **Activity: Drumming Their Connection with the Universe.** This activity contains only part of the Expressing Your Experience exercise in Chapter 5 (p. 153). Have the students sit on the floor if possible, and place their pictures in front of them. If they forgot their pictures, they can visualize what they drew or whatever comes to them during the meditation. Lead them through some deep breathing while they put themselves back in their point of contact with the universe. Looking at the picture they drew may help them. Then pass one drum around the group and ask each student, one at a time, to drum what their connection with the universe feels like, for about one minute. There should be no talking while this happens. If everyone wants to close their eyes, that's fine. After everyone has drummed, hand out noisemakers all around and let the group drum together. If people want to sing and vocalize, that's okay. If they want to get up and dance, that's fine too. Afterwards, let everyone catch their breath. If you have time, start the lecture below, otherwise begin it after break. Be sure the noise you will be making is not going to be a disturbance to other groups or classes in the church.
- 15 **Lecture: The Role of Personal Experience.** Although what mystics and scientists tell us about the universe helps us grow in understanding, ultimately we must make our own connection with the universe, as the drumming has demonstrated. Let this topic lead naturally to a discussion of the basics of magick.
- 10 **Break**
- 20 **Lecture: Magick.** See Chapter 6. Draw the iceberg on the board and explain. Then cover the mechanics and applications of magick (pgs. 163-182).
- 15 **Activity: Meditation.** Lead the Exploring the Iceberg Meditation in Chapter 6 (p. 176). Process briefly.

- 10 **Lecture: Your Magickal Pager.** Pgs. 187-189. Points to include: what your pager is and how it works. Give an example from your own life. One or two students may have an example also. Tell them they will be working with their magickal pagers for the next week.
- 5 **Homework.** Assign the reading of Chapter 7, the journaling in Chapter 6 (p. 175), and the exercise in Chapter 6 called Working With Your Magickal Pager (p. 189). If the students wish to keep in touch once class is over, circulate a page on which they can write their address, email and phone number, and tell them you will make copies of it and pass it out at the last class. Ask them to look at the bead exercise beginning on pg. 193 and shop for the beads they wish to use for it and bring them to the next class.

Class 8

Class Eight at a Glance.

What you will need:

class notebook; dry erase board and markers if not supplied; copies of students addresses and numbers collected at seventh class; extra beads and cording from local craft store for those who forgot or for yourself if you want to join in; books from your personal library on ethics.

UUA Principles and Sources addressed:

UUA Principles 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 (limitations of magick)

Sources 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and UUA Principles 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 (ethics)

UUA Principle 7 and Sources 1, 6 (bead exercise)

- 25 **Smudging. Download From the Week.** How did the magickal paging go?
- 15 **Lecture: More on Magick.** Briefly cover the limitations of magick (pg. 184-186) and the Keys to Success (p. 190-193). Invite discussion and recounting of personal experiences.
- 30 **Lecture: Ethics and Personal Responsibility.** Cover as much of this as you have time for. The students may have specific questions and concerns. Touch on the Wiccan Rede and Rule of Threes, relate to Christianity and Golden Rule, Buddhist code of right living. Mention Asatru system briefly and suggest they work on the Virtuous Exercise on their own in the months following class.
- 10 **Break**
- 35 **Activity: Bead Exercise.** See pg. 193. Have the students repeat after you for the various cleansings of the beads, and the meanings of each as they tie them onto their cord.
- 5 **Class Wrap Up and Goodbyes.** Hand out the list of addresses collected at the previous class.

APPENDIX A
Sample Publicity Articles

Sample articles to promote the “Exploring Paganism” course

Short Article - ~260 words

Come join us in discovering earth-based spiritualities and personal beliefs in an eight-week adult education course, "Exploring Paganism." The course will be taught by (teacher's name) and offered (dates, time) at (place.) The book *Paganism: an Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions*, by River and Joyce Higginbotham, will be used as a text with the course. (Purchase details.)

Earth-centered religions form the sixth source of spirituality recognized by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Spiritual teachings of earth-centered, or Pagan, religions celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of Nature.

With its focus on personal responsibility, the freedom of all to search for meaning and to live according to one's own beliefs, and the honoring of the interdependent web of life, Earth-centered spirituality has much in common with Unitarian Universalist principles. The connections between Paganism and UUism will be explored further in the course.

The class will feature a mix of lecture, discussion, journaling, guided meditations and other activities. Topics covered include the earth-centered sacred year, Pagan perceptions of the Divine and attitudes toward belief, Pagan holidays and worship styles, the concept of a living, conscious, interdependent universe, what magick is and how it works, Pagan viewpoints on Satan, and ethics. The course will also give students a taste of the kind of self-inquiry Pagans encounter in their studies of Paganism, as well as offer tools to help students identify their personal values and goals.

All who are interested in understanding Earth-based spiritualities and exploring their own beliefs are welcome. For more information, contact (information.)

Long Article - ~700 words

Come join us in discovering earth-based spiritualities and personal beliefs in an eight-week adult education course, "Exploring Paganism." The course will be taught by (teacher's name) and offered (dates, time) at (place.) The book *Paganism: an Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions*, by River and Joyce Higginbotham, will be used as a text with the course. (Purchase details.)

Earth-centered religions form the sixth source of spirituality recognized by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Spiritual teachings of earth-centered, or Pagan, religions celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of Nature.

Paganism is a spiritual path that appeals to a growing number of Americans. As there are no formal, public membership lists, getting a head count of modern Pagans is difficult. Estimates by national polling organizations and religious academics estimate the numbers today between 800,000 and 1.25 million. This is up from an estimate of 300,000 based on data from twenty years ago. By comparison, the 2002 World Almanac says that in North America there are about 800,000 Buddhists, 1.3 million Hindus, 6 million Jews and 4.5 million Muslims.

With its focus on personal responsibility, the freedom of all to search for meaning and to live according to one's own beliefs, and the honoring of the interdependent web of life, Earth-centered spirituality has much in common with Unitarian Universalist principles. The connections between Paganism and UUism will be explored further in the course, but two examples are offered here.

First, one of the most basic tenets of Pagan belief systems is that of the blessedness of human beings and the material world. Pagans do not believe that humans are inherently flawed, and do not need "saving" or other repair to be worthy of human and Divine regard. This presumption of worthiness underlies all UUA Principles, as we see clearly in Principle 1 which affirms "the inherent worth and dignity of every person". Like the UUA, Pagan paths place a great deal of trust and responsibility in the individual.

Secondly, Paganism promotes no official dogma and does not require the acceptance of a creedal statement by its members. Being a Pagan often involves learning to let go of attachment to dogma, to approach belief systems objectively, and to accept responsibility for the beliefs and ethics one chooses to adopt. This approach is also in harmony with UUA Principles and Purposes.

Because of the variety and flexibility of beliefs enjoyed by Pagans, it was a challenge for the Higginbothams to identify some the core beliefs and values of modern Pagans. Based on their years of teaching and broad experience in the Pagan community nationally, however, they have identified what they believe to be seven Principles of Paganism, which are:

You are responsible for the beliefs you choose to adopt.

You are responsible for your own actions and your spiritual and personal development.

You are responsible for who or what Deity is for you, and forming a relationship with that Deity.

Everything contains the spark of intelligence.

Everything is sacred

Each part of the universe can communicate with each other part, and these parts often cooperate for specific ends.

Consciousness survives death.

The course will cover these Principles in more detail. Students also will study the earth-centered sacred year, Pagan perceptions of the Divine and attitudes toward belief, Pagan holidays and worship styles, the concept of a living, conscious, interdependent universe, what magick is and how it works, Pagan viewpoints on Satan, and ethics. The course will also give students a taste of the kind of self-inquiry Pagans encounter in their studies of Paganism, as well as offer tools to help students identify their values and goals. Issues explored will include: Why do you believe what you believe? What is the Divine to you, and how do you relate to it? What is your place in the universe? What is evil, and what do you fear spiritually? What are your values, and how did you arrive at them?

The class will feature a mix of lecture, discussion, journaling, guided meditations and other activities designed to help students in their personal and spiritual growth.

For more information about the course, contact (name, other information.)

APPENDIX B

Introduction
&
Pagan Principles and UU Principles and Sources

Introduction to Exploring Paganism: A Discussion of Pagan Belief and UUA Principles and Sources

The goal of this Introduction is to connect the Pagan beliefs you will be studying in this course to UUA Principles and Sources. It provides a summary and overview of the connections you will cover in more detail in future classes. For quick reference, a copy of the complete text of the Pagan Principles and UUA Principles and Sources is attached.

In the first class you will discuss the Seven Principles of Paganism we identify in our book, *Paganism: An Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions*. Keep in mind that these Principles are only our synthesis of commonly held Pagan beliefs as we have observed them. They are not drawn from any particular tradition, group, or practice within Paganism. Although referred to as “beliefs”, these concepts are not equivalent to an official dogma or creedal statement. Pagans are not required to adopt these Principles. Most Pagans we know tend to agree with most aspects of the Pagan Principles, but not necessarily all of them. Paganism’s approach to its beliefs is similar to that of the UUA, as we see in the UUA Purposes which state that UUism does not require “adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed.”

To the seven Pagan Principles we add an important underlying theme, or philosophical foundation, of Paganism that can be viewed as the base upon which the Pagan Principles rest. It is so basic to most Pagan belief and practice that it is rarely stated explicitly and operates more as an assumption. This assumption of blessedness, or that “there is nothing wrong with you.” (See pages 2 and 3). By this we do not mean you cannot or should not desire to grow and improve yourself. We mean that neither human beings nor the material world are fundamentally flawed in any manner, or in need of salvation or other repair to be worthy of human and Divine regard.

This presumption of worthiness underlies all UUA Principles as well, and is also assumed in the Sources. Principle 1 affirms the worth and dignity of every person, which leads to justice, equity, and compassion in human relations (Principle 2), as individuals encourage each other in their spiritual growth (Principle 3), a search that is undertaken in both freedom and responsibility (Principle 4). The right of conscience is recognized (Principle 5) while respecting the web of which all are a part (Principle 7). The UUA Principles, as well as the Pagan Principles, cannot work if human beings are viewed as so inherently flawed that their natures are incapable of making good choices. On this issue, Paganism and UUism are of one mind.

Another major theme of Paganism (see pages 2 and 3), which is echoed in Pagan Principle 6, is the interconnectedness of all aspects of the universe. This theme finds support in UUA Principle 7, which promotes “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” While this theme of Paganism can be viewed as a statement of planetary and interplanetary ecology, and a call to stewardship of resources, Paganism takes the concept of interconnectedness further than that. It goes beyond ecology and past the sub-atomic level, out of space-time, and into consciousness and the multi-dimensional fabric of all that is. The Pagan view of interconnectedness and interdependence presupposes, as stated in Pagan Principle 7, the indestructibility of this multi-dimensional whole. For want of a better word, we call this indestructible aspect “consciousness”. It can be called many things, however, as seen in Pagan

Principle 4. The Pagan theme of interconnection proposes, unlike some versions of the “interdependent web”, that every part of the whole can communicate with all other parts, and choose to cooperate, or not, for specific ends. Herein lies the foundation of magick, as defined by Paganism, which you will explore in later classes.

Pagan Principles 1, 2 and 3 focus on the combination of freedom and responsibility of individuals in the areas of belief, action, and their relationship with the Divine. Belief here is not limited to religious belief, but refers to any idea individuals adopt as true. This includes all areas of life: the social, cultural, psychological, physical, scientific, religious, and familial. Paganism promotes the freedom and obligation of individuals to decide on matters of belief for themselves. This is in agreement with UUA Principles 4 and 3 which affirm “a free and responsible search for truth and meaning” in the context of “acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.” It is also in agreement with the UUA Purpose which states that nothing contained in UUA statements “shall be deemed to infringe upon the individual freedom of belief.” Paganism and UUism are again in agreement on this important issue.

The responsibility for belief extends into the area of God beliefs and an individual’s relationship with the Divine. Pagans are free to image the Divine however they wish, even to deciding there is no Divine. Pagans are also responsible for developing their relationship with the Divine to whatever point they wish to take it, including no relationship at all. Pagans are encouraged to study all religious traditions, as well as spiritual and philosophical writers of all times and cultures, to help them in the formation of their beliefs and relationships. Most Pagans would feel comfortable utilizing any or all of the UUA Sources in their spiritual development, and would agree with UUA Principles and Purposes which affirm the right of individuals to decide these matters for themselves.

Pagan Principle 2 states that individuals are responsible for their actions and the consequences which flow from them. This requires the formation of conscience and a sound ethical system which may draw from any social or religious tradition. The Pagan view is in harmony with UUA Principles 5 and 2 which affirm the “right of conscience” for each individual and promote actions which lead to “justice, equity and compassion in human relations”. Pagans would support the use of each of the UUA Sources in promoting spiritual growth as those Sources call people to lives of justice, love, reason and harmony, and “inspire us in our ethical and spiritual life.” (Source 3).

Although brief, this Introduction has highlighted many connections between Pagan and UUA concepts. You will likely discover others as you go through this course. We believe that modern Paganism and UUism cherish many of the same values, and can be mutually supportive in their goal of fostering spiritual growth and development for everyone.

The Seven Principles of Paganism

Developed by Joyce and River Higginbotham

1. You are responsible for the beliefs you choose to adopt.
2. You are responsible for your own actions and your spiritual and personal development.
3. You are responsible for who or what Deity is for you, and forming a relationship with that Deity.
4. Everything contains the spark of intelligence.
5. Everything is sacred
6. Each part of the universe can communicate with each other part, and these parts often cooperate for specific ends.
7. Consciousness survives death.

The UUA Principles

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The UUA Sources

1. Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
2. Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
5. Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
6. Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.