

January 2012

Dear Members of the First Unitarian Society:

Yes, it's January; yes, it's cold. But is it too early to be thinking about Summer Assemblies when it will be June and warm? NO! Your Summer Assemblies Committee has been hard at work, reviewing the great 2011 summer assemblies and identifying ways to make the programs this coming summer even better! We're grateful to all of you who've offered feedback and suggestions along the way.

For 2012, we want once again to make sure that ALL members of FUS have an opportunity to be an integral part of a successful summer series. We believe that the opportunity to conceive and deliver a presentation on a summer Sunday morning is not only a chance to share something important about yourself with your community here, but also an incredible moment for spiritual growth. Attached to this letter is a "Request for Proposals" (RFP) that we invite anybody connected with FUS to review and use to propose an assembly topic that they would be involved in presenting later this summer.

Scared? Don't be! The Summer Assemblies Committee is here to help you make your presentation run smoothly. Our 2011 speakers provided very positive feedback regarding the support they received from the committee. We make sure that logistics are arranged ahead of time, and that people are on hand to light/extinguish the chalice, make announcements, etc. We help presenters with identifying readings and/or music, if needed, and, with help from our ministerial team, guide presenters to making their talk as effective and fulfilling as possible, both for you and for the congregation. The "presentation" boils down to about a twenty-minute talk, and you can split the time among multiple speakers so no one person has to cover the entire time. *You really can do this!*

So ... do you have a hobby, a passion, a hero, a cause, or an interest that you want to share with the congregation, and which you can connect with UU spirituality? Were you really moved by a book, a movie, or a poem that relates to your UU experience? Have you visited a location that made you think more deeply about your connections with the UU principles and sources? If so ... please consider proposing a Sunday morning topic for a summer assembly program so the rest of us can learn more! Based on feedback, you'll see that the 2012 RFP asks you to **specifically articulate the spiritual message you want your audience to take away from the presentation!** Please pay particular attention to this request so that you, our congregation, and visitors have the best experience possible.

If you're ready to take the plunge, please complete as much as possible of the attached "RFP" and deliver it to the Summer Assemblies Committee mailbox in the office, preferably by Sunday, February 12, 2012. Past presenters have talked about how meaningful this level of participation is ... here's your chance to find out why!

Sincerely,  
The FUS Summer Assemblies Committee





Please identify what speaker(s) you envision being involved with this presentation. Feel free to identify an individual(s) or, for example, “a speaker from [organization].” (Your proposal can involve one speaker, or multiple speakers, but at least one speaker should be associated with FUS, preferably the person submitting the proposal.) **This information is HELPFUL but NOT REQUIRED at this time.**

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Please identify what readings or songs you envision being involved with this presentation. See attached page for pointers on making selections. (You are encouraged, but not required, to use at least one reading or song from the hymnal or its supplement.) **This information is HELPFUL but NOT REQUIRED at this time.**

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Please identify any special equipment or other considerations (room layout, specific date request, etc.) you envision being needed to make your presentation a success. **This information is HELPFUL but NOT REQUIRED at this time.** Please note that not all requests may be within FUS’ means to accommodate.

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Please complete this form to the best of your ability and return it to the Summer Assemblies Committee mailbox in the office at FUS by Sunday, February 12, 2012. The Committee will review all proposals for fit within the overall summer 2011 program, and will follow up with you as soon as possible with initial questions, clarifications, or responses to the proposal. Our goal is to have more proposals than available Sundays, and if that happens, some proposals will be accepted and some will not be. We appreciate your understanding, and encourage you to resubmit ideas (or develop new ones!) for future Summer Assemblies.

## **Helps for Assembly Planning**

**START EARLY**--Six months ahead is not too soon to begin planning for your assembly. It is far better to be all ready to go well in advance, than to be in a panic at the last minute. Unless you have done this before, you may not realize all that goes into a quality Sunday morning experience.

**SELECT A TOPIC**--You have a lot of latitude here. In a UU/humanist context no subject is inappropriate for an assembly. Every area of life has a spiritual or ethical dimension to it. Follow your instincts. What are you most interested in? What are you knowledgeable about? Think it through. What is it you really want to communicate to your audience? How has this affected your life? How do you think it might interest your listeners?

**READINGS**--Your best source for readings is what you already read as you explore your interests. What books are currently in your personal library? What do you read in the course of your professional life? What possible spiritual insights might there be here? Use the library, the bookstore and the internet. Be creative. Consider using poetry. Remember that, for us, there is no closed canon of holy scripture. Any reading can be appropriate if it speaks to and supports your message.

**OPENING AND CLOSING WORDS, CHALICE LIGHTINGS, RESPONSIVE READINGS**--In the back of our hymnbook there are more than 300 such readings, followed by a topical index. The UUA website, [uua.org](http://uua.org), has a section called "WorshipWeb" which might be of help to you. From the home page click on "Leaders". Under "more information" click on "WorshipWeb".

**MUSIC** – As soon as you have settled on a topic, begin thinking about what music you might want. Explore both the hymnal and the hymnal supplement. Together, they contain nearly 500 hymns to choose from. Early on contact the Summer Music Coordinator. Share your topic and any musical ideas you have. Together, you can work out the kinds and styles of music and the musicians to perform them.

**SERMON** – A sermon is essentially a speech with a spiritual/ethical focus. In our context it is about applying our UU principles to pretty much any subject. Allow sufficient time to prepare. Unless you are an experienced public speaker, this can take longer than you might expect. It is a process that involves thinking, reading, note-taking, writing, editing, and practicing your delivery. Aim to connect emotionally with your audience. Share some personal experiences. Tell stories. Seek to inspire more than to inform.

Keep it to within 20 minutes. Even 15 minutes is fine. If you use multiple speakers, make sure all understand the time constraints. Time it. Practice it out loud several times. Get feedback from a trusted friend. On Sunday morning run through a portion of it at the mic with the sound person.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS** – The Summer Assemblies Committee is here to help you along the way. We are happy to give our guidance and encouragement as best we can. Call on us. We are all in this together. That's what religious community is all about.

## Sample Summer Assemblies Formats

### Solo speaker assembly (suggested format – may be adjusted)

Prelude (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)  
Opening Words of Welcome (presenter or summer minister if there is one)  
Chalice Lighting (summer minister or anyone selected by presenter)  
Opening Song (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)  
Life of Community/Announcements (could be Leadership team member or summer minister if there is one)  
[optional] Flowers of Caring and Celebration (could be Leadership team member or summer minister if there is one)  
Offering (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)  
Readings (readings and readers selected by presenter)  
Reflections (presenter(s)) – term “Reflections” preferred instead of sermon  
Closing Song (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)  
Extinguishing Chalice (presenter, anyone selected by presenter, or summer minister)  
Closing Words (presenter or summer minister)  
Postlude (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)

### Multi-speaker assemblies (suggested format – may be adjusted)

Prelude (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)  
Opening Words of welcome (presenter or summer minister if there is one)  
Chalice Lighting (summer minister or anyone selected by presenter)  
Life of Community/announcements (could be Leadership team member or summer minister if there is one)  
Opening Song (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)  
Reading/s (presenter selected by main presenter)  
Reflection #1 (presenter selected by main presenter)  
Offering (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)  
Reading/s (Readings and readers selected by presenter)  
Reflections #2 (presenter selected by main presenter)  
Reading (reading and readers selected by presenter)  
Reflections #3 (presenter selected by main presenter)  
Song (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)  
Closing Words (presenter, anyone selected by presenter, or summer minister)  
Postlude (music selected by presenter and/or music coordinator)