

MEADVILLE LOMBARD THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

USING DRAMA TO ENLIVEN WORSHIP

A PROJECT REPORT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF MEADVILLE LOMBARD  
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
VITA	iv
DEDICATION	v
INTRODUCTION	1
Inspiration from Writings by Unitarian Universalist Ministers	3
Emergent Theology of Worship	8
Inspiration from the Work of Bertolt Brecht	11
Unexpected Pleasures	16
Where to From Here?	19
Hindsight is 20/20	20
CONCLUSION	28
WORKS CITED	31
WORKS CONSULTED	33

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Doctor of Ministry Project Covenant

Appendix 2: Cinderella Revisited: Three Variations on a Theme

Appendix 3: The Adaptation of a Children's Story as a Sermonplay for a Social  
Justice Sunday

Appendix 4: A One-Act Reader's Sermonplay: *Heretics and Heresies: A Brief  
and Incomplete History of Unitarian Universalism in Europe*

Appendix 5: A Puppet Dialogue with John Murray and Theodore Parker

Appendix 6: A One-Act Reader's Sermonplay: A Play for Women's History Month

Appendix 7: A Reader's Sermonplay in Three Scenes: In Celebration of Darwin Day

Appendix 8: Congregational Evaluations of Three Sermonplays at the  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Tampa

## ABSTRACT

### USING DRAMA TO ENLIVEN WORSHIP

BY

SARA EMMA ZIMMERMAN

MEADVILLE LOMBARD THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL, 2009

This project draws inspiration from the work of the 20<sup>th</sup> century German playwright Bertolt Brecht whose aesthetic theories suggest new ways to achieve our worship goals as religious liberals. It introduces the *sermonplay* as a new sermonic form and offers six models of the form for possible application and adaptation during Sunday services. Analysis of productions of three of the *sermonplays* at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tampa, Florida, results in recommendations that could prove helpful to interested clergy and congregations.

## VITA

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To the congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tampa

## **Introduction**

The theology of worship of contemporary Unitarian Universalist clergy asserts that worship should transform congregations through thematic integration of service elements that collectively enliven and engage the worshipers and lead them to new learning and a newly expanded view of themselves and the world. This theology of worship is wholly in keeping with the 20<sup>th</sup> century German playwright Bertolt Brecht's goals for the theater, goals that are similar to goals we have for congregational worship. This similarity suggests that Brecht's methods can be a source of learning for us. The appendices include six dramas that the candidate wrote and produced between 2006 to early 2009. The six are of three types: an adaptation of a story that uses creative dramatics as a mode of performance; three scripted Unitarian Universalist history plays; three variations of a partly scripted, partly improvisational play; and an issue play. The appendix also includes congregational evaluations of three productions and the author's covenant with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tampa (hereafter UUCT) regarding this work. While it is not within the scope of this project to examine the hundreds of books and articles on the subject of drama in worship, an annotated Works Consulted listing four such books is provided in addition to a Works Cited list as part of this paper.



In the first three and a half years as a second-career parish minister, preaching was my longest learning curve. I spoke for 17 minutes each Sunday from my carefully reasoned text and the congregation passively listened. Too passively, I thought. I took some comfort in knowing that learning to preach well is typically the new minister's longest learning curve. As the years progressed, (I am now in my eighth year of parish ministry), the form and content of my sermons improved, but it was not until an "aha" moment at the three and a half year mark that I began to understand fully how to enliven not only the sermon time but the entire hour. In 2006, I began writing *sermonplays*,<sup>1</sup> and over the last three years have written sermons in the form of Unitarian Universalist history plays, adapted stories as plays (see Appendix 3: *Stone Soup*), and developed *sermonplays* that incorporate both scripted drama and improvisation (see Appendix 2: *Cinderella Revisited: Three Variations on a Theme*.)

Clearly, that "aha" moment integrated my personal past and present. I had been introduced to the theater of Bertolt Brecht while still in high school. Ten years later, I wrote a comparative literature master's thesis on the subject of Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*,<sup>2</sup> and not long after that I became a university lecturer and taught his plays and his "Alienation Effect," to be discussed later in this paper. That "aha" moment told me

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term *sermonplay* to denote this new form which resembles neither a traditional sermon nor a traditional play.

<sup>2</sup> Sara Zimmerman, "The Influence of John Gay, Francois Villon and Rudyard Kipling on the Songs in Bertolt Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*" (master's thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1968). *The Three Penny Opera* is the English translation for *Dreigroschenoper*.

that I could bring my past knowledge of Brecht's aesthetic theories to my second career as a Unitarian Universalist minister. I began to notice that my sermons were livelier and better received as I experimented with using drama to enliven them.

### **Inspiration from Writings by Unitarian Universalist Ministers**

It is unlikely that other ministers, Unitarian Universalist or otherwise, draw inspiration from Brecht. Nonetheless, I thought ministers who have inspired me might have something to say about using drama. I was inspired by Gregory Scott Ward's contributions of dramatic adaptations of stories and innovative Sunday services and the website of his co-creation that promotes intergenerational worship.<sup>3</sup> Rev. Ward and I are both former students of (now deceased) Doug Adams, a Worship and the Arts professor at the Pacific School of Religion, a seminary known for its emphasis on the arts in worship. While Rev. Ward's work and my own are similar in our intention of using drama to create thematically integrated services, our Sunday services are dissimilar in that my dramatic pieces become part of a traditional liturgy. In contrast, in Rev. Ward's model for using drama in Sunday services, the traditional liturgy melts into the play and becomes part of the action, so that a character may announce that it is time to sing a hymn, for example. My intention differs also from Rev.

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<sup>3</sup> "Creating Effective Intergenerational Worship Services (Without Going Insane)" "offers resources for intergenerational worship, including philosophy, formats, and lists of scripts related to Unitarian Universalist occasions." <http://archive.uua.org/re/teachers/enrichingteaching2.html> (accessed March 23, 2009).

Ward's in that his method provides a way of "creating effective intergenerational worship" and mine provides a Brechtian-influenced goal of enlivening the sermon. The goal of my *sermonplays* and improvisations is to bring about at least one type of transformation – transformation within, where the parishioners learn something new, or have a newly expanded view of themselves. In the adaptation of *Stone Soup* and improvisations (see appendices 2 and 3), my intention is also to enhance the possibility of bringing parishioners to an engaged understanding of the Second Principle of Unitarian Universalism and to social action.

I was inspired by the Unitarian Universalist ministers Wayne Arnason and Kathleen Rolenz who in their recent book *Worship That Works: Theory and Practice for Unitarian Universalists*<sup>4</sup> identified characteristics of transformational worship:

Transformational worship expands each participant's experience of their own boundaries, helping us to see that we are bigger than our own skin, our own neighborhood, our own culture.<sup>5</sup>

Although Arnason and Rolenz do not identify drama per se, they call for "skillful use of the arts...to express the ineffable in ways that are culturally accessible to the congregation."<sup>6</sup> In the section of their book on "The Sermon," they state that "worship that is transformative encourages

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<sup>4</sup> Wayne Arnason and Kathleen Rolenz, *Worship That Works: Theory and Practice for Unitarian Universalists* (Boston: Skinner House, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

preaching that also touches the heart and the imagination.”<sup>7</sup> When I read these words, I hear echoes from Brecht in his writings about theater especially about transformation. It seems possible that Brecht, although not a clergy person, was also trying to “touch the heart and the imagination” and transform the listener.

I have also been inspired by Jane Rzepka and Ken Sawyer’s book, *Thematic Preaching*,<sup>8</sup> the italicized words of which could have been written by Brecht:

Sermons may attempt to heal, to tend the institution, *to move to action*, to build the loving community, to inspire a sense of spiritual wholeness and well-being, to teach a religious tradition, *to stimulate thought, and to startle, awaken, or amuse.*<sup>9</sup> (my italics)

As the authors point out, our intent is to do all of these things – such as stimulate thought, startle, awaken, or amuse – every single Sunday.

Rzepka and Sawyer, like Arnason and Rolenz, speak of transformation, but they explore further the ideas that sermons can enliven and provoke, and speak to social issues while they seek to transform.

Rzepka and Sawyer also speak of something else that is essential in the practice of doing theater on Sunday morning: collaboration. I realize this might be taking what they say about collaboration slightly out of context in that they were speaking of an implicit collaboration during a traditional sermon:

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Rzepka and Ken Sawyer, *Thematic Preaching: An Introduction* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 104.

In describing Fred Craddock's approach, Charles Campbell tells us that "the preacher doesn't simply deposit conclusions in the hearer's minds but enables the congregation to participate actively in the movement and meaning of the sermon....Listeners ...think their own thoughts, feel their own feelings, draw their own conclusions, and make their own decisions with the result that they take a measure of responsibility for the message. Preaching becomes the shared activity of preacher and congregation."<sup>10</sup>

I believe that using Brechtian-inspired drama in worship, necessarily collaborative to begin with because of the involvement of actors and narrators from the congregation, means that there is potentially, as Campbell says, an enabling "of the congregation to participate actively in the movement and meaning of the sermon."

As a former teacher – both in sixth grade language arts albeit briefly and at the university level for two decades - in an age when process was valued more than product, I have long believed in the usefulness of the unpolished results of creative collaboration to teach and transform. My attempt to translate this belief into effective uses of drama in worship brought about some dissonance. (see Evaluations, Appendix 8). In writing the *sermonplays* and improvisations for parishioners and producing them in Sunday services, my goal was to provide a collaborative learning process, not to provide a polished production.

Sometimes in producing the plays on Sunday morning the actors have not had a chance to look over their freshly produced scripts, and one time there was "discombobulation," a word that Rzepka and Sawyer use to

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 19.

define the latitude a minister has in offering “at least a touch of the funny or the unpredictable ...and every now and then, there can be a whole sermon whose major design is discombobulation.”<sup>11</sup> In the next paragraph they offer for-instances, included this one: “Sunday morning might feature ...a play reading.”<sup>12</sup> One of the most successful of the seven *sermonplays* that I have included in the appendixes is the “One-Act Reader’s Theater Play” entitled *Carrying the Beacon of Truth: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier and their Mentor, Jenkin Lloyd Jones*. It could have been more successful if I had had some time to gather the actors for a brief rehearsal, but not everyone could rehearse even for a little time before the service started. As it happened, one of the characters printed out only her part from the script sent via the Internet, thinking that her part was all soliloquy. The result was a “discombobulated” production, one that would have challenged even Brecht whose definition of “bad acting” applied to being yourself and not trying to become the character. Losing your place? Forgetting your lines? A different matter entirely. I take the responsibility for not providing the script to the actors well in advance. The event, however painful, taught me that some members of the congregation had not realized that I was writing the scripts for the Sunday *sermonplays*. I address this matter of the late delivery of scripts in the section entitled *Hindsight is 20/20*.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

### Emergent Theology of Worship

My theology of worship has formed over the three years of the duration of this project and now consists of three distinct aspects that have been influenced by Rzepka, Sawyer, Rolenz, Arnason, and Brecht. First, I believe that worship should be transformative. The transformation, however subtle, means that the congregants actively participate. Second, this transformation should occur through a thematic integration of service elements that collectively engage the worshipers. The readings, hymns, stories, and meditations should be as harmoniously linked as possible. Third, the transformative, engaging, thematically integrated services should lead parishioners to a new learning and a newly expanded view of themselves and the world. In order to be engaging, the worship could use a variety of ways to stimulate thought, startle, awaken, or amuse. These are ideas espoused by Rzepka and Sawyer. Or, the worship – in the *sermonplay*—could use a variety of Brechtian methods to provoke the observer.<sup>13</sup> Worship should engage participants in active listening and at times offer them opportunities to participate in the process. The opposite of engaged worship resembles a dry, intellectual exercise.

As I looked further into writings by Unitarian Universalists for ideas related to my goal to offer engaging *sermonplays*, I read William F.

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<sup>13</sup> Brecht's goal of provocation will be explained in the next section.

Schulz's "Introduction to the First Edition" of *Transforming Words*.<sup>14</sup> He asks, "Could it be that a sermon is not *primarily* an intellectual exercise?"<sup>15</sup> (italics his) This is the place I came from when I had my epiphany, my "aha" moment about my sermons being too intellectual, when I realized I could offer more, and the *more* could integrate Brecht's approach to theater. Schulz quotes an ordination sermon by William Ellery Channing to make the point that we preachers should not forget that "the truth, coldly imparted and coldly received, as been forgotten as fast as heard."<sup>16</sup> The plays in my collection (appendices 2-7) were not "coldly received." Nor, according to evaluators' comments, were the *sermonplays* as easily forgotten as many sermons. One of the *sermonplays*, however, was said to be "stilted." I agree, and find writing snappy dialogue to be one of the greatest challenges about creating them.

My ability to express some subtle concepts about my life and work, and my theology of worship is also inspired by David O. Rankin's essay "From the Masthead to the Hatches."<sup>17</sup> I do not find that Rankin discusses drama in worship per se. However, in his listing of "Sources of Liberal Authority," he speaks of five sources that in my judgment could apply just as equally to the form of *sermonplays* as to sermons: *academic authority of the pulpit; denominational authority of the pulpit; authority of*

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<sup>14</sup> William F. Schulz, ed. *Transforming Words: Six Essays on Preaching* (Boston: Skinner House, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> David O. Rankin, "From the Masthead to the Hatches," in *Transforming Words: Six Essays on Preaching*, ed. William F. Schulz (Boston: Skinner House, 1996), 49-62.



*tradition in the pulpit; authority of community in the pulpit; and the authority of personal faith.* In Rankin's separate naming of the five authorities, his essay increases my self-awareness that initially as a parish minister I undervalued my past as a university teacher and Brecht scholar and my knowledge of Brecht's theater aesthetics. In regard to the *academic authority of the pulpit*, it was not so much my life-long academic knowledge of Brecht's aesthetics per se or any other previous academic learning that I ignored during the first three and a half years of my parish ministry. In fact, in creating traditional sermons, I drew extensively on my academic past. Rather, it was specifically the use of that knowledge to create a new form. I took a step into the unknown and began using my *academic authority* to create a new form. With this move I considered whether the *sermonplay* would threaten the *denominational authority of the pulpit* and the *authority of tradition*? Would the use of a new form carry the same authority as previous forms? Or would use of the new form diminish that authority? In diminishing the *academic authority* of the pulpit, would it also diminish the *denominational authority* and the *authority of tradition*? How would use of the new form affect the *authority of community in the pulpit* and the *authority of personal faith*? Is the use of the new form congruent with my theology of worship to create transformative, engaging, thematically integrated services that lead parishioners to a new learning and newly expanded view of themselves and the world? Does the *sermonplay* honor the *authority of*

*community*? Does it carry the *authority of (my) personal faith* with integrity? Rankin's delineation of separate authorities provides useful criteria by which to judge the success or failure of my work. In the Conclusion, I take up these questions as they apply to specific *sermonplays* and productions.

In my "aha" epiphany at the three and a half year mark of my ordained ministry, I embraced my past academic credentials and merged them with the unknown. I began to use the dramas to teach denominational history and tradition. The congregation participated in plays that are directly or indirectly about current events in the church (e.g. the play about the prophetic sisterhood has a secondary level of meaning about church architecture and occurred on the day the congregation was voting to conduct a capital campaign). My faith as Unitarian Universalist grounds me in this work. In Rankin's company and in the company of all of the other ministers cited here, I find that my promotion of drama in worship to be consistent with my theology of worship and with the goals of worship in the wider Unitarian Universalist community. But is that assertion warranted by the evaluations? I will also address this question in the Conclusion.

### **Inspiration from the Work of Bertolt Brecht**

At first glance, the influence of Brecht's aesthetics is not apparent in every *sermonplay* that I include with this project. My experience earlier

in my life when I learned about Creative Dramatics techniques<sup>18</sup> and used them one year to produce puppet shows with a sixth grade language arts class certainly influenced my recent creation of narrated dramas such as in the adaptation of *Stone Soup* and parts of the *Cinderella Variations*. Likewise, the sections for improvisation in the sermonic play and story that are part of the *Cinderella Variations* seem to be less Brechtian in format and more *Second City* (a Chicago improv group) or *Whose Line Is It Anyway* (a TV show with Drew Carey) of recent years. But on further thinking about Brecht's aesthetic theory, I realized in retrospect that his work indeed did inspire the use of narration and improvisation. For example, regarding narration, his use of projected titles and descriptions in certain of his "operas" such as the *Three Penny Opera*, and the use of a narrator in that same drama, were an influence. In that and other of Brecht's plays, the use of projected titles and narration is intended not to translate or clarify the action, as it would be, say, at the Metropolitan Opera where projected titles (I am told) translate the language being sung into English. Rather, the intention of the use of projected titles and narration in a Brecht drama is to provoke the audience and make them face something, and then do something about it, or in our meta language of ministry, his intention was to *transform*. I made use of projected titles and scene descriptions in the *Reader's Theater Play in Three Scenes On*

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce Robbins, "Creative Dramatics in the Language Arts Classroom," e-edition, c 1988 <http://www.vtaide.com/png/ERIC/Creative-Dramatics.htm> (accessed March 27, 2009).

*the Occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Darwin's Birthday*, and at least one evaluator did not appreciate it. Indeed the evaluator found that the dialectic that it set up between William J. Dembski's and Michael Behe's<sup>19</sup> positions on intelligent design and evolution to be undesirable in that the play seemed to favor evolution over the less popular opinion, that of intelligent design. My intention was to take a more neutral position. However, Darwin that day was played by a congregational favorite, a post-doc fellow in biology at the University of South Florida who humorously and knowledgably improvised and adlibbed his way through his part. His input skewed the play on the side of evolutionary theory. In the play that emerged, anyone favoring the intelligent design side of the argument certainly would have been provoked.

In regard to both the narrative techniques and improvisation, it is not the format that is particularly Brechtian in these sermonic dramas, but the aesthetics at work. The modern theater is the *epic* theater, according to Brecht. In his 1930 essay, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre,"<sup>20</sup> Brecht delineates "innovations" that will "provoke" the audience. Such theater "arouses" the spectator's capacity for action. Epic Theater regards the spectator as "alterable and able to alter," whereas the traditional or "dramatic theater" regards the spectator as "unalterable."

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<sup>19</sup> Michael J. Behe is a professor of biological sciences at Lehigh University. William A. Dembski holds doctorates in math and philosophy and a master of divinity. For an excellent discussion of their views, see H. Allen Orr, "Devolution: Why Intelligent Design Isn't," *The New Yorker*, (May 30, 2005): 40-52.

<sup>20</sup> Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," in John Willet, ed., trans. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964).

The action of an epic play engages the spectator so that he/she is made to “face something” rather than be “involved in something.” The table which follows lists the comparative changes that Brecht wanted to see happen in theater as it shifted from traditional/dramatic theater to epic theater.

Later in his life he would discuss this shift as being from “Aristotelian” to “non-Aristotelian.” He did not regard these lists as polar opposites. In some instances, they are subtle, as in “the spectator is involved in something,” as contrasted to “he is made to face something”:

#### DRAMATIC THEATRE<sup>21</sup>

plot  
 implicates the spectator in a stage situation  
 wears down his capacity for action  
 provides him with sensations  
 the spectator is involved in something  
 suggestion  
 instinctive feelings are preserved  
 the spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience  
 the human being is taken for granted  
  
 he is unalterable  
 eyes on the finish  
 one scene makes another  
 linear development  
 man as a fixed point  
 feeling

#### EPIC THEATRE

narrative  
 turns the spectator into an observer, but (connect to next line)<sup>22</sup>  
 arouses his capacity for action  
 forces him to take decision  
 he is made to face something  
 argument  
 brought to the point of recognition  
 the spectator stands outside, studies the experience  
 the human being is the object of the inquiry  
 he is alterable and able to alter  
 eyes on the course  
 each scene for itself  
 in curves  
 man as a process  
 reason

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 37. The table is edited to exclude items not applicable to this project.

<sup>22</sup> Words in parentheses are my attempt to add clarity.

Theoretically, when transformation is a goal of worship, a *sermonplay* that employs techniques of epic theater stands a better chance of succeeding. For example, if the dialogue in a sermonic drama about the “prophetic sisterhood,” Unitarian ministers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, raises questions that those ministers faced about church design and architecture, and depicts their thought processes, on the same day that the audience would need to make similar decisions, then such a drama might indeed be said to be “epic.” The prophetic sisterhood *sermonplay* does not have a plot by intention, nor do the others. Only the adaptation of the *Stone Soup* story has a traditional plot line. In intentionally not giving the other sermonplays a traditional plot line, I was experimenting with Brecht’s “epic” methods.

The evaluations (Appendix 8) related to production of the play about the prophetic sisterhood, *A One-Act Reader’s Theater Play: Carrying the Beacon of Truth: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier and Their Mentor, Jenkin Lloyd Jones* on March 8, 2009 in Tampa, reveal that some of the congregation realized that what they had just seen related very much to the very important commitment they were about to make in the congregational meeting following the service, the commitment to raise \$500,000 in a down economy. Some realized that the play was making them face that fact, and that it was providing a context and relevant historical data to study. It was my goal to raise the issues *to the point of*

*recognition*.<sup>23</sup> The evaluations also revealed that not everyone wants to be asked, even implicitly, to *reason* about issues they have already decided on, and are rather *unalterable*. (In any case, the vote passed with 89% in favor.) What Rzepka and Sawyer say about discombobulation and about being silly once in awhile is analogous to Brecht's ploy to remind the audience in the heart of a drama that they are observing, not participating in the action. They are *standing outside the experience*. Regarding that same performance, when the actor who flubbed her part apologized profusely, I told her not to worry about it, that my interest was in Brecht's epic theater, and that such theater attempted to engage the spectators without drawing them into the action, and that one of the ways to do that was to "alienate" the spectators by constantly reminding them that the actors were themselves playing parts, and the action was not plotted to draw the audience into a conflict that would be resolved through a catharsis. Perhaps by her error, she actually made the drama more *epic* and thus more effective, and perhaps she inadvertently caused a few more church members to vote yes.

### **Unexpected Pleasures**

As mentioned above, in the first third of my life, I wrote a master's thesis about the influence of John Gay, Rudyard Kipling and Francois Villon on Brecht as he wrote the libretto for the *Dreigroschenoper*. For the rest of

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<sup>23</sup> The italicized terms in this paragraph refer to the table "Dramatic Theatre/Epic Theatre."

my life, I have carried the insufferable opinion that of the finite things to know about him, I came close to knowing most of them. However, the process of preparing this project during the third third of my life has revealed to me the humbling awareness that while I no longer studied Brecht during the 1970s, 80s, 90s and new Millennium, Brecht research did not stop! For an insight into Brecht's religious beliefs, I have consulted Hannah Arendt's *Men in Dark Times*<sup>24</sup> first published in 1955 and learned that she described the young Brecht after World War I when the "destruction had wiped the world clean..." and Brecht's writing then revealed his thoughts:

It was as though, fleetingly, the world had become as innocent and fresh as it was on the day of creation. Nothing seemed left but the purity of the elements, the simplicity of sky and earth, of man and animals, of life itself.<sup>25</sup>

Arendt quotes lines from *The Rise and Fall of the City Mahagonny*, lines I know well that describe

Life (as) the flight of the cranes veering across the sky, side by side with the cloud, the sharing of the beautiful sky by crane and clouds for a few moments of flight. To be sure, in this world there is no eternal love, or even ordinary faithfulness. There is nothing but the intensity of the moment....<sup>26</sup>

It was in reading Arendt's description of this and other elements of Brecht's work from this period of his life – such as his compassion, "doubtless the fiercest and most fundamental of Brecht's passions, hence

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<sup>24</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955). Because it had scarce relevance to my thesis topic, I was only vaguely aware of it.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.



the one he was most anxious to hide”<sup>27</sup> that I had an epiphany, an inkling. It made me wonder: Did Brecht know Asian religions at that time? Arendt does not link the compassion that she found Brecht to have to Asian religions but to his rejection of his religion of origin after having been raised in “Catholic surroundings.” Actually, as John Fuegi points out in his comprehensive 1994 publication, *Brecht & Co.*, Brecht’s mother’s family was Protestant and his father Catholic, and they were married in a Protestant ceremony, “he being less attached to his religion than she to hers.”<sup>28</sup> I recalled that most of the reading I had done circa 1967 established that Brecht parodied and rejected both institutional Catholicism and Protestantism, i.e., any western religion, it turns out in my new learning, in favor of Taoism.

According to Gaby Divay in his paper, “Brecht’s Use of Moism, Confucianism and Taoism in his *Me-Ti* Fragment,”<sup>29</sup> Brecht was already in 1920 reading Lao Tzu’s *Tao-te-Ching*. That means he had studied Taoism before writing both the *Rise and Fall of the City Mahagonny* and the contemplative song that Arendt claims is a result of Brecht’s rejection of his religion can instead be thought of as a Taoist poem. When I juxtapose Arendt’s comments about it and Divay’s, comments about the I-Ching

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>28</sup> John Fuegi, *Brecht & Co.: Sex, Politics, and the Making of the Modern Drama* (New York: Grove Press, 1994) 2.

<sup>29</sup> e-Edition, c August 2007 <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~divay/ps/brechtMeTi.html> (accessed March 26, 2009).

regarding the “flux of things,” I have the unexpected pleasure of seeing Brecht in a whole new light. His contemplative poem occurs in a drama where everyone is disillusioned with Mahagonny, which was at first for those who sought it out a sexy, hard drinking, hard fighting, all-pleasurable utopia but which turned out to be disillusioning in its boring nothingness. Viewed through the lens of Taoism, this seemingly out of place contemplative poem is a comment on the flux of things, the great beauty of the moment, and revealing of the basis of Brecht’s “dialectic” – his need to see things in terms of contrast, (including for example his listing of the contrasts of the *dramatic theater* and *epic theater*. Divay points out that “certain elements of social criticism” in Brecht’s work relate to the Tao te Ching’s 75<sup>th</sup> chapter where “the polar oppositions found in nature are applied to social conditions.”<sup>30</sup> Many of Brecht’s plays are about the haves and have nots in society; some of his poems express the idea that if people were not hungry they would behave better. Critics in the 1960s attributed Brecht’s dialectical approach to his Marxism and not to his interest in Taoism.

### **Where to From Here?**

The churches where I have collaborated with congregations to offer these dramas and stories on Sunday mornings have shown an appreciation for them. In particular, the UUCT congregation where I have served as settled minister since the fall of 2007 has been particularly supportive. I

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 12.

dedicate this project to them in honor of their support and critical acumen as demonstrated in the evaluation section, appendix 8. In the future months and years at the UUCT I will continue to offer occasional *sermonplays*, but with changes based on their evaluative comments and the hindsight that this project has provided. I will develop liturgical parts of the services, such as meditations and opening and closing words, that integrate a Taoist inspired contemplative point of view and that offer a “dialectic” similar to Brecht’s in the song about cranes in *Mahagonny*.

From the beginning of working on this project, I thought that I might develop a workshop manual with a format similar to that of Marcia McFee (see Works Consulted) that would offer others models for how to create their own service elements. That idea is still on the table. It would not contain as much information about Brecht as this project does, if any at all. My life-long preoccupation with Brecht earlier in my life inspired my theology of worship and the development of the *sermonplays*. I am grateful for that inspiration.

### **Hindsight is 20/20**

I have some words of advice to be considered for inclusion in a workshop manual, ideas that spring from the knowledge gained from experimenting with writing and producing *sermonplays* for three years. For my peers in ministry who seek to use drama to enliven worship I share this advice:

- Do begin with a clear idea of your theology of worship. Perhaps because mine is thoroughly saturated with Brecht's aesthetic, it is more prophetic than pastoral. Included in my theology of worship are the desires to provoke thought and reason, startle, awaken and amuse. Need I point out that these qualities are more conducive to confrontation than to reverence? And yet, my respect for the *authority of tradition* of the pulpit and for the *authority of community*<sup>31</sup> has meant that the Sunday services that they are part of also include opportunities for quiet meditation and reflection. The involvement of a lay worship committee is invaluable for helping to plan the service that integrates thematically relevant elements and honors *denominational authority* and the traditions of the community.
- Do involve the congregation and its relevant groups – such as a Readers' Theater Group and Worship Committee – in planning the production. To do so is to give voice to the authority of the community. It also potentially invites people into the process, and into the understanding that a polished performance is not the goal. Rather, the goal is often to teach something or create an awareness about a social justice issue. The production needs to be simple for logistical reasons in that it takes place during the Sunday service, but also for reasons that Brecht outlines in the

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<sup>31</sup> Rankin, 59.

characteristics of epic drama: the spectator must maintain an emotional distance from the action and not be drawn in.<sup>32</sup>

- Do keep the production simple. For the actors, suggest the simplest of costumes, such as a scarf, shawl, or hat to indicate a historical period or occupation. Use the pulpit and a standing microphone already positioned for another function. Experiment with using projections on the wall behind the pulpit or on the side that state the action of the scene. I used this Brechtian technique in the Darwin Day play with some success. Keeping the production, costumes, choreography and scenery simple means that the usual configuration of the sanctuary for the Sunday service need not be disturbed. The flow of the liturgical elements before and after the *sermonplay* can occur just as they usually do on a Sunday when the sermon format is traditional. At UUCT, the choir sits where it usually sits and sings where it usually sings on a Sunday when a *sermonplay* is to be performed. Use all of the existing space without moving chairs or tables unnecessarily. For example, when scripting a *sermonplay*, consider using existing entryways and balconies for the characters for simple but potentially dramatic entrance points. This too is a Brechtian

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<sup>32</sup> Brecht.

technique that I have used in *Heretics and Heresies* and a number of the other plays.

- Do cast the characters and provide them with scripts a week in advance, if possible, especially when the characters have speaking parts. Even for the *sermonplays* that use narrators and miming actors, and the improvisational pieces, actors should have scripts well in advance. Sometimes the tight schedules of the actors will permit only a brief run-through before the Sunday service. In my experience at UUCT and other churches, this Sunday morning rehearsal has occurred while the choir is also rehearsing. That has never been an issue. In that case, we have quietly run through the simple choreography for the mimed parts to the accompaniment of the choir and rehearsed the spoken parts in my office. Microphone checks at least 15 minutes before the start of the service are advisable for the folks reading parts.
- Do try improvisation as a tool to promote discussion as the conclusion of a *sermonplay*. I used improvisation in the *Cinderella Variations* with intent to provoke thought and reason about the application of the Second Principle of Unitarian Universalism. The *Variations* demonstrate the use of the folktale on different occasions in connection with topics of ethics, social

justice, stages of faith, and Jungian shadows. In this form of improvisation, I deliberately chose a familiar folk tale that I thought well-suited improvisation about these topics. The next step following the choosing of the folk tale is for the improv leader (minister or lay-leader) to think aloud with the congregation about the characters needed to act out the story. Then invite members of the congregation – without regard to age, sexual orientation or race – to volunteer for these roles. In the *Variations*, I asked the actors to stay in character after miming their parts while the congregation confronted them with questions about their behavior in the scripted situation. Remind the participants and the congregation that there are no mistakes in improv, and that it is a process. Improvisation offers the congregation and actors latitude to express themselves on issues of ethics and social justice in ways that the other dramatic forms discussed here do not. It is worth trying for that reason alone.

- Do tread cautiously before creating a full-length puppet sermonplay, even for an intergenerational service. Before attempting this format again, I will ask myself (as some of the evaluators asked) if this is the best way to convey the message. In the production of the puppet dialogue I created,<sup>33</sup> Philosophizin' Mouse and Big Dog pretend to be human actors

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<sup>33</sup> Appendix 5.

who are in turn pretending to be historical characters while also being narrated by a minister who is giving voice to both the Mouse and Big Dog. What was I thinking in giving the important message of the *sermonplay* to characters far removed from the message? In hindsight, this was an example of Brechtian aesthetics gone awry! In attempting to make the spectators “face something” by locating the spectator “outside”<sup>34</sup> the experience, I went too far. While Brecht in some of his plays had his characters wear masks all the better to achieve the “alienation effect”<sup>35</sup> to turn “the spectator into an observer, but arouse his capacity for action,” as he describes in the Dramatic Theatre/Epic Theatre table above, he never, so far as I am aware, made puppets of the masked characters.

Two other reasons in addition to my misuse of the Brechtian aesthetic mark the failure of the puppet dialogue. In retrospect, and in the context of my covenanted relationship with the UUCT regarding this project, the puppet sermon-length play failed in that it disrespected covenantal language which states, “For the *children’s part of the service, I may write short puppet shows.*”<sup>36</sup> (Italics mine.) The covenant does not state that I will deliver a

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<sup>34</sup> Brecht, “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre,” 37.

<sup>35</sup> See a discussion of the alienation effect and masks in “A Short Organum for the Theatre,” in John Willet, ed., trans. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964).

<sup>36</sup> Appendix 1.



sermon-length drama using puppets. In addition, in retrospect, I now realize a third failure of this *sermonplay*. In David O. Rankin's delineation of the sources of liberal authorities, he mentions the "authority of community in the pulpit."<sup>37</sup> This is a contractual authority that was recognized by Rankin who said, "Much of the power of the pulpit flows from the contractual relationship between the minister and the people."<sup>38</sup> One of the evaluators at the UUCT also pointed to the contractual relationship when he noted that the "minister's contract" includes a "provision stating that the minister will help the congregation express itself."<sup>39</sup> Of all the *sermonplays* in the collection, the puppet dialogue removes any voice of the people to a distant outback.

- Do create epilogues to follow *sermonplays*, such as the epilogue I wrote as a short homily to immediately follow my adaptation of the short story *Stone Soup*.<sup>40</sup> Well suited to plays that have a social justice message, epilogues offer an opportunity for a lay person or the minister to express an opinion and have input on that issue and "connect the dots" by explaining the relevance of the *sermonplay* to the issue. By this addition of an epilogue

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<sup>37</sup> Rankin, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Appendix 8, section H3, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Appendix 3.

spoken by, say, the UU Service Committee Chair or the minister, the covenanted and contractual relationships would be honored.

- Do research all of the characters based on historical figures before writing dialogue for them to avoid inadvertent errors of fact. I made such an error in creating a loving and supportive Mrs. Darwin character for the Darwin Day play. Apparently she was not as I portrayed her. In completing the evaluation form, a member of the congregation noted that she had just heard a discussion about Mrs. Darwin on the radio and that in fact, Mrs. Darwin was not so supportive of Mr. Darwin's scientific research. I was embarrassed that I had not, in fact, known what sort of wife Mrs. Darwin was and had created a spouse for Darwin who did not resemble the historical figure. Inventing a deeply fictionalized Mrs. Darwin was a clear violation of the academic authority of the pulpit.
- Do change, improve and adapt any of the *sermonplays* to suit your own church's needs. I wrote the women's history play to be produced on the Sunday when our congregation voted whether or not to have a capital campaign to raise the funds to build a religious education building. Some of the dialogue of the historical figures centers on church architecture and the

desirability of non-gothic designs similar to the type that UUCT would consider later that day. Nevertheless, the basic idea of the play could be adapted for use by another congregation and another focus. I heard from a congregation in California who let me know One of these *sermonplays* has already migrated from Florida to California. Last year, a congregation in California with my permission adapted the historical *sermonplay* about Unitarianism in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe called *Heretics and Heresies*. They adapted it by adding an additional role and increasing the conflict between Servetus and Calvin. If anyone decides to use any of the *sermonplays*, you do not need to ask my permission. However, I would appreciate a mention of my name and a printed acknowledgement that you are using my work as a resource.

### **Conclusion**

Was this project a success? I offer a qualified answer: yes. In my emergent theory of worship, I have stated that worship should be transformative, and that for it to be transformative, congregants would actively participate as active listeners or actors. I have further stated that this transformation occurs through a thematic integration of service elements that collectively engage the worshipers. Thirdly, I have stated that the transformative, engaging, thematically integrated services should lead parishioners to a new learning and newly expanded view of the world. Creation of such worship is not a dryly intellectual exercise. I

have found that the *sermonplays* that I have created in the completion of this project to offer a format for fulfilling all of these worship goals.

Drawing on the work of my old friend Bertolt Brecht and integrating it into this project was a pleasure. However, I have also found in the three years that I have worked on this project that the Brecht-inspired *sermonplay* could fulfill these goals of worship and yet not meet other important criteria apart from the theology of worship, and that is why my “yes” is qualified.

I discovered when I reread David O. Rankin’s essay, “From the Masthead to the Hatches: The Sources of Authority in the Liberal Pulpit”<sup>41</sup> that my parish ministry had ripened to the place where I understand my role as a minister and the role of the *sermonplay* in a new light. For the *sermonplay* to be an unqualified success, I have found that not only must it be in tune with my theology of worship, it must also take into account the *authorities* that Rankin outlines: academic, denominational, traditional, community and personal faith. I have discovered in the course of offering various *sermonplays* in different church settings in Ohio and Florida that not all congregations accept the unpolished, process-over-product messiness of improvisation or lightly rehearsed scripted plays. I have found that a congregation’s enthusiasm (or lack of) for a *sermonplay* that demands their full attention depends on their contexts. Are they traditional in their worship? How willing are they to trade passive

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<sup>41</sup> Rankin.

listening for active learning? I have also found that if there has been a sadness in their community, congregations would rather passively listen to a traditional sermon that day. I experienced this when I went to a church in Florida as the guest minister and discovered that there had been a death of a young, prominent member the day before. I offered a partly scripted, partly improvised *sermonplay* to a congregation that I realized later might have been served better by a more traditional liturgy or a *sermonplay* that dealt with loss. Yes, I have been successful in using drama to enliven worship. I have also gained wisdom about contexts when liveliness may not be the best strategy.

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This text promotes the use of drama in “Seeker Services” centered on a particular theme. Offers a sample drama that is a dialogue between a minister and “Gary” in which the minister discourages suicide. Glossary and Helpful Resources list.

McFee, Marcia. *The Worship Workshop: Creative Ways to Design Worship Together*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2002.

McFee designed this attractive text for use in a variety of workshop settings. The section on “Dramatizing” models how to make the reading of scripture more dramatic by interspersing congregational response. Excellent Resources list includes these sections: “Theology of Worship”; “History of Worship”; “Worship and the Arts”; “Language of Worship”; “Styles and Planning of Worship”; and an extensive “More Music Favorites.”

Miller, Kim, and the Ginghamburg Church Worship Team. *Handbook for Multisensory Worship*. Nashville: Abington Press, 1999.

Includes a CD-ROM. Offers plans for 34 services in the Protestant liturgical year. Dramas are scripted dialogues of everyday events with goal of contemporizing scripture.

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“Part 6: Show and Tell” offers “Using Drama to Build Worship,” “Writing Sketches for Worship,” six sketches, and directing advice. Example sketch: “Luge Chute, a Sketch Introducing Luke 5:17-19. This sketch illustrates a story from Scripture in a modern setting. It requires only three guys and a bag of chips.”(117)



**Appendix 1:**  
**Doctor of Ministry Project Covenant**

Rev. Sara Zimmerman's Covenant with the Congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tampa, Diana Stevens,<sup>1</sup> President, Board of Trustees, 2007-2008.

Covenant Date: August 17, 2008

Place: Sunday Service, UUCT

**Diana Stevens, President, Board of Trustees:** Sara, during the Covenant part of the Act of Installation of you as our new settled minister on March 2nd of this year, 2008, you agreed to "live among us, to make our concerns your concerns, and to lead us, as you are able, in the paths of wisdom, compassion and peace." You agreed to be our minister in times of joy and sorrow, and to preach the truth in freedom and love. We asked that you "demonstrate by your example, the way of a calm and courageous life, and lead us in our shared quest for greater understanding."

**Rev. Sara:** Yes, I remember our Covenant and I honor it. And likewise, the members of this church pledged in turn to encourage and assist me and to share responsibility for my welfare and spiritual development. You offered the cooperation of your hearts and hands, and you offered a free pulpit.

**Diana:** Yes, I acknowledged that we covenanted to do those things. These agreements are in place.

**Rev. Sara:** I also affirm that these agreements are already in place. What I am asking for today is something more specific than your interest in my "welfare and spiritual development." I am pursuing a Doctorate in Ministry at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. The school suggests that I covenant with you about the major project that I need to complete for the degree. I am hoping we can covenant about this today.

**Diana:** What can you tell us about the project?

**Rev. Sara:** My project is called "Theater in Worship." My intention is to create sketches that can be acted out to illustrate particular points of the sermon, and to make judicious use of other theater techniques, such as occasional use of improvisational theater, as well as music, singing and dance. For the children's part of the service, I may write short puppet shows. There may be other kinds of theater pieces I have not thought of

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<sup>1</sup> Diana Stevens gave her permission on 4/13/09 for her name to be used in this document.

yet. My goal is to collect the best of these offerings in a book length manuscript, with a how-to section for other worship leaders of any denomination. I will periodically invite the congregation to evaluate these offerings in writing.

**Diana:** How long do you expect to be working on this project?

**Rev. Sara:** At the most two years. I would like to complete it by the end of 2010 or before. During this time, I will introduce theatrical pieces into the service probably once or twice a month.

**Diana:** I now invite everyone who is willing and able to stand and join in unison in saying the words printed below:

**Congregation:** Sara, we pledge to encourage and assist you as you develop and try out your creative techniques to enhance our worship services. When you invite us to evaluate these creations of yours, we promise to take the few minutes you ask for, and to be honest.

**Rev. Sara:** Likewise, I pledge to use my best judgment in what I offer to you as part of the worship service; and to make sure it adds and does not detract from the worship experience. I deeply appreciate this Covenant. Thank you.

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Cinderella Revisited: Three Variations on a Theme**

By the Rev. Sara Zimmerman

#### **First Variation:**

##### **Using a Familiar Folktale to Create A Partially Improvised Skit**

**For Use as the “Story for All Ages” in the Intergenerational Portion of a Sunday Service.**

**Designed to accompany a sermon focused on the Second Principle of Unitarian Universalism.**

This first variation has scripted parts for the roles, and following Scene 3, it offers opportunities for the congregation and the players to improvise.

#### **Narrator:**

Let’s call this story time Cinderella Revisited. I’ve chosen this story because most know it – no matter what age you are – and several of the characters always behave in certain ways no matter what version you read. I’ve chosen this well-known folktale because it will help to illustrate a point about our Second Principle.

So let’s get started. We are going to do this partially as mime and partially as improvisation. You will act out the parts as I read the script.<sup>1</sup> For costumes, I brought some things for characters to work with to act out the scene. Just some scarves and a hat and a crown, so you can put on one thing to suggest a costume. (show) The six characters we need are Cinderella, the two stepsisters, stepmother, the godmother, and the prince. Who will volunteer?

(Note to Narrator: As the volunteers come forward, ask their names, introduce them, and thank them. Briefly huddle with them to explain in more detail what they are doing. Position the actors, give them the costumes, and very briefly coach them with a few hints on how to act out the words.)

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1 This technique is called *creative dramatics*. See Bruce Robbins, “Creative Dramatics in the Language Arts Classroom,” <http://www.vtaide.com/png/ERIC/Creative-Dramatics.htm> (accessed March 27, 2009).

Narrator: To congregation: you need to do a trumpet fanfare right now.  
Blow trumpets: ta ta ta ta taaa.

**Begin narration and action.**

**Scene One:** Once upon a time a girl named Cinderella lived with her stepmother and her stepmother's two daughters. Cinderella was living with them because her mother died. Her stepmother was jealous because the girl missed her mother so much. The stepmother had another problem with Cinderella -- she was prettier than her own daughters. The stepmother tried to hide Cinderella in the basement. And the sisters bossed Cinderella around and treated Cinderella as if she were their servant.

Cinderella had to do everything for them and never received any thanks for it. All she had to wear was an unattractive old dress, and at night when her work was done, she had to sleep next to the fireplace among the ashes and cinders. Cinders. That's right, that's why she was called Cinderella. But she never complained and she was always nice to her mean stepmother and stepsisters.

One day get an announcement that the Prince of that country where they lived was sponsoring a big dance, a magnificent dance, a ball. At the end of the big dance, he was going to choose his bride. Imagine the excitement at Cinderella's house when the invitation arrived!

The two evil stepsisters thought about nothing else, and they fought and argued all the time over which of them is most likely to be chosen by the prince. They ordered Cinderella to make ball gowns for them, and when she does, they put on the gowns and parade in front of the mirror, frowning at what they see. They blame Cinderella for everything they don't like about the dresses, and they don't like anything. They yell at Cinderella saying these things and more: "You made my gown too long for me! It's too pink! There are too many petticoats! I don't like these ruffles here! My gown is too tight! Mine is too fussy at the neck. Oh Cinderella, how could you! This dress makes me look fat!" Her stepmother yelled at her too. "Can't you do anything right?" she said.

In spite of how hard Cinderella worked, the stepmom and stepsisters never thanked her for all the efforts she had put into them, and of course they forgot to thank her.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Parts of this First Variation are adapted from "Cinderella," Berlie Doherty, *Fairy Tales told by Berlie Doherty*, (Cambridge: Candlewick Press, 2000).

**Scene Two:** (The Narrator continues) The stepsisters and their mom leave to go to the Prince's dance. When Cinderella is alone, feeling sorry for herself, out of nowhere, Cinderella's Fairy Godmother shows up and tells Cinderella that she will make it possible for her to also go to the Dance. "But I have nothing to wear," Cinderella says. Don't worry, says her godmother, and she dresses her in fine green silk and very special Manolo Blahnik four-inch heels.

**Scene Three:** (Takes place at the prince's dance) The stepsisters have been there for a while and have met the prince. But he doesn't dance with any of them. Just then, he sees Cinderella after the makeover that her Godmother gave her, and it's love at first sight. Then there's that whole chase thing about Cinderella leaving the dance at midnight and leaving behind a shoe. During the next few days, the Prince searches the country for the owner of the shoe. He goes hither and yon, trying it on every single woman in the kingdom. Finally, he finds Cinderella and she and the Prince live happily ever after. The end.  
Please take a bow.

### **Improvisation Begins**

**Narrator:** (Ask the characters to face the congregation and remain in their roles.)

Now I invite the children and youth, and everyone else to think about the characters and their actions in terms of our Second Principle: We covenant to affirm and promote "justice, equity and compassion in human relations." We agree to "have compassion." What does compassion look like? We say that we agree to bring justice and equity to everything we do. This means that we notice that all the money and food and water and other natural resources in the world are not distributed fairly to everyone. From the way these characters acted, what do you think? Are they coming even close to living the 2<sup>nd</sup> principle?

Follow these questions with an open discussion while characters remain in their roles and answer questions from the congregation. Sample question: Stepmother – why were you so mean to Cinderella?  
Thank actor volunteers again and invite everyone to take a bow.

End of First Variation

## **Second Variation:**

### **Using a Familiar Folktale to Create A Partially Improvised Sermonplay**

**For Use as the Sermon in a Sunday Service focused on the Second Principle of Unitarian Universalism and James T. Fowler's *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).**

**Minister:** “We covenant to affirm and promote Justice, Equity and compassion in human relations.” This is our second principle as Unitarian Universalists.” Justice, equity and compassion. My modus operandi today is to present an improvised version of Cinderella as a way to put it up there so we can look at the characters in terms of the second principle. What did we notice today? That at least in that family, in that milieu, there was hardly any attempt to promote justice, equity and compassion. Well, it's one of those fairy tales after all and not real life.

Last month I took an intensive course at Meadville Lombard Theology School in Chicago. It was a course in Lifespan Faith and Human Development, an excellent course taught by a psychotherapist. Among the assigned readings was the familiar book by James W. Fowler called *Stages of Faith*. Fowler draws upon the life stages that were earlier defined by Piaget and Erikson. Fowler names six stages of faith and says we all go through the first three, and some people never move above the third. I'll explain these six stages in some depth, and will go back to the Cinderella characters to help us see and know these stages more clearly instead of talking about them in the abstract. The reason I am doing this, the main point of my sermon and all this drama, is to think about the 2<sup>nd</sup> Principle in depth, and to get to that depth by comparing it with James Fowler's Stages of Faith and answering these questions:

- how can we live the Second Principle and not only affirm and promote it?
- How is it like Fowler's sixth and highest stage of faith?
- If it is like Fowler's sixth and highest stage of faith, then is it unattainable? Fowler says only a few people ever get to the 6<sup>th</sup> stage. Are we aiming too high as Unitarian Universalists? I'll save my answer for the conclusion of this sermon. Let me tell you Fowler's sixth stage so you can see the similarities: Persons who achieve the sixth stage of faith appear to participate in a power beyond ordinary experience. Think Gandhi and Mother Theresa. For them, demonstrating absolute love and justice aren't a question of whether they have the time or the inclination, but are a must. They dedicate themselves to the transformation of “present reality

to transcendent actuality.”<sup>3</sup> By the way, in talking about faith, Fowler is talking about how people live their lives, how they are in the world, not necessarily whether they go to this church or that church. He thought people could have a faith and not go to church.

Well now that I’ve explained that I interested in comparing our second Principle with Fowler’s stage six of faith, and now that I have noticed that both our Second Principle and Fowler’s stage six of faith are about compassion and justice, I want to return to the Cinderella characters and have them speak for themselves, tell their own stories, and by doing so, illustrate where they are in each of Fowler’s six stages. You should be able to hear the progression of the stages of faith as the characters describe them.

At this point, I need to again cast characters, six this time, who will come up front here with me and read your parts, and wear a scarf or hat. I have six characters and need actors to play them, to be good sports, and wear scarves, and hats so we remember who you are.) We’ll need the two sisters, one older, one younger, the Stepmother, the Prince, and the Godmother. This time we need a Godmother. If you played a part and want to play it again, please come up.

(Have them come up, give them script with a part marked, ask them to dress the part as they see fit, and have a seat, or stand nearby.)

Fowler’s Stage One is called “Intuitive Projective.” Children ages 3 to 7 best exemplify this stage. Parents have much influence at this age. Their children imitate them. These children live in unrestrained fantasy. In this play, the younger of the two stepsisters lives in a world of unrestrained fantasy. She behaves like a 3 – 7 year old. She treats Cinderella just the way their mother does – badly. When she is asked who God is, she says:

**Younger Step Sister:** “God is a man in the sky.”

**Minister:** She is at Fowler’s stage one.

Stage two of James Fowler’s hierarchy of stages is called the “Mythic Literal.” He says that children in elementary school exemplify this level. The children are beginning to be able to tell the difference between fact and fiction, and are beginning to understand justice and fairness.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 8.

In our play, the older stepsister understands what Cinderella thinks. The older stepsister realizes that she and her sister and her mom were mean to Cinderella and do not treat her fairly.. And when asked: “Who do you think God is?” She answers:

**Older Stepsister:** God is a man in the sky with a white beard. I know that the story of Cinderella is a story. It’s not real life. I know that Cinderella thinks we were mean to her. Who do I think God is? God is a man in the sky with a white beard.

**Minister:** The Older Stepsister is at stage two, the “mythic literal” stage, just a little beyond her younger sister.

Stage three is called the Conventional stage, and is characteristic of adolescence. Some of us humans stay in it all our lives. Its characteristics are conformity and seeking the approval of others. The source of authority remains outside of this person. Let’s ask the Stepmother to demonstrate this.

**Stepmother:** I just want my girls to have a normal, middle class life, with all the wonderful things that implies. And I want other people to see them and say, “That’s what I wish for my own daughter.” I know I hold the same values and beliefs that my family has held for generation upon generation and I am proud of that! Who is God to me, you ask? I believe in a higher power.

**Minister:** The fourth stage is called Individuative-Reflective. Adults in this stage understand social relationships in terms of systems, such as family systems. They look carefully at their values. They demythologize. May I present the Prince who turns out to be an individuating, reflective prince.

**Prince:** In spite of my being in a royal family, I actually feel like I am my own boss. I know there’s a lot of history, a lot of myths about us royals, but I have taken a careful look at all of that and understand it. I know what my father and my mother the Queen expect of me, and yet my inner voice says to me, it says, “Take off the symbolic crown and be your own man!” I’d like to be a professional golfer if you’d like to know the truth.

What is my faith? I certainly don’t believe that God ever was or could ever be a human. I don’t believe the stuff I was taught in the church I was raised in. I do feel the presence of something when I am out on the green, something about the light and the air. Something.



**Minister:** Thank you, Prince. Now here is Cinderella, who exemplifies Fowler's stage five. As you listen to her, you will understand.

**Cinderella:** Yes, they call me Cinderella, and they imagine all sorts of things about me that are just not true! My sisters and step mom don't have a clue about my interior life. My step sisters in time will come to realize that while they are more or less imprisoned in a system, a cultural system that creates expectations for them, I have personally decided to live independently of their system. What I would really like to do is go and live in a community with other seekers and doubters, ideally with people like Bill Moyers and Joseph Campbell and Mother Teresa in the group. We would do mega social justice work outside the commune when we are not busy raising our own fruits and veggies.

**Minister:** But didn't you just marry the prince?

**Cinderella:** Yes. (Laughing) I know I live a paradoxical existence. That's characteristic of stage five, isn't it? I can tolerate that ambiguity. (Smiles) I am willing to sacrifice my own desires to live with the prince in the palace and not in that commune I imagine, that place of love and social justice. I guess I am willing to live in the palace for the first few years, not forever and ever, because I simply must create that transformed world that I envision. I'm willing to sacrifice my own desires for a few years. I'm optimistic that the Prince will be willing to move out of the palace with me and live there too. I think he'll be ready to move from stage four to stage five in a few years.

**Minister:** Let's bring on the Godmother who's a stage sixer, a rarity, if Fowler has it right.

**Godmother:** Yes, I am unusual. I exemplify universal love. My compassion knows no bounds, and my acts of social justice bring equity to the world. You saw how I transformed Cinderella from her oppressed place in the corner of the cellar and offered her transcendence into a new reality.

Think of that act not in terms of a fairy-tale Cinderella, but in terms of a metaphor. Everyone should aspire to do what I do; everyone should aspire to transform pockets of the oppressed world. Everyone should bring their love and compassion and try to bring millions of people out of their places of oppression and transform them into realized personhood. Think of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Think of Mother Teresa. Think of Gandhi. And think of me, the Fairy Godmother. What you saw me do was a microcosm of what the others do for millions. We create zones of

liberation. We change the world with our attitudes of universal inclusiveness.

**Minister:** Thank you, Godmother. And now to the conclusion of this sermonplay. Earlier, I asked the question: “Are we aiming too high when we affirm and promote ‘Justice, Equity and Compassion’ in human relations?” I now invite your discussion.

**Improvisation Ends the Sermon:** Invite the characters to stay in their roles. Invite the congregation to address each character with a question inspired by Fowler’s stages. Read again the bulleted questions on the first page of this Variation, and remind them of the brief definitions of the stages of faith. Invite insights about Fowler’s stages of faith.

End of Second Variation

### **Third Variation:**

**Using a Familiar Folktale to Create a Partially Improvised Skit For Use as the Story in the Intergenerational Portion of the Sunday Service focused on Carl Jung’s concept of the Shadow Side.**

Use the First Variation to where the Improvisation begins...

Show props; position the actors.

**Begin action and narration:**

After the third scene, ask the characters to face the congregation and remain in their roles.)

**Improvisation begins**

Now I invite questions from the congregation, addressed to the Step Sisters and the Step Mother. Think about how the sisters and mother have not shown one iota of kindness to Cinderella. Ask them why that is. Ask them why they are so totally mean. Ask them if they really feel that way through and through. (Improvised dialogue.)

Now I invite you to ask Cinderella questions. E.g. Why are you so good? Why didn’t you defend yourself when your sisters and stepmother were so evil to you?

End of Third Variation

### **Appendix 3:**

## **The Adaptation of a Children's Story as a Sermonplay for a Social Justice Sunday, With the Minister's Homily as Epilogue**

### **STONE SOUP, A Very Short Play**

An adaptation by the Rev. Sara Zimmerman of the story *Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown, (New York, Aladdin Paperbacks, 1986).

For the Guest at Your Table, Intergenerational UUSC Sunday Service, Nov. 19, 2006, at the East Shore Unitarian Universalist Church (Cleveland).

This play uses the *creative dramatics* technique of narrators telling the story and players dramatizing the action read by the narrators. Little rehearsal time is required of the actors. Preparation time is needed to cast the characters and gather costumes (though most of the characters wear their regular clothes) and props.

### **Cast of Characters and Costumes**

#### **3 Narrators:**

#### **3 soldiers**

**Soldier 1:**

**Soldier 2:**

**Soldier 3:**

#### **Soldier Costumes:**

*The three soldiers should be uniformly dressed in their own clothes. For example, they could all wear white shirts and khaki pants, or black shirts and black pants, or red shirts and black pants. Doesn't matter what combination, as long as they are all the same. Hats: All the same color (if possible) baseball caps, worn backwards. Guns? No guns. These soldiers are non-combatants. ☺*

**Two families of the church.** *They each have a "yard," one on each side of the sanctuary, where they are just hanging out as families, except when the narration says otherwise.*

**Family #1:**

**Family #2:**

**Family costumes:** *Wear usual street clothes. The women/girls wear aprons and maybe also a shawl over their shoulders.*

**Family Props:** *Family #1 has two bunches or bags of carrots that they hide at first and later put in the soup.*

*Family #2 has one or two cabbages that they hide at first and later put in the soup.*

**Villagers: the Congregation.** *Their parts will become clear as the narrators read the story. Some muttering and pantomiming required. The Director will assist.*

**Director:** *Sits off to the side in a director's chair. Ad libs a few times to bring congregation's attention to their parts – see for example the "muttering" on page 4. See italics for suggestions of times when the Director could ad lib lines.*

### **Bit Parts and More Props**

**A large table,** *which seems to be big enough to seat both families and the three soldiers, is visible center stage. Chairs are unnecessary, since no one will actually sit, except the Director.*

**Soup-pot bringer:** *A Villager who has a big empty soup pot ready to bring up to the table. This villager pantomimes that the pot is very heavy because it is filled with water (pretend water). (see p. 4)*

**Fire-bringer:** *Has a sign to bring to the front and put next to or under the pot that says "Fire" in large letters. (see p. 4)*

**Stone bringers:** *These 3 Villagers each have a large roundish smoothish stone each to bring forward and give to the Soldiers. (see p. 4)*

**Sound Effects Person:** *Responsible for knocking on door sound.*

**Spice and herbs bringers:** *Two children.*

**Potatoes and meat bringers:** *Many Villagers (members of congregation).*

**Setting:** *All of the action occurs "outdoors" and the "outdoors" is imagined to be the entire sanctuary. The families are in their "yards," one on each side of the sanctuary.*

**Action**

**The play begins when Family #1 is playing some sort of game together outside their imagined house, stage right.**

**Family #2 is doing the same, stage left.**

*[The Three Soldiers enter from the back of the church, walking at a slow, sauntering pace towards the front. Note: They are sauntering, not marching. Each one has an actor's "bit" that he/she (the soldiers can be girls, of course) does. For example, one might chew gum, another toss a ball in the air, and the third might make eye contact with members of the audience, nodding and saying hello.]*

**First Narrator: Once upon a time and a very long time ago in a country I can't remember where, three soldiers trudged down a road in a strange country. They were on their way home from the wars. Besides being tired, they were hungry. In fact, they had eaten nothing for two days.**

**Three Soldiers When the Three Soldiers hear this line about not eating for two days, they stop where they are, turn toward the audience, rub their stomachs and say loudly, "Oh I am soooo hungry. Oh I am soooo hungry."]**

**First Narrator: "I would really really like to have a good dinner tonight," said the first soldier. "And a bed to sleep in," said the second. "But I don't see anybody around here," said the third. "We must march on."**

**Now dear audience, you can see that there are families in a village near here, at least two families who are visible at the moment. So are the soldiers in luck? No! These people were afraid of soldiers and kept talking amongst themselves, pretending not to notice the soldiers and turning their backs on them. These families had what you and I might now call a scarcity mentality. They thought they did not have enough. Enough of what? You may ask. They thought they didn't have enough food. You could hear them saying:**

**Here come three soldiers. Soldiers are always hungry. But we do not have enough for ourselves." And they hurried to hide the food. (The two families make quick, lively, furtive movements, "hiding" their food.)**

**“They hid all their cabbages and potatoes and carrots and meat. They hid sacks of barley in the loft. They hid some food under their beds.**

**Second Narrator: When the soldiers stopped at the home of the first family they found, they knocked on the door. [Cue for Sound Effects Person]**

**When the family who lived there came to the door, the soldiers said, politely, “Could you please spare a bit of food for three hungry soldiers?”**

**The homeowner, whose name was Paul, and his wife, Francis, looked sad. “Oh so sorry,” they said. “We haven’t eaten in three whole days. It rained all this year and washed out our crops. We haven’t eaten in three days.”**

**And so the three soldiers went on to the next house where they could see the family playing together.**

***[Three Soldiers As they walk over to the next family’s house (on the other side of the sanctuary), they rub their stomachs and say, “Oh I am sooo hungry. And I’m getting tired too.” They can all say these things at once.]***

**Second Narrator *[When the soldiers are at the second “house”]* And once more, they politely asked the family: “Could you please spare a bit of food for three hungry soldiers? And maybe you have some corner of your house or barn where we could sleep for the night?”**

**The father’s name was Al. Al said, very loudly, “Oh no, I’ll have to say no.” His wife’s name was Louise. Louise shook her head, and frowned. “No No No,” she said. “We gave all of our spare beds to the soldiers who were here before. Our beds are full.”**

**And so they went through the village.**

***[Three Soldiers. After you leave the second “house,” start going up to members of the congregation and pretend to be asking them for food during this next part.]***

**Third Narrator And so they went through the village. Not one person they asked had any food to give away, and some of them looked quite prosperous in the way they were dressed. *And yet, they all looked sad, and sighed loudly, and tried to look hungry.***

**One person said he had given his extra beds to the Salvation Army, another said he had used the extra grain to feed his chickens.**

Then in a dramatic and surprising turn of events, the First Soldier called out: "Good people. I have an announcement." Everyone paid attention to him. "We are three hungry soldiers in a strange land. We are hungry, but you have no food. The three of us have decided to make Stone Soup."

The Villagers and the families all stared at him and muttered amongst themselves all at the same time, "Huh? What did he say? Whoever heard of such a thing?" [*This muttering should be audible. If it isn't audible, the Director should invite them to mutter more loudly.*]

"Bring us a large pot filled with water," the Soldiers said. And then a Villager brought a large pot. [The bringer of the soup pot pretends that it is filled with water and is very heavy.] The Villagers light a fire under the pot and bring it to a boil.

[*Fire-bringer brings a sign with "Fire" spelled out and places it next to or under the pot.*]

3<sup>rd</sup> Narrator continues: After they have the pot, and a nice fire going under the pot, the Soldiers say, "And now, please bring us three round, smooth stones."

The Villagers could find those easily enough and brought them to the Soldiers, who dropped the stones into the pot.

[*Pause in narration to allow time to drop stones in pot.*]

"Any soup needs oregano, rosemary and thyme," said the soldiers, and two children ran to get those. "Carrots, now we need carrots. Oh if there were only carrots, it would be much better."

"Why I think I might have a carrot or two after all," said Francis, coming from her yard with two bunches of carrots in her apron.

"A good stone soup should have cabbage," said the soldiers as they put the carrots into the pot. "But no use asking for what you said you don't have."

"Oh lookie here, I do have some cabbages, after all," said Louise, coming from her yard with three cabbages.

"Now only if we had a little bit of beef and some potatoes, this soup would be good enough for a rich man's table."

*The Villagers looked thoughtful. Then they suddenly remembered their potatoes and sides of beef hanging in their cellars, and they went and*

*got them and put them in the soup. [Members of the congregation have cut-out shapes of vegetables and beef (or cards with names of these things on them.) They bring them forward and put them in the soup.]*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Narrator continues:** A rich man's soup – and all from a few stones. It seemed like magic! A few more things went into the soup that day- - barley and milk. And at last the soup was ready.

And what a soup it was! How good it smelled! It was truly fit for a king, and soon the Villagers found it tasted really really good. The Villagers thought it was the best soup they had ever tasted. They ate and ate. Then they danced and sang, far into the night.

Finally, very late into the night, everyone got so tired, they went home to sleep. Except for the soldiers. They still did not have a place to sleep, and they asked the Villagers, "Is there not a loft or spare bedroom, or even a barn where we could sleep?"

And now the Villagers sounded much different. "Let three such wise and splendid young men sleep in a loft or a barn!" they said. "Are you kidding? Of course not! They must have the very best beds in the village!" And here's what happened:

**1<sup>st</sup> Narrator**

The first soldier slept in the priest's house. [*Narrator points in to one corner of the sanctuary.*]

The second soldier slept in the baker's house. [*Narrator points to a second corner.*]

And the third soldier slept in the mayor's house. [*Point to a third corner*]

In the morning, the whole village gathered in the square to give the soldiers a send off.

*[Both families and the soldiers gather in the middle aisle, towards the front of the sanctuary. Francis and Paul, Al and Louise shake the hands of the three soldiers.]*

"Many thanks for what you have taught us," the peasants said to the soldiers. "We shall never go hungry again, now that we know how to make soup from stones."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Narrator:** "Oh, it's all in knowing how," said the soldiers, and off they went down the road.



***[Soldiers walk to the rear of the sanctuary and out into the Narthex, while waving goodbye.]***

### **The End**

***[Curtain call: Soldiers hurry back in – to the front of the sanctuary – and take a bow. Two Families take bows. The Director assists with this process. Could demonstrate before play starts how to bow in unison.]***

### **EPILOGUE: Minister's Homily**

And so our play has ended, with everyone in that small village sharing their resources so that everyone may enjoy the benefits. But real life is seldom like that. In real life, there is private hoarding and reluctance to show your available resources. Your DRE and I chose this particular story for today because we see it as an allegory for the water situation that is already developing in parts of this country and in the world. As you have heard, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee holds the problem of the scarcity of water as a number 1 concern. Through their leadership, and the work of many organizations, there is a powerful cooperative effort developing. At the same time, however, there are lines being drawn in the turf and water is being politicized. There are haves and have nots. May it someday be otherwise.

I urge everyone to join and support the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee – a totally separate organization from the UU Association. Every year, they invite new members. You have several members who are spokespersons for the UU Service Committee. *(Identify persons)* They will be happy to talk with anyone about joining.

I'd like to thank all of our actors and narrators today: *(here mention names of all the narrators, soldiers, families, etc.)* Thank you all!

End of Epilogue

#### **Appendix 4:**

#### **A One-Act Reader's Sermonplay**

#### ***Heretics and Heresies***

#### ***A Brief and Incomplete History of Unitarian Universalism in Europe***

By the Rev. Sara Zimmerman

#### **Optional Responsive Reading #566 *God Is One*<sup>1</sup>**

**Sound Booth:** Italian Renaissance, any selection. At the cue, "let's have a little music," play for a minute or less, then fade to nothing.

**Costumes:** Minimal, and up to each character to wear one or two items of dress that suggest the 16th century, and their role.

**Props:** John Calvin carries binoculars (intended anachronism)

#### **Cast of Characters:**

Narrator

Michael Servetus

John Calvin

Laelius Socinus (Sozzini)

Jadige Gnoinskiej

Katharine Weigel

Faustus Socinus (Sozzini)

**Stage Directions:** *Note that stage directions are in italics. While the music is playing, the following come up to sit on the stage -- SERVETUS, SOCINUS, JADIGE, and KATHERINE. Take the pulpit when your part comes up. CALVIN sit anywhere for now. You will go to the side of the room instead of to the pulpit.)*

**Narrator:** Francis David, whose words we just read, was a preacher in the 16<sup>th</sup> century court of Transylvania (now known as Romania). King John Sigismund was the king, and the only Unitarian king in history. As king of Transylvania, he became a Unitarian because of Francis David's influence, and issued the first edict of religious freedom. In the 1500s, followers of Francis David were called "Unitarians" because of their belief that *Edge Oz Eeshten* (God is One.) God is indivisible. In the play that our Readers' Theater Group is offering today, you will meet other historical figures from Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. People who believed, like Francis David, that "you need not think alike to love alike." Who believed in reason as the lantern of faith, conscience as the source of

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<sup>1</sup> In *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: UUA, 1993).

spiritual joy, and salvation here on earth. Many loved Jesus and believed in Jesus but not in the risen Christ. After I introduce our characters and players, we will let them speak for themselves. Their words are based on historical records and have been adapted for a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience. <sup>2</sup>

*(stand by each one as you say their name)*

Michael Servetus is being played today by \_\_\_\_\_; John Calvin, no friend to Michael Servetus, is being played by \_\_\_\_\_; and we have the Socinus Uncle and Nephew, Uncle Laelius Socinus, being portrayed by \_\_\_\_\_; and his nephew, being played today by \_\_\_\_\_. The courageous women in our play are Jadige Gnoenskiej, played by \_\_\_\_\_ and Katharine Weigel, also known as \_\_\_\_\_.

(Except for Calvin and Servetus, take seats up front facing congregation right after you are introduced.)

And so, let us begin. Let's have a little renaissance music to set the tone and suggest the 16<sup>th</sup> century. (CUE MUSIC) Our setting is Europe, specially the countries of Italy, Spain, Switzerland, France, and Poland. The 1500s were an age of danger, especially for anti-trinitarians, those like Francis David who believed in one God, not the Trinity. As you will see, if you were a Unitarian in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, if the plague didn't kill you, you ran some chance of being executed because of your beliefs. This is a story about some of our heroes, heroines, enemies and benefactors.

(During the last few words "enemies and benefactors," MICHAEL SERVETUS moves toward the mic. Narrator moves aside.)

**Michael Servetus:** *(brash, energetic, ad libs own greeting)* Hello. Good morning. My name is Michael Servetus. I'm from Villaneuva, in Spain, just south of the Pyrenees. My father was a nobleman, my brother a priest. When I was 16, my father sent me to France to study law. I studied the Bible instead. I had never seen the Bible much before, and I found it fascinating, especially Jesus! I didn't understand how he was supposed to be part of the Trinity.

**Narrator:** So you questioned the Trinity!? Did you know that in your father's generation and in Spain, your own country, thousands of Jews and Muslims were deported or killed for refusing the doctrine of the Trinity? Did you think maybe your objection to the Trinity might be life-threatening to you?

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<sup>2</sup> Source of the historical facts in this sermonplay: Charles A. Howe, *For Faith and Freedom: A Short History of Unitarianism in Europe* (Boston: Skinner House, 1997).

**Servetus:** Well, remember that I was no longer in Spain. By that time I had left my law studies and was in Switzerland, in Basel. I was a Renaissance man! Reading Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and the early Church Fathers in the original. I thought my scholarly reading of the Bible could be of use. I thought I could convince everyone with my fine scholarship. Everyone had the wrong impression of the relationships of the Trinity. It was my goal to do the research and provide the information they needed to truly be enlightened. I thought if the great Reformers like Martin Luther – if they would just read my book, they would be converted. My first book was published in 1531, called The Errors of the Trinity. Let me give you just a small sample. I objected to the Holy Spirit being a distinct Being. I think it's God's spirit moving within our hearts, not separate from God.

**Narrator:** Did John Calvin have a problem with you and your book? (*JOHN CALVIN, at mention of his name goes and stands at wall and examines Servetus through his binoculars.*)

**Servetus:** There he is right now, watching my every move. (*points to Calvin*) He wasn't a threat to me in 1531 because he had not yet become the powerful John Calvin that we knew and dreaded, the man who closely examined every threat to his version of Protestantism. Anyway, I moved around a lot and adopted a disguise to avoid being punished. I even changed my name! Meanwhile I said more things that irritated John Calvin – not on purpose. I just had to share the results of my brilliant studies.

**Narrator:** What did you say?

**Servetus:** Well, for example, I was convinced that we should look to the primitive Christians for the real God. I thought we should offer baptism to adults only. And I thought we should regard the church as a spiritual community rather than an institution, stuff like that. I went to visit Calvin to explain it all to him -- (*now speaking directly to Calvin*) -- **BUT JOHN, YOU JUST WOULDN'T BE REASONABLE!**

**Narrator:** What happened then?

**Servetus:** Oh, you know, all those mainstream reformers – Calvin, – they all got so angry with me. At first, I escaped being burned at the stake by escaping over a wall in my night clothes. They burned me anyway – in effigy! That was in June of 1553. I kept hiding out. On Sundays I thought the way to hide out was by going to church. I mean, in those days, anyone who didn't go to church was suspect. But someone spotted me in church on a Sunday in August of 1553, and reported me. They threw me in prison. At the trial, they accused me of heresies and

questioned me about my writings – I still don't get why they were so upsetting to John Calvin. They questioned me about my presumed sympathy with Muslims and Jews. I told Calvin I thought his doctrines of predestination, original sin, and total depravity—I told him I thought his doctrines reduced men and women to mere objects like logs and stones. To this day, I don't know what he was so upset about!

**John Calvin:** (*says loudly from the side, no mic*) MICHAEL, DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. IT WASN'T ABOUT YOU. IT'S YOUR HERESIES. YOU HAVE GOT TO GO!

*(Servetus now pantomimes being led away. Go down steps, and head towards the double doors, and act like you are fighting off people who are grabbing you by the arms and handcuffing you. John Calvin, go and sit anywhere you like.)*

**Narrator:** Michael Servetus was found guilty of heresies and burned at the stake on October 27, 1553.. We will have a moment of silence. (*silence, 10 seconds. Right after the silence, Jaddy G. moves to the mic, and Narrator sits down.*)

**Jadwige:** Permit me to lighten things up with some hospitality. I am Jadige Gnoinskiej –it's a Polish name, probably unpronounceable for you -- just call me Jaddy. There are so few women in the recorded history of early Unitarianism. Just Katharine Weigel and me. Let me tell you about her – she was also Polish.

*(while Jaddy says "Let me tell you about her" Katharine comes to mic.)*

**Katharine:** (*cheerfully*) If it's OK with you, I'd rather tell my story myself! Yes, Katharine Weigel is my name. I am exactly as you see – 80 years old, gray haired, and cheerful, always full of fun and jokes. Ask me later, I have some new ones. Anyway, in the spring of 1539, the Catholics in Poland accused me of not believing in Christ as the Son of God. I was 80 years old, and they really put the pressure on me, trying to get me to say what I didn't believe. Don't get me wrong, I loved Jesus. I just couldn't believe he was the Son of God. There was no tolerance for beliefs that were different. They put me on trial, convicted me, and burned me at the stake on April 19, 1539, in Krakow, Poland. (*pantomimes being led away to be executed – goes down center aisle, towards double doors. Ad lib "did you hear the one about" and sings a Unitarian hymn while walking.*)

**Jaddy:** Let us have a moment of silence for Katharine Weigel. (*silence, 10 seconds. Jaddy G. is very cheerful, warm, the slightest hint of uppity*) I am Jaddy G, and lucky to be me. My husband is a wealthy Calvinist, but

he is a very good husband indeed and gives me a lot of freedom, way way ahead of his time in that regard. Every woman should be so lucky. Anyway, he's a Calvinist and I'm an Arian. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a word that sounds the same – "Aryan" -- will take on a negative meaning because of Hitler's meaning. *(emphatic) That's not what this is about. Don't be confused about that. When I say I'm an Arian, I mean I believe in the teachings of Arius.* You remember, the guy who lost the election at the Council of Nicaea long ago in the year 325? When they voted to have a Trinity in spite of biblical evidence to the contrary? And so in many churches they recite the Creed about believing in Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity. I don't believe that.

I believe what Arius believed, so I'm an Arian – A – R – I – A – N. I convinced my sweetie, my dear Calvinist hubby to establish a new town in Poland where everyone could come and practice their own religion. It was about 30 years after poor Katharine Weigel lost her life in that cruel way – poor thing. We called the new town Rakow.. There were lots of Arians like me, and people of other religions, and pacifists, and many who pursued social justice. Some noblemen even gave up their property and wealth to work in the fields. Isn't that a happy story? Anyway, just thought I'd say hello. *(while Jaddy G. is saying her last line, Socinus moves to mic)*

***Laelius Socinus:*** Bon Giorno! My name is Laelius Sozzini, but here in Poland they call me Socinus. I am from Siena, that beautiful hill town north of Rome. A whole bunch of us Italian Humanists made our way northward and influenced the development of Unitarianism in Northern Europe. I think what happened to Michael Servetus and to Katharine Weigel was terrible, just terrible! I stayed safe by being evasive when they asked me about my true beliefs. I could be evasive in a way that hardly made anyone suspicious. My friend Castellio published a book called *Against Heretics*. It was about Calvin's murder of Servetus. Calvin's boys thought I was in on it – they thought I had collaborated with Castellio. When they asked me if I had collaborated with Castellio, here's what I told them, in my exact words: *(very slowly reads the following quote)*

"I, Laelius Socinus, in my boyhood learned one creed,...the Apostles' Creed...But I have read others also, and attribute all the honor I can and ought to the very old creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople."  
See? I didn't say I *believed* in the Apostles' Creed and the Holy Trinity, and I didn't say I *didn't* believe in them. *(laughs)* Anyway, I thought a lot about theology, and became a pioneer in the interpretation of the Book of John. You can ask me for more details later. I died young, at the age of 37. If I had lived longer, I might have been able to a few more accomplishments. Why did I die? Sorry, I can't remember why. I think it was the plague. Lots of people died of the plague in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Faustus Socinus:** Ah yes, my poor uncle, dying so young like that. I am Faustus Sozzini, the nephew. I was what you call a late bloomer.. In fact, I was 35 by the time I left Italy and started studying theology in Switzerland and France. I found my uncle's books and papers in France. Up until that time, I had no focus to my life. My uncles' books and papers inspired me to write a theological work. I got into a lot of trouble for writing it. And no wonder – it was called *Concerning the Savior Jesus Christ*. Just the title raised a red flag for people. I wasn't clever like my uncle who knew how to be evasive and stay out of trouble. I said in my book that I believe Christ is Savior, not because of his death on the cross, but because his life shows us the way to salvation, and the way to salvation is to live by his example, *not because* he saved us on the cross.

*(Stops, looks congregation in the eyes)* Do you realize what a heresy that was! And here's another heresy I came up with: "Do not expect the Millennium when Christ will come to reign on earth. The Millennium isn't going to happen, people." Saying that got me into trouble too. I got into even more trouble when I said the church must be pacifist, must love peace. After I said all those things against the church, I had to move away from Krakow to a safe house out of town to avoid being beat up, and I lived there for five years before moving back. I never should have moved back because in 1591, a Catholic nobleman's boys attacked me in Krakow. They treated me to unspeakable shame. It happened again, a few years later. They burned my books and papers and said they would burn me too, unless I recanted. *(loudly)* I did not recant! I told them, *go ahead. I told them to do whatever God permits them to do.* They were taken aback by what I said, and decided to drown me in the river instead. On the way there, a friend spotted me, and saved me. I lived another 13 years, and died at the age of 64. My grave in Poland is marked with an impressive monument that American Unitarians donated. Thank you.  
*(Faustus sits.. Narrator walks toward mic)*

**Narrator:** No, Faustus Sozzini, Thank You! Later, I asked Faustus what he was proudest of and he asked me if I remembered that town in Poland that Jaddy G. founded. Rakow. That continued to be a safe place for the Polish Brethren. In 1601 they collectively wrote the Rakovian Catechism. The Rakovian catechism influenced the Unitarian movement of today. Today we have only scratched the surface of Unitarian history in Europe. My hope is that it has brought an awareness of some key persons. Because of them, today we are part of a movement that honors freedom of religious thought, the unrestricted use of reason, and a tradition of tolerance of differing views and practices.

The End

**Narrator:** Let's bring the actors to the stage and take a bow.

## **Appendix 5:**

### **A Puppet Dialogue with John Murray and Theodore Parker For an Intergenerational Service By the Rev. Sara Zimmerman**

{This version includes local church history that easily be changed by other churches to be about their settings. It includes additional topical references, such as to General Assembly in Salt Lake City in 2009, that could be changed.}

#### **Cast of Characters:**

**Big Dog:** performed with a large shaggy sheep dog puppet and gruff voice; any larger puppet would do – with the name and voice changed to suit.

**Philosophizin' Mouse:** performed with a small mouse puppet with a nasal twang; any smaller puppet would do – with the name and voice changed to suit.

**Minister:** performed with the minister in all three roles. Not recommended. It's too difficult to turn the pages and remember which voice to use. Could be performed by two puppeteers and a Narrator.

**Costumes:** Big Dog plays Theodore Parker in this version. During his role as Parker, he wears a scarf as costume.

#### **Sermon: Philosophizin' Mouse and Big Dog Discuss Unitarian Universalism**

**Mouse:** *(a small gray mouse puppet whose personality tends toward pomposity and who has a mildly annoying noticeably nasal voice.)*

Good morning ladies, gentlemen, children and youth. My name is Theodore Parker Emerson Murray Jones Mouse, III. If you know Unitarian Universalist history, I am certain you will recognize that the name I have adopted for myself, the name only I have created, is a combination of names of famous Unitarians and Universalists. Allow me to tell you how it happened, what led me to choose such a name. I am a great reader of theology and philosophy and follower of the great intellectual debates about religion. For many years now, I have studied dozens of men and women who are and were the greatest thinkers and activists of their time and so often they have proven to be Unitarians and Universalists.



I have named myself Theodore Parker Emerson Murray Jones Mouse, III. There is no first and second; I don't mind telling you that I just think it's more distinguished to say "the third." I am descended from the original Mickey Mouse and my father wanted to name me Mickey the 3,333<sup>rd</sup> but that would make me just another mouse and I am just so much more than that.

**Minister:** Thank you Mr. Mouse. Would you mind telling us...?

**Mouse:** Yes yes. But I would also like to say in way of introducing myself that besides reading Unitarian Universalism history and theology, I also like to hang out at the Annual General Assemblies in June. Last year it was no problem at all getting to Fort Lauderdale – I just hopped a freight train – but this year traveling to Salt Lake City for this year's General Assembly at the end of June could prove more challenging. Of course I could always pretend to be a stuffed toy mouse and you could pack me in your suitcase.

**Minister:** That is an idea. You probably want to get there because it's a very important General Assembly. The Assembly will elect the next president of the Unitarian Universalist Association. But would you mind telling us, well you see, the thing is, I did invite you to speak today about UU history and theology, and they are all waiting...

**Mouse:** Yes yes. *Excusae moi. Con permiso. Pardonae moi. Verzeihung.* So sorry. However, you may have noticed but I have already commenced to do so.

**Minister:** Oh, I see you know five languages. What do you mean you have already commenced to do so?

**Mouse:** My very name: Theodore Parker, Emerson, Murray, Jones. Look on my name as an outline for my remarks. Let us begin with Theodore Parker. He's my favorite, so I will begin with him. And you think it's remarkable that I know five languages? Theodore Parker knew 20!

**Big Dog:** *(A large fuzzy sheep dog puppet with a much deeper voice and bouncier, friendlier demeanor than mouse. Lots of breath support. Wears a scarf as Theodore Parker costume)* Woof woof. Mr. Mouse, you promised me I could play Theodore Parker this time. I'm wearing my Theodore Parker costume. I know all the facts about Theodore Parker. Just ask me anything.

**Mouse:** Yes yes. Yes, Big Dog, if you are ready, tell us the facts.

**Big Dog:** My name is Theodore Parker. I am one of the greatest Unitarians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century! My father was a poor farmer and I am his 11th child. I had a talent for learning languages. Then I studied the Bible. I used what I knew in those languages to translate certain words in the Bible and discover things in other people's translations that were not true. I was the minister at several churches in New England. I am most famous for what I said during an ordination sermon that I preached on May 19, 1841. (*Stops*)

**Mouse:** Yes yes, that was excellent, Big Dog, er I mean Rev. Parker. Do you remember the title of that famous sermon?

**Big Dog:** (*deliberate*) The title of that sermon was "The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity."

**Mouse:** Yes, yes. That's right. "The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity." Permit me to explain the theological meaning of that title. (*clears throat importantly*)

"The essence of Christianity is of 'permanent' validity, but many aspects of the religion are merely 'transient,' varying from age to age."<sup>1</sup> What the Rev. Parker clearly meant by that was that all "creeds, confessions, and collections of doctrines" were transient.

**Minister:** Parker believed that reason and morality were more lasting than creeds, and that that reason and morality will last. Creeds don't last. He thought the moral teaching of Jesus were permanent. His views were shocking not only to Trinitarians, but also to Unitarians. He was asked to resign from the Boston Ministers Association, made up of Unitarians!

**Big Dog:** Poor Theodore Parker.

**Minister:** But not really. Look at the way our religion has evolved. Parker has had a lasting influence into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As an Association of congregations we have agreed on having seven Principles and no creed. The teachings of Jesus and wisdom from other faiths have lasted and are obvious in our Principles. Everyone is expected to use their reason and find their own truth in sacred texts, like the Jewish and Christian Bible.

**Mouse:** Yes, yes. Each of us finding our own truth is so important. Each of us needs to build our own theology and be supportive of the others around us building theirs.

**Big Dog:** (*remove his Theodore Parker costume; e.g. scarf*) Woof woof Just like that song we sang today. The kids' version of the Seven

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<sup>1</sup> Conrad Wright, ed. *A Stream of Light*, (Boston: Skinner House, 1975)52.

Principles. Everybody sing with me. (*Tune from do-re-mi in Sound of Music*) “One – Each person is important. Two – Be kind in all you do. Three – We’re free to learn together. Four – And search for what is true. Five – All people need a vote... La la la la la “(*fades*)

**Mouse:** Permit me now to tell you about a Universalist! I am certain you are familiar with the fact that the Unitarians and the Universalists were separate denominations until they merged in 1961. Prior to 1961, the two religions had very distinct histories. I have selected one Universalist to talk about this morning: John Murray.

**Big Dog:** (*jumping up and down, speaking quickly*) Ooo ooo ooo Woof woof. I love hearing this story. There John Murray is in the 1700s in England, and he has some terrible things happen in his personal life, and he has been preaching the radical religious position that everyone is saved, and so a lot of people are opposed to him and even tried to lynch him and he gets tired of religious controversy, so he gets on a boat to come to this country determined to quit the ministry, and the boat runs aground off the coast of New Jersey and he makes his way to shore, and the farmer there RIGHT THERE on the land where he comes ashore has a chapel already built and the farmer happens to have been waiting for someone like John Murray, and then the farmer asks John to stay there and be the minister and long story short instead of leaving the ministry, in a few years John Murray’s message of Universalism has spread all up and down the East coast. I love the story of John Murray. Can I tell it? Can I?

**Mouse:** Well well, yes, yes, you just did Big Dog, you just did. Let me say a word or two more. Allow me to explain his theology. What John Murray brought to America is called “universalism” because it is a message of universal salvation. Eventually Murray became the minister in Gloucester, Massachusetts, married Judith Sargent, and helped to establish the rights of religious dissenters. Because of John Murray’s leadership, the Universalists helped the cause of the separation of church and state.

**Minister:** Yes, that’s all true about John Murray and I thank you and Big Dog for telling his story. Actually, what everyone seems to forget is that a Congregationalist minister in Boston was already preaching “the salvation of all men.” His name was Charles Chauncy. He published a pamphlet in Boston in 1782 that took issue with the translations for two Greek words in the New Testament. The English translations for these words are usually “everlasting” and “forever.” But Chauncy said, “That’s not what the words mean!” And therefore these Greek words cannot be

used “to support the idea of the eternity of punishment in hell.”<sup>2</sup> There is nothing in the Bible about “everlasting” and “however.”

**Big Dog:** Woof woof. Hey you guys, I think it’s getting late and I’m hungry. Isn’t there something about a potluck today? Did you hear my tummy growling?

**Mouse:** But I’m only half way through my outline!

**Minister:** Well Mr. Mouse, I think we’ll have to save the other two figures in your outline for another day. That would be Ralph Waldo Emerson and Jenkin Lloyd Jones. I promise we’ll talk about them another day, soon.

**Mouse:** With all due respect, you talk about Emerson all of the time. You need to talk about Jenkin Lloyd Jones, especially. Promise me.

**Minister:** Yes, Mouse, I promise. I’ll think I’ll talk about him next month. But before we end this discussion, I’d like to say a few things about this history of this church.

**Big Dog:** How many is a few?

**Minister:** Well how about five things.

**Big Dog:** OK, five.

**Minister:** OK, why don’t you help me?

**Big Dog:** Woof woof. 79 years ago, a minister came to start a fellowship. That was in 1930. But it didn’t last.

**Minister:** Then in 1934, the American Unitarian Association tried to establish the African Universalist Church of Tampa. But sadly, that didn’t last either.

**Big Dog:** In 1955, a multi-racial Great Books discussion group started and called itself the Tampa Unitarian Fellowship. They met at what was then the Black Cuban Club in Ybor City.

**Minister:** In the late 1960s the congregation moved into a building it purchased from St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in South Tampa.

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<sup>2</sup> Ernest Cassara, ed. *Universalism in America*, (Boston: Skinner House, 1997)8.

**Big Dog:** Woof woof. And in 1973, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tampa moved here to Morris Bridge Road, and into the small dome. So is that enough history for today. Now can we eat?

**Minister:** Thank you, Big Dog. You were so helpful this morning. Our potluck lunch will start soon after the end of the service. We'll have our closing hymn and closing words first.

And thank you Mr. Mouse. How knowledgeable you are!  
(Mouse bows elaborately)

**Optional Closing words by Theodore Parker<sup>3</sup>**

Be ours a religion which like sunshine, goes everywhere  
Its temple, all space;  
Its shrine, the good heart;  
Its creed, all truth;  
Its ritual, works of love;  
Its profession of faith, divine living.

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<sup>3</sup> *Singing the Living Tradition*, (Boston: UUA, 1993).

**Appendix 6:**  
**A One-Act Reader's Sermonplay**

By Rev. Sara Zimmerman

***A Play for Women's History Month***  
***Carrying the Beacon of Truth: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier***  
***and Their Mentor, Jenkin Lloyd Jones***

Especially well suited for a church about to launch a capital campaign to support a religious education building project.

**Reading:** "Entering Upon a New Era of Religious Thought" by Mary Safford (*Read by the character who plays Safford in the play.*)

Mary Safford was a 19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarian minister who was part of the Iowa Sisterhood of ministers, and then later in her life she founded a Unitarian church in Orlando, Florida. You will be hearing more about her in a little while.

This is from a sermon she wrote in 1889<sup>1</sup>: "We are entering upon a new era of religious thought. A greater reformation is now in progress than was that of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Science and the Higher Biblical Criticism are fast making it impossible for rational human beings longer to hold views that once were deemed essential to salvation. The old creeds are rapidly being outgrown. But there is danger that in the strong reaction from many old time beliefs, men and women may lose sight of those saving truths, those eternal principles of morality, without which life is not worth the living. There is danger than in throwing aside the superstitions of the past, they may also lose that reverence and moral earnestness that are indispensable to real progress. Intellectual emancipation from error without moral education is not less dangerous than bigotry. The knowledge that increases our power to do good, if we are so inclined, also enables us to do more harm if we lack the moral training that would inspire us to use this knowledge worthily....Not only must we proclaim the saving truths we hold, we must also strive to build up these truths in our own lives and in the lives of others."

**Costumes:** Regular dress, but perhaps with some subtle adjustment or addition. (E.g. scarf with brooch or for Jenkin Lloyd Jones, a cravat.)

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<sup>1</sup> "Sermon Delivered at Least Twenty-Eight Times, 1889-1908," in Dorothy May Emerson, ed. *Standing Before Us: Unitarian Universalist Women and Social Reform 1776-1936* (Boston: Skinner House, 2000) 499.

**Cast of Characters:**

Mary Safford

Caroline Bartlett Crane

Eleanor Gordon

Jenkin Lloyd Jones

**Setting:** A meeting of the Iowa Sisterhood.

**Stage Directions:** *Four chairs in front are arranged in a slight semi-circle instead of straight across as is usual.*

*From the beginning of the service, Eleanor and Mary are sitting in two of those chairs, facing the congregation. Later, Caroline Crane and Jenkin Lloyd Jones will enter separately from the back and come down the center aisle. Everyone, please read ahead for your microphone cues. Speak to the congregation unless indicated otherwise.*

**Eleanor:** *(at the pulpit mic)* My name is Eleanor Gordon, and like my close friend Mary Safford, I am a member of the Iowa Sisterhood of ministers. We have also been called the "Prophetic Sisterhood." The year is 1900. We're gathering here for a meeting today with another one of our Sisterhood, Caroline Bartlett Crane, and one of our mentors, Jenkin Lloyd Jones. While we are waiting for the meeting to get started, let me say I currently serve the Burlington, Iowa church, but I also do missionary work in other parts of Iowa to spread the message of Unitarianism, and before doing this, I taught public school. Sometimes I have been challenged for my Unitarian beliefs, like the time my school board called me before them for what they called "flagrant Unitarianism." So what was I doing to deserve that? Teaching evolution! In the church I serve, I teach evolution to my heart's content. I teach about Darwin and Emerson in Sunday School and the scientific method of reading the Bible.

I know you heard earlier from Mary, who is also a leader of the Iowa Sisterhood, and a very strong leader, much more so than I. Mary is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association and on lots of other boards.

**Mary:** *(at the standing mic)* Hello again, everyone. Yes, I am so very well known now that there's a joke about me. I don't mind telling you as it speaks to my good moral character. "What do the Catholics and Unitarians have in common?" Answer "They both worship the Virgin Mary."

*(wait for any reaction)* I guess if they didn't like me so much, they wouldn't have made up jokes about my personal life. *(to Eleanor and*

*Caroline*) I just thought I'd get that out of the way so when Caroline and Jenkin get here for our meeting we can focus on the serious stuff.

**Eleanor:** Earlier I heard you reading from your sermon. I've heard you read that same sermon so many times! Why don't you write something else?

**Mary:** Eleanor, I accept that criticism from you because I honor the very friendship that we have enjoyed since our childhood days in Hamilton. We have been through so much together, starting and building congregations in Iowa and Nebraska, working through crises, struggling with the eastern Unitarian traditions – we are just so much more theologically liberal than those Harvard men. Now, in regard to this sermon, I give it everywhere I go because it contains the heart of what I strongly believe: *(waving hands with dramatic flourish)* “Science and higher biblical criticism are fast making it impossible for rational human beings to hold views any longer that were once deemed to be essential for salvation.” *(back to normal gestures)* Then I make the point about not losing the point of Unitarianism, not throwing the baby out with the bath water, so to speak. I make the point about holding on to reverence, and especially the need for moral education. Education, education, education.

**Caroline:** *(enters now from the back of the sanctuary; goes to the pulpit mic. Mary and Eleanor sit down.)* Hello dear friends. My name is Caroline Bartlett Crane. I've been friends with Eleanor and Mary for many years. *(Looks over at Mary and Eleanor, who nod in agreement.)* As women ministers of the Unitarian church on what is considered to be the Western frontier, we have had to make choices. Pick our battles, you might say. As we talked together at meetings like this one we will be having today with the four of us, and in the many letters we wrote back and forth to one another and to our mentors, we decided on what is most important to us. And you can tell by looking at our churches what is most important.

*(from the side Mary calls to Caroline, not with microphone):* **Mary:** Tell them about Kalamazoo!

**Caroline:** We encourage each other in our building projects. Mary is referring to the church I serve in Michigan, where from the start we thought long and hard about what the building should look like and all of the different functions we wanted it to serve. We see the architecture and the theology as going hand in hand. Without our beliefs, we probably would still be building churches that look like those that Unitarians are still building back East. That old-fashioned Gothic style. With the spire. You've seen them in the Boston area. Our architecture is different because our theology is different. Jenkin Lloyd Jones talks with us about



this. He was one of the first to talk about the congruity between architecture and liberal theology. Although with Jenkin, it's less **theology** and more **ology**. He is so open to all sorts of religious traditions. Where can he be – he was due here half an hour ago.

**Jones:** (*enters from the back of the sanctuary – goes to standing microphone.*) Sorry I'm late – I was just visiting my nephew Frank Lloyd Wright in Chicago where he is working on a church building. Unity Temple, he's calling it. You know, I have a hunch that Frank will one day make a name for himself! So remind me, what's on our agenda today? Oh, but before we get started, I have to tell you Caroline, I appreciate the letter you wrote to me about how important it is to you to be here in the Western Conference. How when you were in Boston last year, how those narrow minded Eastern Unitarians tried to convince you to join their Conference. You mentioned in your letter that they still have a structure that keeps women at the bottom of their organization. (*Sits*)

**Caroline:** Yes, they subordinate women and expect me to join them? Never! Here in the Western Conference, our structure depends more on "cooperation and sympathy between men and women."<sup>2</sup> And, like I mentioned to you, they want us to build churches that look like theirs, all high pulpits and high spires. As if we were in France building the Cathedral of Notre Dame! (*scoffs*) Jenkin, you asked about our agenda for today. Remember, we decided last time to talk about two very interconnected things: our theology and how it impacts our church building function and design. We all support each other in this.

(*Eleanor goes to the standing microphone*)

**Eleanor:** Mary and I continue to feel very strongly that a church needs to be a source of good for the whole city of Des Moines. A church's responsibility must not be confined to its immediate family but reach out. Maybe it is that we are women and are naturally more hospitable and benevolent in our feelings about our relationships with our neighbors on the outside. Or maybe it's our democratic theology. It's probably both. Our buildings need to be an asset to the whole neighborhood and a place where people will want to come. We offer a homey and warm space, with flowers blooming all around, like pink and white hibiscus. And jasmine blooming nearby.<sup>3</sup> People will come not just for the Sunday service, but seven days a week. Jenkin, I remember what you call this. You call this

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<sup>2</sup> Cynthia Grant Tucker, *Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier 1880-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994)119.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 112-113.

type of church a “People’s Institute.” And two phrases that describe this kind of place: “large studying” and “noble usefulness.”<sup>4</sup>

*(Mary joins Eleanor at the standing microphone)*

**Mary:** Eleanor and I are planning to retire to Florida where we will found a church in Orlando and be sure to grow that jasmine. And lead suffrage campaigns.

*(Jenkin joins Caroline at the pulpit mic)*

**Jenkin:** Let’s get back to the purpose of the liberal church and what the buildings should look like. You know, I have always said that utility and simplicity should be our guiding principles. The ideal church should be a “humble abode, not ‘a Gothic sham’ but like ‘a secular hall, and a workshop.’” It should be a place “where its members could come together for culture and mutual comfort and the study of God’s laws through selfless community service.” And you know, that old Gothic style tries to look like a cathedral and costs a lot and is “useless on weekdays” and so pretentious that it would frighten away people.”<sup>5</sup>

**Caroline:** *(to Jenkin)* It is the year 1900 and people expect church’s to look a certain way. They are surprised that ours sometimes look just like houses. Or in the case of your church, they say it looks like a cross between a Roman cathedral and a Turkish mosque!

**Jenkin:** *(laughing)* Hindsight is 20/20. We finished that 13 years ago and designed it many years before that. I think we’d go with a much simpler design now.

**Eleanor:** Theology and function should dictate design. Mary and I believe like the two of you do that true hospitality and love will “find a way in whatever house.”<sup>6</sup> Concern with outward appearances should not be the reason your church looks a particular way. We’re excited to tell you that the Sioux City congregation is converting an old skating rink into a meeting place. It doesn’t look like much on the outside, but inside the space is very versatile.

**Caroline:** At People’s Church in Kalamazoo, in addition to the women’s gymnasium that I told you about last time, we now plan to open a kindergarten that will draws children from all around the town. We’ve hired a trained kindergarten teacher from Chicago and already have so many applications that it looks like we won’t have room for everyone.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 107.

**Mary:** I'm so glad to hear you talking about education, Caroline. So often, I think that I am the only one who thinks about this, but of course it isn't true. My dream is that soon in the new century, our church along with other liberal churches will provide religious education for children and adults every week! That will be a "noble enterprise to carry forward to larger and larger results!"<sup>7</sup>

**Jenkin:** I am so impressed with what you all are thinking about and doing. As supporters of Free Religion, we "put the Church on the level of all other institutions, the Bible on the level of all other books, and Christ on the level of all other men."<sup>8</sup> Our churches don't have spires and our doors are open all week and on Sunday for education and social action. Caroline, I agree with you that this kind of a church is a noble enterprise to carry forward.

Well I know we all have trains to catch. Maybe someday we'll be able to talk to each other in a four-way simultaneous conversation and won't have to travel so far to have a meeting. But I don't count on it.

The End.

*(All line up together, hold hands, and take bow together.)*

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<sup>7</sup> Emerson, 496.

<sup>8</sup> Tucker, 140.

**Appendix 7:**  
**A Reader's Sermonplay in Three Scenes**

by Rev. Sara Zimmerman

**In Celebration of Darwin Day: Intelligent Design vs. Evolution  
On the Occasion of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Darwin's Birthday**

**Reading:** "Ozzie and the Snortlefish: A Great Story Parable"<sup>1</sup>

**Cast of Characters:**

**Emma Darwin**                      wife of Charles Darwin  
**Michael J. Behe:**                (see projection for scene two for description)  
**William J. Dembski**            (see projection for scene two for description)  
**Charles Darwin**

**Stage Directions:** Each of the actors sits adjacent to the pulpit facing the congregation as the play begins. Except for the minister, characters listen and react to each other, by smiling, frowning, etc., and making ad libbed comments as they wish. Each speaker goes to the pulpit to speak in turn.

**Costumes:** Optional and minimal. For example, the Darwins could each wear one piece of clothing that suggests the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as a brooch and shawl for her, a hat for him.

**Projections on the front wall:** As described below, they are visible at the beginning of each scene.

**Prologue:**

**The Minister:** February 12, 2009, marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charles Darwin's birthday. Darwin's contribution to evolutionary science is well known. He developed a theory of natural selection. His detractors include two men of the 21<sup>st</sup> century who believe not in natural selection but in intelligent design theory. Today's sermon "Intelligent Design or Evolution" is in the form of a "reader's theater play in three scenes and introduces Emma Darwin, his wife; two detractors who favor the theory of intelligent design; and Darwin himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Denny O'Neill at <http://www.thegreatstory.org/snortlefish.html>.

**Scene 1: Projection:** *Emma Darwin fears that no one will remember Charles unless he's first to publish a theory of evolution. In addition, she tells of the family's commitment to the "brotherhood of races."*

My name is Emma Wedgwood Darwin. Charles and I married in 1839. I took a great deal of interest in his work and supported his studying and publishing on scientific subjects. We have been married about three years when he wrote an essay about his evolutionary theory but why he didn't publish it then, I don't know why. Do wives always know why their husbands do what they do? Charles just wasn't very competitive. So when Alfred Russell Wallace wrote a letter to my Charles to let him know about *his* evolutionary theories, well I was just stunned. I worried that if Wallace published his essay before Charles published his, no one would ever remember the name Charles Darwin. Wallace's title wasn't very catchy. I mean, you be the judge. "On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely From the Original Type." My Charlie's essay title was much better: "On the Origin of Species." Well, after Charles got Wallace's letter and that essay with the long title, my Charlie made sure that both essays were published together. That's the kind of guy my Charlie was.

Needing to be first didn't motivate him. When I really think about what motivated my dear Charlie, I know it was more about his most deeply held philosophical beliefs. You have to see Charlie's work in the context of the moral values of the whole extended Darwin family. You have to realize what we stood for. We believed wholeheartedly in family, and there was never a better father or husband. And although I did tease a little about Charles' lack of competitive spirit, I have to tell you that I was happy to be married to a man who believed in his theory of "natural selection." After all, he didn't call it "a theory of individual competition" or "survival of the ruthless." His calling it "Natural selection" was just perfect. Later on he told me if he had called it something other than "natural selection" it would have been "natural preservation."<sup>2</sup> Most people don't realize that he never called it "survival of the fittest." "Natural selection" sounds every so much more like my Charles. Before I go, I want to tell you about our family's opinion about slavery. We thought very strongly that it was a sin. We believed wholeheartedly in the "brotherhood of the races." That belief in the interconnectedness of all people was central to Charles' values. Well, goodbye dears.

**Scene 2: Projection:** *Michael J. Behe, Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute and Professor of biological sciences at Lehigh University; and William A. Dembski, Ph.D.s in mathematics and philosophy, and a master*

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<sup>2</sup> See [http://pages.britishlibrary.net/charles.darwin3/darwin\\_bio.htm](http://pages.britishlibrary.net/charles.darwin3/darwin_bio.htm)

*of divinity in theology, argue against the theory of natural selection and support the theory of Intelligent Design.*

**Behe:** (*standing at podium, speaking to congregation.*) Did you ever see a cell under a microscope? I'll bet you did at some point in your past, in high school or college. Some of my students at Lehigh – if they are seeing cells for the first time – can barely contain their excitement. Cell structures are incredibly complex! The word “incredibly” doesn't quite catch the meaning I'm after. I've thought about this quite a lot and the word I've come up with is *irreducibly*. Cell structures are not just incredibly complex, they are *irreducibly* complex.

Let me explain what that means. If you removed part of a cell, none of that cell would function. For example, take a recent example we heard about in that *Ozzie and the Snortlefish* story. Ozzie has fins growing out of his body. That reminds me of the flagellum that we find some bacteria to have attached to their backs. They work like propellers and move the bacterial flagellum through the water. I've studied these flagellum and find that they are made up of 30 different proteins, “all precisely arranged and if any one of them is removed the flagellum stops spinning.”<sup>3</sup>

Now I ask you, *isn't that amazing!* Yes it is! Yes it is! And I also ask you, if something is perfect in all its parts and can't work if one of the parts is removed, *what part could evolution possibly play?*

The answer, my friends, is NONE. The answer is that **The Great Intelligent Designer** had a hand in this! And even if such an irreducibly complex system could in fact evolve, how could a biologist even prove that?

I'll answer that. (*with dramatic emphasis:*) ***The Theory of Evolution can never be proven.*** Thank you. (*sits*)

**Dembski:** (*standing at podium, speaking to Behe*) My work has been honored with the \$100,000 Templeton Foundation Book prize, has been the subject of a cover story in TIME magazine--and to gain some measure of credibility with you liberal thinkers, and has been cited in three front page stories in the New York Times. Well, Michael, your enthusiasm is catching. I agree with you 100%. But as you well know, I come at this from a different point of view. I am not a biological scientist like you. I am a mathematician, philosopher and something of a theologian. In fact, in 2005, I was appointed to the Center for Science and Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. (*Speaking to the congregation*) If you are interested in this subject, you are probably

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<sup>3</sup> H. Allen Orr, “Annals of Science: Devolution,” *The New Yorker*, (May 30, 2005), 49.

interested in my books. I have quite a few that are available at local libraries. *The Design Inference. Intelligent Design. No Free Lunch.* And *The Design Revolution.*

And speaking of books, I have always admired Melville's *Moby Dick*. I get quite a lot of inspiration from that novel. Not thinking about the content so much, but about the complexity of it. It didn't just happen. Melville *designed* it. It didn't just come together through some chance coincidence. Melville thought about it and thought some more and put it together with a design and a plan. It was his intelligence at work. So you can see where I am going with this. I'm making an inference. Just as Melville designed a great novel with his intelligence, The Great Intelligent Designer plans and organizes everything. Do you see what I am saying? Think about it. Your eyes, for example. They have a wonderfully complex design. How did they get that way? Intelligent Design is the only answer.

Now I'd like to talk about algorithms. (*continuing, to congregation*) I'm a mathematician, but I'll explain this without using any higher math. Let me talk about mutation instead. You understand mutation. Darwin's followers say that mutations and natural selection bring about things such things as those fins on the Ozzie fish -- to use an example from today. But I don't believe that. I don't agree with the implications of that story, that through the process of natural selection and survival of the fittest and mutation that Ozzie's descendents developed appendages suitable for crawling out of the pond. It wasn't natural selection. It wasn't because of evolution. It happened, but not for those reasons. It happened because of a designer's intelligence. Intelligent Design.

How do I reach that conclusion? Let me explain. It's all about the algorithms. Darwinism is like the algorithms that say if you are lost and you try going up one hill or move randomly to get where you are going, you are -- in fact -- moving randomly. Natural selection is like that. Now I ask you, how can such random development, how can natural selection, how can Darwinism possibly prove anything about how our wonderful natural world developed? It's too darned random.

Well, I have said enough for today. Thank you for your time! (sits)

**Scene 3: Projection: Charles Darwin** states his religious views in his own words, <sup>4</sup>demonstrating the evolution of his own thoughts over his lifetime.

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<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to a member of the UUC Tampa congregation, Dr. Tom Raffel, a post-doctoral student in the Biology Department at the University of South Florida, for providing additional Darwinian "quotes."

**Darwin:** Good morning dear people. It is good to be with you, even as a ghost of myself. (*looks over at the previous two speakers*) Hearing Professor Behe and Dr. Dembski inspires me to tell you that I have profound disagreements with them. As you know, I do not share their beliefs in Intelligent Design, quite the opposite. There was a time that I considered myself a Theist, and I will explain why. However, that changed by the time I was an old man – by then I was an Agnostic.

First of all, however, I must distinguish my theological ideas from my scientific ones. In the late 1830s, I wrote that “the old argument of design in nature...which formerly seemed to me so conclusive, fails, now that the law of natural selection has been discovered. We can no longer argue that, for instance, the beautiful hinge of a bivalve shell must have been made by an intelligent being, like the hinge of a door by man. There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows. Everything in nature is the result of fixed laws.” The arguments of Behe and Dembski are as old and nearly as outdated as arguments for the sun orbiting the Earth, and even in my days they were roundly rejected by most of the scientific community. Evolution by natural selection provides a mechanism whereby complex life-forms can arise from simpler beginnings. Time and again, specific examples of so-called “irreducible complexity” such as the eye and flagellum, have repeatedly been shown to be entirely consistent with and explained by evolutionary theory.

My scientific views are common knowledge now, but my theological views are less well known, and they might surprise you. Early in my life I embraced Theism, and I continued to for long after I accepted the truth of evolution. “At one time I was led by (my) feelings...to the firm conviction of the existence of God, and of the immortality of the soul. In my Journal I wrote that whilst standing in the midst of the grandeur of the Brazilian forest it is not possible to give an adequate idea of the higher feelings of wonder and...devotion which fill and elevate the mind.” But I also wrote that I could not see “that such inward convictions and feelings are of any weight as evidence of what really exists. The state of mind which grand scenes formerly excited in me and which was intimately connected with a belief in God, did not differ from that which is often called the sense of sublimity.” It “can (therefore) hardly be advanced as an argument for the existence of God, any more than the powerful though vague and similar feelings excited by music.”

At this point in my life, however, I did feel there was a “source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with reason and not with the feelings (that) impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty or rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man...as the result of



blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause ...(with) an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I (therefore) deserved to be called a Theist.”  
 Now, Professor Behe and Dr. Dembski, I want you especially to know that “this conclusion was strong in mind about the time when I wrote *The Origin of Species*; (but) since that time that it has very gradually,...become weaker.” I started to wonder, “can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animal, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions? (Might this not) be the result of (a) connection between cause and effect which strikes us as a necessary one, but ,, (in reality) depends merely on inherited experience?”<sup>5</sup>

In other words, gentlemen, we have evolved to think the way we do. My dear wife Emma disliked when I compared children and monkeys. However, “we must not overlook the (possibility that) the constant inculcation in a belief in God on the minds of children (produces) so strong and perhaps an inherited effect on their (still developing) brains, that it would be as difficult for them to throw off their belief in God, as for a monkey to throw off its instinctive fear and hatred of a snake.”  
 Emma asked our son Francis in 1885 to omit that sentence from my autobiography because it would offend our religious friends. I notice that it has since been restored and you can even read it – as you say – online. I do apologize if I have offended any of you dear people. As a Unitarian myself, I know that you seek your own truths, and your truth need not be the truth I found at the end of my life.  
 Thank you.

The End

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<sup>5</sup> See “The writings of Charles Darwin on the Web” by John van Whye Ph.D., at <http://pages.britishlibrary.net/charles.darwin3/barlow.html> for material in Darwin’s own words, in “extract from Nora Barlow ed., *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, 1809-1882.*”



**Comments:**

**Rate:** on February 22, in a celebration of Darwin Day, the sermon as a play in three scenes on the topic of Intelligent Design vs. Evolution. (Circle one) 1 2 3 4 5

**Comments:**

**Rate:** on March 8, in celebration of Women's History Month, a play about the Prophetic Sisterhood. (Circle one) 1 2 3 4 5

**Comments:**

(End of form)

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**B. Distribution and return.** I distributed 30 hard copies after the Sunday service on March 8, and had one request via the Internet for a copy to be sent by email and returned by snail mail. Thirty-one copies were returned by the deadline. One was incoherent and uncountable.

**C. Sermon/Plays rated: Background.** Previously to February and March of 2009, I presented sermon/plays and congregation-involved, improvised skits from early in my ministry, beginning with my parish internship in Dallas (1999-2000), continuing in a brief time as MRE at the Greenville UU Fellowship in South Carolina (2001), then in my settled ministry at the UU Fellowship of Charlotte County, Florida, (2002-2006), and finally, now in my settled ministry in Tampa, Florida, beginning in 2007. Prior to my acceptance as a D.Min. student at MLTS in 2006, I had mostly anecdotal evidence of the value of the earlier plays. Now as a D.Min. candidate, in order to have a body of plays that could be evaluated as a group, I wrote, recruited a cast, and produced three plays in close proximity to one another for Sunday services in February and March 2009, and then invited the congregation to scale all three of them on the same Likert-type form. Because not all evaluators saw all three plays, 30 evaluations were counted for the Women's History Month play; 26 were counted for the Darwin Day play, and 24 for the UU History/Puppet Dialogue play. The average attendance at the UUCT is 110.

**D. Sermon/Plays rated: The Results.**<sup>1</sup> Because Likert scales "may be subject to distortion,"<sup>2</sup> in the paragraph above the items to be rated, I stated, "Note: a negative rating will not mean a failed project."

*In Celebration of Darwin Day: Intelligent Design vs. Evolution* (Appendix 7) was the most successful of the three evaluated sermon/plays,

<sup>1</sup> All of these evaluations—as filled out by UUCT evaluators in early March, 2009, are available upon request.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likert\\_Scale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likert_Scale) for a discussion of Likert scale distortion.

receiving 92% in the range of Most Strongly Agree, Strongly Agree and Agree. Of the 26 respondents, 10 indicated Most Strongly Agree, and 10 Strongly Agree.

*A Play for Women's History Month: Carrying the Beacon of Truth* (Appendix 6) was the next most successful, or the most successful, depending on how the votes are counted. It received 87% in the range of Most Strongly Agree, Strongly Agree and Agree. However, of the 30 respondents, 17 indicated Most Strongly Agree, and 5 Strongly Agree.

*The Puppet Dialogue with John Murray and Theodore Parker* (Appendix 5) was the least successful. It received 79% in the range of Most Strongly Agree, Strongly Agree and Agree. Of the 24 respondents, 7 indicated Most Strongly Agree, and 9 Strongly Agree.

**E. The Comments about the sermonplay: *In Celebration of Darwin Day: Intelligent Design vs. Evolution* (Appendix 7)**

"The debate was presented with both sides fairly represented. I appreciated that."

"All aspects of this presentation were very clear to the listener."

"Interesting detail and attitudes. The characters came alive."

"I thought the dramatization was a great way to convey the thoughts and information presented, though I believe Design and Evolution go hand in hand, Evolution being Devine Design."

"Really enjoyed this presentation, humor, information."

"Excellent!"

"Great dialogue and controversial openness explored with the speakers; confirming to U Uism."

"Outstanding – provocative – held everyone's interest."

"Very well brought to life some of the complications of the release(?) of Darwin's work. I especially liked his wife's introduction that personalized this scientific icon."

On the same subject – Mrs. Darwin – different evaluator: "The characterization of Mrs. Darwin wasn't as successful as was probably planned maybe because I had just heard on the radio that she wasn't all that supportive."

“Actors had better preparation. More interesting script” (than Women’s History Month play.)

“This presentation was more suitable than the first play” (the puppet dialogue) “but I would like best a sermon on the subject.”

“Needed more interaction between participants.”

“It was exciting to see the characters in the context of their times and to learn about Darwin’s UU roots.”

“The only part I would change would be to have the speakers state their names and not show any projections on the wall.”

“Terrific, entertaining, provocative.”

“I’m just not into plays.”

**Two evaluators took the time to compose longer paragraphs of critique about the Darwin play,**

**including this one:**

“I felt two opportunities for dramatic learning were lost. One is presenting dialogue for the seeming but desirable paradox of affirming a person while disagreeing with a viewpoint or presented belief. The second lost opportunity involved was to make yet another case or reminder that Darwin’s proposal is a theory supposedly based on scientific progress. A theory based on the scientific method may be changed if the scientific method offers a better theory; this may be a bit laborious but shortening the story of evolution theory to a captioned ‘... vs. ...’ simplifies the contrasts for me to ‘us versus those fools.’ Dramatic presentation may require extra concern or otherwise only the easy impressions are the ones I remember.”

**and this one:** “Of the three, I thought the Intelligent Design/Evolution one was the most effective, well written, informative, thought-provoking. The ‘actors’ played their parts well, giving their information clearly and authoritatively. Juxtaposing their arguments made their reasoning more understandable to me.”

**F. The comments about the sermonplay: *Carrying the Beacon of Truth: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier and Their Mentor, Jenkin Lloyd Jones* (Appendix 6):**

“Although I only attended the March 8, 2009 service, I really enjoyed the engaging, humorous way the actors presented their play. Kudos were in

order! After the play, I heard that the actors received their final parts earlier the day they performed. The parts would have flowed more freely if the actors could have practiced (sic) with their final parts.”

“This presentation was effective because of the ability of the congregation’s performers. The dialog was intelligent and clearly delineated UU principles still relevant. To visitors it clarified important distinctions from traditional Christian beliefs – dare I say, superstitions and myth.”

“A bit disorganized.”

“The readers were very well chosen and I thought the role of women in the UU movement came across clearly. A summary at the end of each session would have been helpful.”

“A bit stilted. Comments that take pot-shots at other viewpoints perhaps better expressed in terms of a strong commitment and clear exposition of the character’s own philosophy.”

“This dramatization actually brought a moving emotion of warmth, whether love, joy or a combination of both.”

“Thought they did a great job.”

“Having women speak as if they were part of the exciting time of Universalist popularity was a successful experience.”

“All would be greatly improved and more effective if, like plays and public presentations, they were rehearsed and practiced before their presentation.”

“Lots of history and information about the roots of our present UU beliefs and outlook. I always look forward to these mini plays.”

“What a cute play! And informative. Learned a lot about pioneer women and the UU church.”

“Outstanding”

“This was just entertaining enough but still gave a lot of information.”

“Nice tribute to our women’s history.”

“Material was excellent – one rehearsal would have greatly improved the delivery.”

“I really enjoy this use of drama. My only suggestion would be to do more advance planning so that you can find more ‘actors’ and give those people time to practice their roles.” (This evaluator continued to evaluate the dramas in general. See the enumerated comments that begin “Overall” in section H.)”

”Grounding to teach our history when our (Bush) era has been so conservative that we feel like U Uism is new, radical, and marginalized. These dramas well connect history, celebration of cultural markers, and appropriate members of the congregation to provide a sense of continuity in a now-only, techie culture.”

“The script was – sorry to say – boring at times, though germane to the theme of the day. Enjoyed the characters and costumes.”

“Perfect. Right number of participants, back and forth, + interaction.”

“Many years ago I tried to read The Prophetic Sisterhood but couldn’t get into it. This play brought the characters to life in a memorable way. Their simple costumes were effective in projecting their characters. The play emphasized timely issues for our congregation, i.e., building churches that are functional. The humor (Frank Lloyd Wright – the Virgin Mary) was fun.”

“Excellent! Good dialogue offering different perspectives on these women.”

“I just didn’t like it, because of activities going on afterwards. I’m a guy and just didn’t get into it.” (Note: “going on afterwards is probably a reference to the scheduled congregational meeting to vote on whether or not to launch a capital campaign, a second vote to make 500K the goal, in order to build an RE building. Several other evaluators pointed out the connection. The drama supports the ‘non-gothic’ architectural style favored by the Prophetic Sisterhood and records the successes of these women in building such churches. This evaluator might have been ready to vote ‘no’. Both votes succeeded with nearly 90% of the members voting yes in both cases in secret ballots.)

“I think I missed a woman’s story of maintaining a sense of purpose and how she may have remained determined to offer a sense of the world so much different than the world around her. A story about buildings and architecture seemed to be the main message content and some biographical included so as to be about the women. The two guys (sic) brought into the presentation, they could have as easily disappeared or been mentioned sideways if the focus was on a women or the three

women.” (Note: The only male character is Jenkin Lloyd Jones who speaks with the women about architecture. He refers to Frank Lloyd Wright who was indeed his real-life nephew.)

“Thoughtful and inspiring. Definitely enhanced my appreciation of our pioneering women ministers! Enhanced my feeling of connection to these women, their causes and our principles.”

“I enjoyed the play and learned a lot. The participants could have known when it was their part a little better. It lost something with the confusion as to who was next.”

**G. The comments about the sermonplay: *A Puppet Dialogue with John Murray and Theodore Parker for an Intergenerational Service***  
(Appendix 5):

“Fun, informative, but not deep.”

“I enjoyed the puppets.”

“Didn’t seem to flow smoothly, not rehearsed enough.”

“Long-time U Us hear these stories over and over. The different presentation (and even the distraction of the puppets) was a successful experience.

“This was an intergenerational service and I think both adults and children listened intently. It helped UU history to come alive.

“This presentation seemed too juvenile for our congregation and would be more appropriate for some Religious Education classes. It might give visitors a false impression about the intellectual rigor of our principles.

“Fun, informative, but not deep.”

“I loved this sermon. It did a great job capturing the attention of both young and old and clearly conveyed its message.”

“The puppets were great. UU church history might not have been the most appropriate topic for a dog and mouse.”

“It was cute, but I felt that it wasn’t the best way to deliver the info.”

“Although this was a creative intergenerational service, I wondered how the puppet show would impress new visitors.”



“Excellent presentation of abstract viewpoints may have passed over younger viewers.”

“Fun for a fully intergenerational service to keep the attention of the children, but what I remember from the sermon is the minister’s performance issues and not the substance. Short for kids, yes. For adults, no.”

“Moral reasoning – a lasting practice, dogma disappears – from notes at the time. Having a dog turn pages was endearing.”

“It was great! I really liked it.”

“That was fun and I’m waiting for part 2.”

“Puppets were distracting. I feel the use of puppets is better served in telling a story to the children. We also had too many things scheduled that Sunday with Bring a Friend to Church.”

“Very enjoyable and informative.”

**H. Four evaluators wrote signed comments that addressed the larger subject of theater in worship:**

**H1.** “In general, I have found these dramatic ‘reenactments’ of UU history (the person commenting had not see the Darwin Play) to be an extremely effective way of connecting us to our shared past. Figures are humanized; ideas are explored in greater context and are made more understandable. It engages learner with different preferred styles of taking in information and makes subject matter many find dull (history) both engaging and entertaining.

I have found these services among the most interesting and memorable of Rev. Zimmerman’s tenure at UUCTampa.  
(signed ) (name withheld) Ph.D. (Adult Education)”

**H2.** “Overall, I like these dramas:

1. They involve members of the congregation in the service – “buy-in” to the services.
2. They make extant members’ talents, skills, and professions.” (gives example of a university biology post-doc who shared expertise in Darwin play)
3. They build a sense of community – the services are a communal effort.”
4. Even the flubs keep it real, warm, and sometimes humorous.”

5. Once a month is about optimum for drama. We need to hear the minister and need members to participate in other 'roles' in the service.

**H3.** "The introduction of dramatic presentations as a form of sermon has been a breath of fresh air in our services. It has breathed new life into them. Not that they were moribund, but the addition has been delightful and I believe very well received. Features that strike me as strengths of these presentations have been:

- interesting and involving; entertaining; informative
- gets more members participating in the service presentation
- is not used every time and so injects a note of change in the Sunday services

They are a most welcome and strong addition to our Sunday services and I like them.

Having said this, I would like to offer some thoughts for additional consideration. While I am entirely in favor of these 'dramatic' sermons, in my opinion some aspects of these presentations might be strengthened and other aspects might be considered as having an avoidable potential for side effects:

- While it gets members involved in the service presentations, it provides them with what they say rather than offering them an opportunity to speak for themselves. Two suggestions:
  - one would be to be sure that the text reaches those who will be participating well in advance so that they can be sure they are comfortable with what they have been chosen to say and even provide input into it
  - not to assume that just because those chosen to participate have done so, that they might not also wish to have a chance to offer their own thoughts in an independent sermon or, at least, an introductory statement at a separate service. Note that in minister's contract there is a provision stating that the minister will help the congregation express itself.

Because drama has people acting parts that are prescribed, this type of sermon does not permit the issues raised to be developed by the participants but rather leaves the issue reduced to the terms in which the characters being portrayed would have presented them. This concentrates the drama upon historical and biographical features. While we should not forgo these, in my opinion, they come up short because they often (?usually) do not deal with 'our issues.' The presentations often mention interesting issues but these seem to get swept by the wayside as the history and biographical details unfold.

Perhaps one way of dealing with this is to have the 'drama' presented as the initial portion of the 'sermon' and have it followed by a broader subsequent minister's or actor's personal commentary or even as a dialogue such as 'What would Emerson have said about our today's issue of ...' delivered by one of more of (?developed by/with the actors play) the 'character(s) in question' thereby developing and/or resolving the issues and thoughts within the presentation."

(signed) (name withheld)

**H4.** "Of the three, I thought the Intelligent Design/Evolution one was the most effective, well written, informative, thought-provoking. The 'actors' played their parts well, giving their information clearly and authoritatively. Juxtapositioning their arguments made their reasoning more understandable to me. Women's history was also interesting. Thinking I'd already learned all there was to learn about the topic, then I learned some more. But that presentation was marred a bit by some stumbling and fumbling around, and lost continuity. Rehearsal time might have helped.

You did very well with the puppets, Sara, but I didn't care at all for the piece itself. On Bring a Friend to Church Day, when we should be putting our best foot forward for guests, I'd eagerly anticipated a serious discussion of UU history, and invited all my family, as well as one of their close friends, to attend and learn more about the church. It seemed totally inappropriate to have a puppet show instead.

I do like humor in the pulpit, but I find a little goes a long way. Too much, or in some cases any at all, and the subject becomes trivialized. I'm glad you are experimenting with drama, Sara, and I like your traditional sermons very much. It's such a pleasure to have you here with us."

(signed) (name withheld)

**Appendix 8:**

**Congregational Evaluations of Three Sermonplays as produced at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tampa (see Appendices 5, 6, and 7).**

**A. I created this evaluation form based on a five-point Likert model, and distributed it to the congregation following the Sunday, March 8, 2009 service.**

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**EVALUATION FORM**

Thank you for completing this form and returning it to me today, or mailing it at your earliest convenience so that there is a good chance I will receive it by next Saturday, March 14.

In the case that you wish to mail it to me, I provide stamped envelopes. All you have to do is fill in my name and address. (The address is evident in the return sticker already on the envelope.)

If you wish to return this form today, there is a box for this purpose in the lobby.

I invite all evaluators to remain anonymous if you wish. Thank you for supporting my doctor of ministry work. Rev. Sara 3/8/09

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Further Explanation: My doctor of ministry project explores the use of drama to enliven worship. But not just any drama. Going back to my teen years when I saw a production of a play by Bertolt Brecht, I have been interested in techniques he used, such techniques as direct speech to the audience, projections of titles, minimal sets, and emphasis on teaching the audience something that they would remember after leaving the theater. I proposed to my faculty advisors at Meadville Lombard Theological School to use some of these techniques in creating dramatic pieces for worship services, and they encouraged me to experiment.

I need to know (and my Meadville committee would like to know) how successful you think these dramas were in worship. Please rate or write comments about the following three productions, or better yet, rate AND explain your rating. Use the reverse side for extra space if you like. Note: a negative rating will not mean a failed project.

On a scale of 1 through 5, **with 1 as most strongly agree**, agree or disagree that the following plays enhanced your worship experience. If you were not present for one or more of these, move on to the next.

**Sample Scale:**

1 most strongly agree      2                      3                      4                      5 most strongly disagree

**Rate:** on February 15, the sermon as a puppet dialogue with Big Dog and Philosophizin' Mouse discussing UU history. (Circle one) 1 2 3 4 5

**Comments:**

**Rate:** on February 22, in a celebration of Darwin Day, the sermon as a play in three scenes on the topic of Intelligent Design vs. Evolution. (Circle one) 1 2 3 4 5

**Comments:**

**Rate:** on March 8, in celebration of Women's History Month, a play about the Prophetic Sisterhood. (Circle one) 1 2 3 4 5

**Comments:**

(End of form)

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**B. Distribution and return.** I distributed 30 hard copies after the Sunday service on March 8, and had one request via the Internet for a copy to be sent by email and returned by snail mail. Thirty-one copies were returned by the deadline. One was incoherent and uncountable.

**C. Sermon/Plays rated: Background.** Previously to February and March of 2009, I presented sermon/plays and congregation-involved, improvised skits from early in my ministry, beginning with my parish internship in Dallas (1999-2000), continuing in a brief time as MRE at the Greenville UU Fellowship in South Carolina (2001), then in my settled ministry at the UU Fellowship of Charlotte County, Florida, (2002-2006), and finally, now in my settled ministry in Tampa, Florida, beginning in 2007. Prior to my acceptance as a D.Min. student at MLTS in 2006, I had mostly anecdotal evidence of the value of the earlier plays. Now as a D.Min. candidate, in order to have a body of plays that could be evaluated as a group, I wrote, recruited a cast, and produced three plays in close proximity to one another for Sunday services in February and March 2009, and then invited the congregation to scale all three of them on the same Likert-type form. Because not all evaluators saw all three plays, 30 evaluations were counted for the Women's History Month play; 26 were counted for the Darwin Day play, and 24 for the UU History/Puppet Dialogue play. The average attendance at the UUCT is 110.

**D. Sermon/Plays rated: The Results.**<sup>1</sup> Because Likert scales "may be subject to distortion,"<sup>2</sup> in the paragraph above the items to be rated, I stated, "Note: a negative rating will not mean a failed project."

*In Celebration of Darwin Day: Intelligent Design vs. Evolution* (Appendix 7) was the most successful of the three evaluated sermon/plays,

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<sup>1</sup> All of these evaluations—as filled out by UUCT evaluators in early March, 2009, are available upon request.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likert\\_Scale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likert_Scale) for a discussion of Likert scale distortion.

receiving 92% in the range of Most Strongly Agree, Strongly Agree and Agree. Of the 26 respondents, 10 indicated Most Strongly Agree, and 10 Strongly Agree.

*A Play for Women's History Month: Carrying the Beacon of Truth* (Appendix 6) was the next most successful, or the most successful, depending on how the votes are counted. It received 87% in the range of Most Strongly Agree, Strongly Agree and Agree. However, of the 30 respondents, 17 indicated Most Strongly Agree, and 5 Strongly Agree.

*The Puppet Dialogue with John Murray and Theodore Parker* (Appendix 5) was the least successful. It received 79% in the range of Most Strongly Agree, Strongly Agree and Agree. Of the 24 respondents, 7 indicated Most Strongly Agree, and 9 Strongly Agree.

**E. The Comments about the sermonplay: *In Celebration of Darwin Day: Intelligent Design vs. Evolution* (Appendix 7)**

"The debate was presented with both sides fairly represented. I appreciated that."

"All aspects of this presentation were very clear to the listener."

"Interesting detail and attitudes. The characters came alive."

"I thought the dramatization was a great way to convey the thoughts and information presented, though I believe Design and Evolution go hand in hand, Evolution being Devine Design."

"Really enjoyed this presentation, humor, information."

"Excellent!"

"Great dialogue and controversial openness explored with the speakers; confirming to U Uism."

"Outstanding – provocative – held everyone's interest."

"Very well brought to life some of the complications of the release(?) of Darwin's work. I especially liked his wife's introduction that personalized this scientific icon."

On the same subject – Mrs. Darwin – different evaluator: "The characterization of Mrs. Darwin wasn't as successful as was probably planned maybe because I had just heard on the radio that she wasn't all that supportive."

“Actors had better preparation. More interesting script” (than Women’s History Month play.)

“This presentation was more suitable than the first play” (the puppet dialogue) “but I would like best a sermon on the subject.”

“Needed more interaction between participants.”

“It was exciting to see the characters in the context of their times and to learn about Darwin’s UU roots.”

“The only part I would change would be to have the speakers state their names and not show any projections on the wall.”

“Terrific, entertaining, provocative.”

“I’m just not into plays.”

**Two evaluators took the time to compose longer paragraphs of critique about the Darwin play,**

**including this one:**

“I felt two opportunities for dramatic learning were lost. One is presenting dialogue for the seeming but desirable paradox of affirming a person while disagreeing with a viewpoint or presented belief. The second lost opportunity involved was to make yet another case or reminder that Darwin’s proposal is a theory supposedly based on scientific progress. A theory based on the scientific method may be changed if the scientific method offers a better theory; this may be a bit laborious but shortening the story of evolution theory to a captioned ‘... vs. ...’ simplifies the contrasts for me to ‘us versus those fools.’ Dramatic presentation may require extra concern or otherwise only the easy impressions are the ones I remember.”

**and this one:** “Of the three, I thought the Intelligent Design/Evolution one was the most effective, well written, informative, thought-provoking. The ‘actors’ played their parts well, giving their information clearly and authoritatively. Juxtaposing their arguments made their reasoning more understandable to me.”

**F. The comments about the sermonplay: *Carrying the Beacon of Truth: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier and Their Mentor, Jenkin Lloyd Jones* (Appendix 6):**

“Although I only attended the March 8, 2009 service, I really enjoyed the engaging, humorous way the actors presented their play. Kudos were in

order! After the play, I heard that the actors received their final parts earlier the day they performed. The parts would have flowed more freely if the actors could have practiced (sic) with their final parts.”

“This presentation was effective because of the ability of the congregation’s performers. The dialog was intelligent and clearly delineated UU principles still relevant. To visitors it clarified important distinctions from traditional Christian beliefs – dare I say, superstitions and myth.”

“A bit disorganized.”

“The readers were very well chosen and I thought the role of women in the UU movement came across clearly. A summary at the end of each session would have been helpful.”

“A bit stilted. Comments that take pot-shots at other viewpoints perhaps better expressed in terms of a strong commitment and clear exposition of the character’s own philosophy.”

“This dramatization actually brought a moving emotion of warmth, whether love, joy or a combination of both.”

“Thought they did a great job.”

“Having women speak as if they were part of the exciting time of Universalist popularity was a successful experience.”

“All would be greatly improved and more effective if, like plays and public presentations, they were rehearsed and practiced before their presentation.”

“Lots of history and information about the roots of our present UU beliefs and outlook. I always look forward to these mini plays.”

“What a cute play! And informative. Learned a lot about pioneer women and the UU church.”

“Outstanding”

“This was just entertaining enough but still gave a lot of information.”

“Nice tribute to our women’s history.”

“Material was excellent – one rehearsal would have greatly improved the delivery.”



“I really enjoy this use of drama. My only suggestion would be to do more advance planning so that you can find more ‘actors’ and give those people time to practice their roles.” (This evaluator continued to evaluate the dramas in general. See the enumerated comments that begin “Overall” in section H.)

”Grounding to teach our history when our (Bush) era has been so conservative that we feel like U Uism is new, radical, and marginalized. These dramas well connect history, celebration of cultural markers, and appropriate members of the congregation to provide a sense of continuity in a now-only, techie culture.”

“The script was – sorry to say – boring at times, though germane to the theme of the day. Enjoyed the characters and costumes.”

“Perfect. Right number of participants, back and forth, + interaction.”

“Many years ago I tried to read The Prophetic Sisterhood but couldn’t get into it. This play brought the characters to life in a memorable way. Their simple costumes were effective in projecting their characters. The play emphasized timely issues for our congregation, i.e., building churches that are functional. The humor (Frank Lloyd Wright – the Virgin Mary) was fun.”

“Excellent! Good dialogue offering different perspectives on these women.”

“I just didn’t like it, because of activities going on afterwards. I’m a guy and just didn’t get into it.” (Note: “going on afterwards is probably a reference to the scheduled congregational meeting to vote on whether or not to launch a capital campaign, a second vote to make 500K the goal, in order to build an RE building. Several other evaluators pointed out the connection. The drama supports the ‘non-gothic’ architectural style favored by the Prophetic Sisterhood and records the successes of these women in building such churches. This evaluator might have been ready to vote ‘no’. Both votes succeeded with nearly 90% of the members voting yes in both cases in secret ballots.)

“I think I missed a woman’s story of maintaining a sense of purpose and how she may have remained determined to offer a sense of the world so much different than the world around her. A story about buildings and architecture seemed to be the main message content and some biographical included so as to be about the women. The two guys (sic) brought into the presentation, they could have as easily disappeared or been mentioned sideways if the focus was on a women or the three

women.” (Note: The only male character is Jenkin Lloyd Jones who speaks with the women about architecture. He refers to Frank Lloyd Wright who was indeed his real-life nephew.)

“Thoughtful and inspiring. Definitely enhanced my appreciation of our pioneering women ministers! Enhanced my feeling of connection to these women, their causes and our principles.”

“I enjoyed the play and learned a lot. The participants could have known when it was their part a little better. It lost something with the confusion as to who was next.”

**G. The comments about the sermonplay: *A Puppet Dialogue with John Murray and Theodore Parker for an Intergenerational Service***  
(Appendix 5):

“Fun, informative, but not deep.”

“I enjoyed the puppets.”

“Didn’t seem to flow smoothly, not rehearsed enough.”

“Long-time U Us hear these stories over and over. The different presentation (and even the distraction of the puppets) was a successful experience.

“This was an intergenerational service and I think both adults and children listened intently. It helped UU history to come alive.

“This presentation seemed too juvenile for our congregation and would be more appropriate for some Religious Education classes. It might give visitors a false impression about the intellectual rigor of our principles.

“Fun, informative, but not deep.”

“I loved this sermon. It did a great job capturing the attention of both young and old and clearly conveyed its message.”

“The puppets were great. UU church history might not have been the most appropriate topic for a dog and mouse.”

“It was cute, but I felt that it wasn’t the best way to deliver the info.”

“Although this was a creative intergenerational service, I wondered how the puppet show would impress new visitors.”

“Excellent presentation of abstract viewpoints may have passed over younger viewers.”

“Fun for a fully intergenerational service to keep the attention of the children, but what I remember from the sermon is the minister’s performance issues and not the substance. Short for kids, yes. For adults, no.”

“Moral reasoning – a lasting practice, dogma disappears – from notes at the time. Having a dog turn pages was endearing.”

“It was great! I really liked it.”

“That was fun and I’m waiting for part 2.”

“Puppets were distracting. I feel the use of puppets is better served in telling a story to the children. We also had too many things scheduled that Sunday with Bring a Friend to Church.”

“Very enjoyable and informative.”

**H. Four evaluators wrote signed comments that addressed the larger subject of theater in worship:**

**H1.** “In general, I have found these dramatic ‘reenactments’ of UU history (the person commenting had not see the Darwin Play) to be an extremely effective way of connecting us to our shared past. Figures are humanized; ideas are explored in greater context and are made more understandable. It engages learner with different preferred styles of taking in information and makes subject matter many find dull (history) both engaging and entertaining.

I have found these services among the most interesting and memorable of Rev. Zimmerman’s tenure at UUCTampa.  
(signed ) (name withheld) Ph.D. (Adult Education)”

**H2.** “Overall, I like these dramas:

1. They involve members of the congregation in the service – “buy-in” to the services.
2. They make extant members’ talents, skills, and professions.” (gives example of a university biology post-doc who shared expertise in Darwin play)
3. They build a sense of community – the services are a communal effort.”
4. Even the flubs keep it real, warm, and sometimes humorous.”

5. Once a month is about optimum for drama. We need to hear the minister and need members to participate in other 'roles' in the service.

**H3.** "The introduction of dramatic presentations as a form of sermon has been a breath of fresh air in our services. It has breathed new life into them. Not that they were moribund, but the addition has been delightful and I believe very well received. Features that strike me as strengths of these presentations have been:

- interesting and involving; entertaining; informative
- gets more members participating in the service presentation
- is not used every time and so injects a note of change in the Sunday services

They are a most welcome and strong addition to our Sunday services and I like them.

Having said this, I would like to offer some thoughts for additional consideration. While I am entirely in favor of these 'dramatic' sermons, in my opinion some aspects of these presentations might be strengthened and other aspects might be considered as having an avoidable potential for side effects:

- While it gets members involved in the service presentations, it provides them with what they say rather than offering them an opportunity to speak for themselves. Two suggestions:
  - one would be to be sure that the text reaches those who will be participating well in advance so that they can be sure they are comfortable with what they have been chosen to say and even provide input into it
  - not to assume that just because those chosen to participate have done so, that they might not also wish to have a chance to offer their own thoughts in an independent sermon or, at least, an introductory statement at a separate service. Note that in minister's contract there is a provision stating that the minister will help the congregation express itself.

Because drama has people acting parts that are prescribed, this type of sermon does not permit the issues raised to be developed by the participants but rather leaves the issue reduced to the terms in which the characters being portrayed would have presented them. This concentrates the drama upon historical and biographical features. While we should not forgo these, in my opinion, they come up short because they often (?usually) do not deal with 'our issues.' The presentations often mention interesting issues but these seem to get swept by the wayside as the history and biographical details unfold.

Perhaps one way of dealing with this is to have the 'drama' presented as the initial portion of the 'sermon' and have it followed by a broader subsequent minister's or actor's personal commentary or even as a dialogue such as 'What would Emerson have said about our today's issue of ...' delivered by one of more of (?developed by/with the actors play) the 'character(s) in question' thereby developing and/or resolving the issues and thoughts within the presentation."

(signed) (name withheld)

**H4.** "Of the three, I thought the Intelligent Design/Evolution one was the most effective, well written, informative, thought-provoking. The 'actors' played their parts well, giving their information clearly and authoritatively. Juxtapositioning their arguments made their reasoning more understandable to me. Women's history was also interesting. Thinking I'd already learned all there was to learn about the topic, then I learned some more. But that presentation was marred a bit by some stumbling and fumbling around, and lost continuity. Rehearsal time might have helped.

You did very well with the puppets, Sara, but I didn't care at all for the piece itself. On Bring a Friend to Church Day, when we should be putting our best foot forward for guests, I'd eagerly anticipated a serious discussion of UU history, and invited all my family, as well as one of their close friends, to attend and learn more about the church. It seemed totally inappropriate to have a puppet show instead.

I do like humor in the pulpit, but I find a little goes a long way. Too much, or in some cases any at all, and the subject becomes trivialized. I'm glad you are experimenting with drama, Sara, and I like your traditional sermons very much. It's such a pleasure to have you here with us."

(signed) (name withheld)