

A Brief Overview of the History of Unitarian Universalism

“The Universalist Church of America was founded in 1793 and the American Unitarian Association in 1825. After merging in 1961, the two formed the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. Both denominations have long histories and have contributed important theological concepts. Most notably, Unitarian Universalism has evolved to be a non-creedal religion that welcomes people of all beliefs. Humanism itself became an influential part of the religion in the early 20th century and remains strong to this day. The Unitarian Universalist Association currently represents approximately 1,000 member congregations in the United States with more than 170,000 members and several hundred thousand more who identify as Unitarian Universalists but are not members of a congregation.

“Since the merger of the two denominations, Unitarian Universalism has built upon its dual heritages to provide a strong voice for social justice and liberal religion. Unitarian Universalists work in local, state, national and international interfaith coalitions and partnerships to affirm its principles and values. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the UU College of Social Justice, and the Standing on the Side of Love Program (<http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/>) are examples of this work.”

Although there have been many chronicles of the history of Unitarian Universalism, perhaps the most notable one is the widely-read pamphlet *Unitarian Universalist Origins: Our Historic Faith* by Mark W. Harris. The following are several excerpts from this valuable document:

“Two thousand years ago liberals were persecuted for seeking the freedom to make religious choices, but such freedom has become central to both Unitarianism and Universalism. As early as the 1830s, both groups were studying and promulgating texts from world religions other than Christianity. By the beginning of the twentieth century, humanists within both traditions advocated that people could be religious without believing in God. No one person, no one religion, can embrace all religious truths.

“By the middle of the twentieth century it became clear that Unitarians and Universalists could have a stronger liberal religious voice if they merged their efforts, and they did so in 1961, forming the Unitarian Universalist Association. Many Unitarian Universalists (UUs) became active in the civil rights movement. James Reeb, a Unitarian Universalist minister, was murdered in Selma, Alabama after he and twenty percent of the denomination’s ministers responded to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s call to march for justice.

“...Our history has carried us from liberal Christian views about Jesus and human nature to a rich pluralism that includes theist and atheist, agnostic and humanist, pagan, Christian, Jew, and Buddhist.”

The Seven Central Principles

As Reverend Barbara Wells ten Hove indicated, “The Principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities.”

1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person

2nd Principle: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations

3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

4th Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

5th Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large

6th Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

7th Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

Brief reflections on each of the seven principles taken from the statements of various UU ministers in *The Seven Principles in Word and Worship* (ed. Ellen Brandenburg) add a greater understanding of their depth.

1. “Reverence and respect for human nature is at the core of Unitarian Universalist faith. We believe that all the dimensions of our being carry the potential to do good.”

2. “Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations points us toward ...the larger community. It gets at collective responsibility. It reminds us that treating people as human beings is not simply something we do one-on-one, but something that has systemic implications and can inform our entire cultural way of being.”

3. “Spiritual growth isn’t about a vertical ascent to heaven but about growth in every dimension at once. It’s spirituality in 3-D.”

4. “As responsible religious seekers, we recognize that we are privileged to be free, to have resources to pursue life beyond mere survival, to continually search for truth and meaning, to exist beyond bonds of dogma and oppression, and to wrestle freely with truth and meaning as they evolve.”

5. “In our religious lives, the democratic process requires trust in the development of each individual conscience -- a belief that such development is possible for each of us, as well as a commitment to cultivate our own conscience.”

6. “I want us to believe -- and to live as if we believe -- that a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all is possible.”

7. “Our seventh Principle may be our Unitarian Universalist way of coming to fully embrace something greater than ourselves. The interdependent web -- expressed as the spirit of life, the ground of all being, the oneness of all existence, the community-forming power, the process of life, the creative force, even God -- can help us develop that social understanding of ourselves that we and our culture so desperately need. It is a source of meaning to which we can dedicate our lives.”

(<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/282067.shtml>)

The official statement of Unitarian Universalist principles also describes these sources on which current practices are based:

- 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;
- 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;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- 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;
- 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.

(<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/index.shtml>)

The key concepts in the Unitarian Universalist principles are: worth and dignity; equity and compassion; acceptance of one another; search for truth; the democratic process; peace, liberty, and justice for all; respect. The key concepts in “A Humanist Code of Ethics” (compiled by the Humanist Association of Northern Ireland) are: think for yourself; respect truth and reason; respect life; be open and honest; be loving and kind; help the weak and needy.

The Key Principles of humanism

There also are numerous statements that express the principles of humanism that cover a wide array of humanist concerns. We have drawn from several statements.

From Humanist Manifesto I (1933)

-- In place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer, the humanist finds religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.

--The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good.

(http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_I)

The authors and half of the signers were Unitarian ministers.

From Humanist Manifesto II (1973)

-- From the Preface: “Humanism is an ethical process through which we all can move, above and beyond the divisive particulars, heroic personalities, dogmatic creeds, and ritual customs of past religions or their mere negation.”

-- From the Closing: “We will survive and prosper only in a world of shared humane values....

At the present juncture of history, commitment to all humankind is the highest commitment

of which we are capable.” (http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_II)

From Humanist Manifesto III: Humanism and Its Aspirations (2003)

“...Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.”

(http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_III)

From the Amsterdam Declaration 2002 (International Humanist and Ethical Union)

-- Humanism is a lifescape aiming at the maximum possible fulfillment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living and offers an ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times. Humanism can be a way of life for everyone everywhere. (<http://iheu.org/humanism/the-amsterdam-declaration/>)

What Is Humanism?

Former AHA Executive Director Fred Edwards has written prolifically about the principles of humanism. In the essay titled, *What Is Humanism?* he concludes with these keen observations: “So, with modern humanism one finds a lifescape or worldview that is in tune with modern knowledge; is inspiring, socially conscious, and personally meaningful. It is not only the thinking person's outlook but that of the feeling person as well, for it has inspired the arts as much as it has the sciences; philanthropy as much as critique. And even in critique it is tolerant, defending the rights of all people to choose other ways, to speak and to write freely, to live their lives according to their own lights. So the choice is yours. Are you a humanist? You needn't answer ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ For it isn't an either-or proposition. Humanism is yours -- to adopt or to simply draw from. You may take a little or a lot, sip from the cup or drink it to the dregs. It's up to you.”

(http://americanhumanist.org/humanism/What_is_Humanism)

What Humanism Means to Me. Helen Bennett, director of Adult Religious Education in the UU Friendship Fellowship in Rockledge, Florida presents her views on humanism in her poem “What Humanism Means to Me.”

Humanism means to me
A chance to feel I'm really free
To take responsibility
For all I choose to do and be.
I don't demand a deity
To dominate my destiny,
But I decide the ends I deem
Most worthy of my self-esteem.
Creating purposes and goals
Nourishes all human souls.
Our ethics we ourselves have wrought

From social need and human thought.
Words like *prayer* and *soul* and *grace*
For me, will always have a place
As metaphors for what we'd teach
Beyond the realm of concrete speech.
Mythology and metaphor
Can help us penetrate the core
Of Mystery, that source of art
That may reveal the human heart.

Unlimited capacity
For good or ill, tenacity
And products of the human mind
Promote my faith in humankind.
We have the power to postulate
A world that's free of fear and hate,
Where love and tolerance hold sway,
And no one is compelled to pray.
The best ideals, the thought of God,
Emanate from humble sod,
For men and women have created
Every concept we've debated.
From Shakespeare's art to Hitler's pain,
We take the sunshine with the rain.
With humanism as our guide
Faith and reason coincide,
And in our hands lies Nature's fate,
To nurture or to desecrate.
Evil can cause us to fail,
But I think goodness will prevail.
Though orthodoxies throw a rope,
Humanism is our hope.

-- From "Humanist Voices in Verse" in Humanist Network News
(<http://americanhumanist.org/HNN/details/2012-07-humanist-voices-in-verse-what-humanism-means-to-me>)

For additional essays on Living the Humanist Life, Humanism and Traditional Religion and related issues, see: http://americanhumanist.org/Who_We_Are/About_Humanism and Bill Murry's book, "Becoming More Fully Human"
(<http://humanistpress.businesscatalyst.com/becoming-more-fully-human.html>)

Unitarian Universalism and Humanism: On Common Ground

The following description of The UU Humanist Association illustrates that Unitarian Universalism and humanism are on common ground!

The UU Humanist Association

The UU Humanist Association was founded in 1962 by Edwin H. Wilson, Lester Mondale, and others to advance humanism within Unitarian Universalism and to promote humanism in general. Originally it was called the “Fellowship of Religious Humanists,” then the “Friends of Religious Humanism” and, until recently, the “HUUmanists.” UUs were instrumental in writing all three of the Humanist Manifestos and in founding the American Humanist Association.

The primary intent of the association is to promote and extend the use of rational inquiry (without supernatural considerations) and compassionate action in all human interactions. For over fifty years the UU Humanists and its precursor organizations have celebrated the Humanist Manifesto’s vision of a religious tradition through scholarship, teaching, and advocacy both within and apart from Unitarian Universalism.

The UU Humanist Association is a member of the Secular Coalition for America “whose purpose is to amplify the diverse and growing voice of the non-theistic community in the political and civic life of the United States.” It also is a member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union which represents the global humanist movement.

The mission statement of the association includes these two goals: (1) to promote a broad acceptance of humanism in our society, particularly throughout the Unitarian Universalist Association and its congregations and (2) to provide an active interface between Unitarian Universalists and the secular community. Local groups, many of which are associated with the AHA, are an important part of its mission.

The following are illustrations of the core values and aspirations and major initiatives of the UU Humanist Association:

Core values and aspirations

-- “We are Naturalists” and we support “Facts not Faith,” i.e., “We are committed to pursuing fact-based initiatives that will help sustain the planet, our environment, and humanity itself for the greatest number of future generations.”

-- “Free and Responsible Thought.” We serve as the principal stewards of the Humanist heritage at the core of Unitarian Universalism, affirming our commitment to the values flowing from its rich history of free and responsible thought...We actively foster, support, and publicize local secular and Humanist communities and enthusiastically encourage Unitarian Universalists everywhere to support their efforts....”

-- “Living with Joy and Love.” “We espouse an ‘embodied’ Humanism that celebrates the joy of lived experience and the importance of love in human relationships.... Learning to lead an ethical, Humanist life is both a moral and a biological imperative.”

Major initiatives

-- Embodied Humanism: “Our widely-praised ‘Book SmUgging project’ at the 2012 General Assembly of the UUA was the beginning of a concerted effort to make sure we actively live out our Humanist values of reason and compassion, and not just talk about them.”

-- Humanist Education: “We continue to work with The Humanist Institute and the Institute for Humanist Studies to provide opportunities for emerging secular and religious humanist leaders to build their skills and deepen their knowledge base.”

-- Becoming a Primary Bridge between Secular/Nontheist Communities and Unitarian Universalism: “This initiative could provide an unprecedented opportunity for us to truly fulfill our dual mission of being the voice of reason and compassion (without supernatural assumptions) within Unitarian Universalism, while also serving as an advocate for Unitarian Universalism in the freethinking community at large. Here are two actions we are taking to make this happen”: (1) Helping to establish and/or strengthen local Humanist and freethinker groups (in close cooperation with secular Humanist organizations) and encouraging UUs across the country to join them. (2) Mobilizing UU individuals, institutions, and congregations to actively support the activities of our partner organizations, especially the Secular Coalition for America and its member organizations.

“In general, we are focusing our activities on our role as a bridge between Unitarian Universalism and the secular/non-theist communities. Like our forebears, we Unitarian Universalist Humanists have a special role to play with freethinking people of today – especially young people.... Young non-theists of today deserve the same opportunity that was given to all of us – the opportunity to find a home in a beloved community, where their life stance will be not only welcomed, but also celebrated and shared.”

Sources:

-- About the UU Humanist Association (<http://huumanists.org/about>)

-- Local Groups (<http://huumanists.org/local-groups>)

-- Celebrating over 50 years as the voice for Humanism in the Unitarian Universalist Association (<http://huumanists.org/about/history-and-mission>)

The statements above are not the only ones which illustrate the Common Ground on which both Unitarian Universalism and humanism stand. Below are excerpts from five additional expressions of our common focus and common values.

“The Humanist In Me” --Reverend Bruce Clear; All Souls Unitarian Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

Humanism is not a particularly complicated idea. It is not a set of beliefs so much as it is a set of commitments. It means holding concern for this-worldly matters rather than other-worldly matters and being committed to that which improves the human condition in this world..... Let me offer one more description of the humanist view. One of the better

summaries I found is in an unsigned pamphlet that was used by the Humanist Association I belonged to for many years in Portland, Oregon. It said this:

Humanism is non-dogmatic and open-ended. It is the belief that human beings are the source of meaning and values. It is a scientific search, self-correcting and open to change with new knowledge and new insights. Humanism is deeply concerned with ethics and values, but rather than telling people what they should or should not do, it assists their search for values and attempts to help them achieve their full positive potential as human beings. Humanists see humanity as having the capacity for continued growth and development, and they accept responsibility for encouraging that growth.

On the surface, this sounds like Unitarianism, does it not? Well, it should, because Unitarians and humanists do, of course, have a great deal in common. It is not just a surface similarity. As a matter of fact, humanism—as an organized movement in the United States—began within Unitarian churches.....

Is there a difference, then, between Unitarianism and humanism? Humanism as a movement, I have tried to show, is deeply rooted in Unitarianism. It is also fair to say that Unitarianism as an organized movement is historically rooted in the long-standing humanist traditions of the Enlightenment. As compatible and related as they are, though, I believe there are subtle differences in emphasis that ought to be recognized....

.....The subtle difference in emphasis I see, though, is that in Unitarianism, the value of freedom takes precedence, and in humanism the value of reason takes precedence. This does not mean at all that Unitarians reject reason or that humanists reject freedom; rather, as I say, it is merely, and subtly, a difference of emphasis. Both approaches are highly compatible.....

The entire sermon can be found at:

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/sermons/184058.shtml>

The History and Philosophy of Humanism and Its Role in Unitarian Universalism

From an address by Steven D. Schafersman to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Butler County in Oxford, Ohio in September 1995. Dr. Schafersman is a geologist and current President of Texas Citizens for Science, an advocacy group that opposes teaching creationism as science in public schools.

Dr. Schafersman begins his address with this “good and widely acceptable definition of Humanism: Humanism is the naturalistic philosophy or way of life centered on human concerns and values that asserts the dignity and worth of humans and their capacity for self-actualization through the use of reason and scientific inquiry.” He also notes, however, that his preferred definition is this:

Humanism is a philosophy, world view, or life stance based on naturalism--the conviction that the universe or nature is all that exists or is real. Humanism serves, for many humanists, some of the psychological and social functions of a religion,

but without belief in deities, transcendental entities, miracles, life after death, and the supernatural. Humanists seek to understand the universe by using science and its methods of critical inquiry -- logical reasoning, empirical evidence, and skeptical evaluation of conjectures and conclusions -- to obtain reliable knowledge. Humanists affirm that humans have the freedom and obligation to give meaning, value, and purpose to their lives by their own independent thought, free inquiry, and responsible, creative activity. Humanists stand for the building of a more humane, just, compassionate, and democratic society using a realistic ethics based on human reason, experience, and reliable knowledge -- an ethics that judges the consequences of human actions by the well-being of all life on Earth.

He also wrote that “Humanism is therefore concerned largely with two issues: first, a rejection of all forms of theism, supernaturalism, and their associated miracles, superstitions, dogmas, authoritarian beliefs, and wishful and hopeful thinking, and second, the resulting necessity of creating or finding values, meanings, and ethical beliefs in a completely naturalistic universe by the sole use of human reason and individual inquiry.” He then addresses both issues and examines humanism's relation to Unitarian Universalism.

Among his many observations is this:

Theistic religions provide a ready-made theistic philosophy -- or theology -- to answer these questions, one that is burdened with authoritarianism and supernaturalism. Liberal religions, on the other hand, such as the UUA, allow members to develop their own moral philosophies and provide the opportunity to do so with like-minded individuals. For the guests present, the word ‘liberal’ in ‘liberal religion’ is used in the sense of ‘liberty’; UUs are at liberty to think for themselves about all aspects of ethical inquiry. The UU motto is ‘Deed, not Creed’. Humanists agree completely with this point of view. UU congregations have members with a diversity of theologies and philosophies, including theism, deism, pantheism, paganism, atheism, and humanism. All are engaged in a common search for meaning and values without the requirement to believe or accept any specific doctrine or creed. For this reason, the philosophy of Humanism has long found a home within Unitarian Universalism.

The entire document can be found at: <http://lanoestacado.org/freeinquiry/files/humanism-uu.html>

The Faith of a Humanist

From a pamphlet by Sarah Oelberg, Minister of the Nora Church Unitarian Universalist in Hanska, Minnesota and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Makato

During the years of my formal education, I particularly valued that Humanism honors reason and encourages integrity. I liked that it invited me to think for myself, to explore, challenge, and doubt; to approach the important questions of life with an openness to new ideas and different perspectives; and then to test these ideas against reality, filter new knowledge through my own active mind, and believe according to the evidence. Humanism

provided me with the “tools” I would use to pursue the “free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” It invited me to ask about each idea, “Is it reasonable and responsible to believe this? Does it make sense in terms of what is known about the world and the universe?” This is not to suggest that we do not also learn and gain insights from intuition, hunches, flashes of inspiration, even emotion or unexplainable experiences -- we do. But when making important decisions that will affect ourselves and others, it behooves us to test our perceptions against reality.

This testing led me to realize that we are all connected to the world, the cosmos, and everything therein. I discovered that Humanism teaches that our well-being and our very existence depend upon the web of life in ways we are only beginning to understand, that our place in nature has to be in harmony with it. Humanism leads me to find a sense of wider relatedness with all the world and its peoples, and it calls me to work for a sound environment and a humane civilization. Because everything is interconnected, I cannot be concerned with my own life and the future of humanity without also being concerned about the future of the planet.

My Humanist religion also prods me to consider the moral principles by which I should live. Humanist ethics, based on love and compassion for humankind and for nature, place the responsibility on humanity for shaping the destiny and future direction of the world. I am called to find my better self and to try to become the best person I can be. Humanism also makes me aware of the existence of moral dilemmas and the need to be very careful and intentional in my moral decision-making, for every decision and action has a consequence now and for the future. I am compelled by my own analysis of the world situation to become involved in service for the greater good of humanity, recognizing that things are changing so quickly that an open-ended approach to solving social problems is needed.

...These are some of the things I have learned since kindergarten, and some of the reasons I am proud and happy to be a Unitarian Universalist Humanist. It is a religious perspective for those who are in love with life, and one that I embrace joyously.

Reverend Oelberg’s pamphlet can be found at:

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/welcome/humanism/151238.shtml>

Coming Out as a Humanist

An on-line post by Rev. Dr. Neal Jones; Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia, SC.

I am a humanist. That’s not something I always share with others, especially here in South Carolina, where the first question people generally ask upon meeting you is, “So where do you go to church?” where people regularly talk about God as their co-pilot and Jesus as their fishing buddy; where prayer is considered a viable solution to every problem, from ending drought to finding a parking place. Publicly admitting that you are a humanist – or an atheist, agnostic, skeptic, freethinker, or any other variety of nonbeliever – anywhere in

America is about as risky as burning a flag in an American Legion hall. Where I live, being a nonbeliever can get you denied a promotion and fired from your job. It can get you disowned by your family and deserted by your friends. It can get your house or car vandalized, and it can get you physically harmed. Prejudice against nonbelievers may be the last socially acceptable bigotry.

So it may seem strange that I strongly advocate that we humanists come out of the closet, but that's exactly what I think we should do. As we well know, the phrase "coming out of the closet" was first used by LGBT people, and I think it is relevant for us humanists, as well, because being a nonbeliever, like being gay, carries a stigma. Even the symbol for atheism is a scarlet A. People assume that if you are a nonbeliever, you have no morals, meaning, or joy in your life, and the only way to dispel that myth is to show people that they are wrong. We have learned from our LGBT brothers and sisters that the way to melt the fear, ignorance, and hatred in our society is to come out and show others that LGBT people are people, too. Society also needs to see that humanists don't have horns and tails. When I was growing up, we were not even talking about homosexuality; now LGBT people are getting married, even in South Carolina, and all of us regard Ellen DeGeneres as our best friend. The remarkable pace of change in attitudes toward LGBT persons in our lifetime would not have happened unless, one by one, they started coming out of the closet to their sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, friends and neighbors, bosses and coworkers. We humanists need to do the same.... Coming out as a humanist is really about the courage and peace of taking the risk to be yourself, and that's really the only life worth living.

For the entire document: <http://humanists.org/blog/201411/coming-out-humanist>

The UU Congregation: A Habitat for Humanism

This thought-provoking article by Maria Greene originally appeared in the [theHumanist.com](http://thehumanist.com), the weekly e-zine of the AHA. Maria is the UU Humanist Association Executive Director and one of the leaders of the Concord Area Humanists, an AHA chapter. In her article she addresses the issue of how Unitarian Universalists and humanists can work together to create community and explores the need for UU congregations and local humanist groups to join forces.

Below we are including the first and the last two paragraphs of her article and recommend that you read the rest for yourself. You will be moved to action. The full article can be found at: <http://americanhumanist.org/HNN/details/2014-01-the-uu-congregation-a-habitat-for-humanism>.

When the topic of Humanist community comes up someone is bound to mention Unitarian Universalism. That is because UUs have what Humanists who want community are looking for. Unitarian Universalism also comes up because a significant number of UUs are Humanists and because organized Humanism was in large part an outgrowth of Unitarianism in its early days. Humanism and Unitarian Universalism go together, and I

assert that the over 1,000 UU congregations are natural and practical homes for local Humanist communities.

And it's not just the Humanist local groups that would benefit from making UU congregations their homes. The UUA *needs* Humanists or it will completely lose its character as the home of freethinkers and become yet another shrinking, liberal religious denomination. The UU congregation benefits not only with new people and their resources but also with more varied programming since Humanist meetings and concerns tend to be about things all UUs care about: science, philosophy, history, politics, environmentalism, separation of church and state and so on.

We need existing Humanist local groups to ally themselves with UU congregations and UU Humanists to either reach out to the existing local groups or to step up and start new ones if there are none. We need to join forces to amplify the voice of reason and compassion in the world. Every UU congregation should be welcoming to Humanists and ideally should have a group that nurtures and encourages them. It is not difficult to launch a group that starts on such a firm foundation and there is a lot of support available from the American Humanist Association and the UU Humanists Association. The benefits are enormous. The UUA is and always has been a home for Humanists and it can be a wonderful place to find or make a “Habitat for Humanism.”

What is the Next Step?

If you have not read it yet, we recommend the book *Humanism As the Next Step* by Lloyd and Mary Morain (the Humanist Press, Washington, DC, newly revised edition 2008) as your next reading. The book provides a concise overview of the history and principles of modern humanism. We also suggest that you begin to dialogue with AHA members in your community on the humanist principles discussed above and look for additional commonalities which you are certain to find.

Also, if you harbor any doubts about the concept of a divinity (which many people of all religious traditions do according to the 2008 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life), the next step would be to explore the American Humanist Association's website (americanhumanist.org/) where you will find a wealth of information about our local groups, programs, publications and resources of all types for people of all ages. You can, of course, follow the American Humanist Association on Facebook and Twitter and become a member. You may wish to identify yourself as both a humanist and a Unitarian Universalist. You surely would not be the first to do so! Many UUs realize that they have a home in the AHA. We welcome you....

For additional information and for answers to any questions you might have about the humanist worldview and lifestance, please contact the American Humanist Association at: aha@americanhumanist.org

A final word

Let the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism and the corresponding principles of humanism continue to *be the ground on which we walk -- and work -- together*. And as we noted in the brochure, “Are you Unitarian Universalist?” you may also be a humanist. As this paper indicates, many people are. “We can be both a Unitarian Universalist and a humanist when we stand together, on the same side, in support of our shared common values.” We are more than first cousins. We are brothers and sisters.