

# Overview and Notes

SOPHIA FAHS SUNDAY:

**JOURNEYS OF  
THE SPIRIT**

## **A Celebration of Multigenerational Faith Formation**

*The religious way is the deep way, the way that sees what physical eyes alone fail to see, the intangibles of the heart of every phenomenon. The religious way is the way that touches universal relationships; that goes high, wide and deep, that expands the feelings of kinship.*

- Sophia Fahs

Sophia Lyon Fahs (1876-1978) was an extraordinary religious educator who worked imaginatively to stimulate and capture the sense of wonder and creativity in our everyday lives. Fahs believed that every encounter with life was a possibility for deeper learning about who we are, what matters, and how we connect with that which is sacred. *Sophia Fahs Sunday* is a celebration of an enduring legacy that signals an eternal sense of possibility in the lives of today's children, youth, and adults.

As an engine for promoting innovative faith formation, The Fahs Collaborative Laboratory for Faith Formation assembled a group of talented religious educators, ministers, and musicians to provide inspiring stories of faithful living in congregational life. The Design Team realized that each congregation has its preferences around issues of worship, music, and liturgy. Thus, the Worship Packet is designed for you to use as a template or to pick-and-choose only those elements you find useful for your local celebration. Materials are suitable for all ages and a wide range of cultural traditions and learning styles. We expect you to call upon your creative wisdom to make materials adaptable for small, medium, and large congregations, and for the diversity of learning and worship styles present in your congregational culture.

All materials are free of charge. We only ask that you to register a few details about your congregation, agree to complete an evaluation of your congregation's experience, and consider "sharing the plate" for that Sunday in order to promote the good news of multigenerational faith formation. Your generous donation will support this type of program development in subsequent years.

Read on for Notes on implementing your Sophia Fahs Sunday!



## Implementing Sophia Fahs Sunday: Using the Worship Packet

**Start Early.** Begin reading through the packet materials early in order to decide how best to use the materials. Reach out to professional staff and laity (including children and youth) who would be excited to create a space for sharing stories of how our Unitarian Universalist faith is changing their everyday lives.

**Make It Your Own!** Congregational cultures within Unitarian Universalism are wildly diverse. The materials in the packet are designed to be altered in ways that are most relevant to your congregation. Tweak! Shift! Insert! Delete! Make it your own!

**Technology.** We have included power point slides that correspond to the *Journeys of the Spirit* Order of Service. Adapt the slides to correspond to your service. You will want to designate a person to run the slideshow during the service. Make sure the person has a copy of the order of service script to follow. The reflection stories have a \*\* symbol to show when to advance to the next slide. We recommend a run through with the slides to rehearse timing and any liturgical changes for your specific congregation. Using the power point slides to display images and lyrics helps engage congregants of all ages and learning styles. Consider adding photos of congregants to the slideshow to remind people that, yes!, we're doing exciting faith formation in here! Remember, too, the Golden Rule of Technology: it won't work when it's supposed to! **If you are using technology during the service, EXPECT glitches, and have a back-up plan ready to launch in SECONDS!**

**Publicity.** Graphics for advertising for your *Sophia Fahs Sunday: Journeys of the Spirit* service are included in the Worship Packet. Our main image was created by the visionary UU artist Rev. Kaaren Anderson. We can imagine you using the image as covers for your Order of Service (available in color or black and white versions). Use this image to build excitement for the multigenerational celebration on facebook, memes, postcards, posters, fliers, etc.

**Music.** Our design team included the talented Unitarian Universalist poet, Rev. Marta I. Valentin and composer Mark David Buckles who provide aesthetic offerings for this celebration of multigenerational faith formation. Share these original compositions with your choir director/musician who can help you incorporate these pieces into your celebration. The song "What Will I Do?" is used as a Chant refrain throughout the service, dovetailing with the "Community Response" ritual that encourages congregants to reflect on their personal experiences. Please refer to the Composer's Notes in the Worship Packet. There, Mark David makes suggestions for usage for each piece. Note that copyright permission has been granted ONLY for the "Journeys of the Spirit" service. Please contact Mark David ([www.markdavidbuckles.com](http://www.markdavidbuckles.com)) for use subsequent to performances outside 2015 Sophia Fahs Sunday.

**Spoken Reflections.** The design team gathered wonderful stories of reflection to enrich your celebration. The stories represent the faith experiences of Unitarian Universalist laity and religious professionals of diverse ages, theological traditions, and cultural backgrounds. We encourage you to assign readers with similar identities when possible (e.g., a youth reads Samantha Burden's reflection, or an elder reads Clyde Grubbs' words). Each reflection has corresponding slides with images to help worshippers connect with the author. If you need to make the service shorter length of time, consider choosing one story from each section of the service with multiple reflections on the same topic: "People Helping Us" (Grubbs, Burden) "Helping Other People" (Wooden, Tse, Braetrup). You might be aware of children, youth, and adults in your congregation who have compelling stories of how their Unitarian Universalist faith has supported their journey of flourishing through challenging times. Consider asking them to share their wisdom in place of one of the stories we suggest. Stories of personal witness are powerful and move people deeply. Feel free to insert reflections of this type in your service.

**Keeping Our Younger Members Engaged.** *Journeys of the Spirit* was designed to fit the needs of different types of congregations. The Children's Order of Service and Activity Pages provide a visual guide to the service for non-readers as well as quiet activities that keep our younger members engaged. Religious educators know that powerful learning just doesn't happen in formal settings. Your *Journeys of the Spirit* packet includes extended learning Activity Cards that promote reflection during the following week.

**Encouraging Reflection Beyond Sunday.** The Journeys of the Spirit Activity Cards are designed for the six days following Sophia Fahs Sunday with activities for children and families to explore themes from the service and from the life of Sophia Fahs. These cards can be printed and handed out to families at the service or emailed as a pdf file. Alternatively, your Religious Educator could post one card image per day to a congregational Facebook page, on Twitter, or email blast. (Remember, too, that Instagram is the preferred choice of social media for those under 25 years of age!)

**Learning Styles Matter.** The packet suggests adaptations that attend to your congregants' preferred ways-of-knowing: musical, visual, linguistic, spatial, kinesthetic, and so forth. Each section builds on the theme asking, "What journey is your spirit on? How has that changed over your life? Where will it go as you grow older?" This is done through multi-generationally friendly stories, songs and activities. We encourage you to include as many of these alternative ways of worshiping as possible. Keep track of what happens as a result of these innovations. You never know who's sitting in your pews! Also, there are many great resources on multigenerational worship, different learning styles, and how to make your church friendly to all ages. The UUA website has collected some of these resources: <http://www.uua.org/worship/multigenerational/>. In addition, The Fahs Collaborative created a rubric that support leaders in creating worship and learning experiences, a Checklist for Pedagogical Diversity in Religious Life found on our website.

**Community Response.** *Journeys of the Spirit* includes ways for congregants to engage actively in the worship, in what we call a "Community Response." We envisioned this as an interactive ritual suitable across generational demographics. We suggest using the image of a large spiral, which could be hung in the worship space, and/or, smaller pieces of paper with a corresponding print of the spiral image. Consider providing crayons,

colored pencils, or mini-pencils in pews or baskets, so each person can attend to internal meaning-making. There will be three or four opportunities to work in this ritual in the service. Our vision is that each time the “Wondering Questions” are asked congregants can participate by drawing their individual response to the question. Your liturgist can consider encouraging congregants to wonder in silence, or share their thoughts/feelings with a neighbor. A wonderful closing ritual might include gathering the completed spirals for display in your Fellowship Hall as a reminder of the day’s learning. Consider, too, sharing your success with the world! The Fahs Collaborative would welcome images and testimonials about your experience on our [facebook page](#)!

**Wisdom Story Option for Younger Children.** This service is designed for all ages: children and adults worshipping together. If your congregation wishes to integrate a children’s lesson, we recommend using the story, *The Hermit and the Well* by Thich Nhat Hanh (<http://www.amazon.com/Hermit-Well-Thich-Nhat-Hanh/dp/1888375310>)

**Share the Plate.** *Journeys of the Spirit* is provided as a free resource to congregations in support of the vision of multigenerational faith formation. As an act of reciprocity, we ask each congregation to consider sharing your Sunday morning offering, in full or part, with The Fahs Collaborative. Your congregation’s donation will support the work of religious educators, musicians, and ministers - working together - to bring Sophia Fahs Sunday to you in future years. To help educate your parishioners with our organization, we have provided inserts for the Order of Service describing our mission and programs. Here’s how to “Share Your Plate”:

- Please send collected donations made out to **Meadville Lombard Theological School** noting “Sophia Fahs Sunday” in the memo line to: Meadville Lombard Theological School 610 South Michigan Ave. Chicago, IL 60605
- Donations can also be made online by following these directions: Ask your administrator to go the Meadville Lombard website ([meadville.edu](http://meadville.edu)), then click “Donate” on the header. Please note “Sophia Fahs Sunday” in the “comments” section. Meadville Lombard accepts VISA, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express.

**We welcome your feedback!** If you have a moment, please let us know your experience of the service. Please contact Assistant Director, Joy Berry at [wrought.faith@meadville.edu](mailto:wrought.faith@meadville.edu).