

ON BEING RELIGIOUS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE RELIGIOUS?

This talk grows out of a long time frustration of mine. After my years of study of Anthropology/Religion and of being a UU Minister, I have heard the word “religious” or the words “being religious” used by many people in many different contexts. Often it is used in ways to distinguish between who is religious and who is not religious. Apples and oranges. The problem is that the use of these terms is far from uniform, i.e. What “being religious” means to one person is not necessarily what “being religious” means to another person. Consequently, the term “being religious” seems arbitrary, even meaningless.

Yet I think to “be religious” is trying to say something; something about belief systems; something about being human. **So I concluded that either we are all religious or none of us are religious. We’re either all apples or all oranges☺**

I opted for “we are all religious beings” (pick your fruit). I came to this conclusion based on:

- 1. Faith: Something inherent to being a conscious human being; a necessary part of being human.**
- 2. Religious identity: the meaning, the words, the beliefs, the symbols, the practices, the rituals, the rites, etc. that we give to our inherent faith.**
- 3. Thereby, all human beings are religious human beings.**

What determines any given human being’s religion is how he/she “answers” six fundamental questions of religion.

THE SIX FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF RELIGION

1. How was the Universe Created?
2. How did Life come to be?
3. How do human beings fit into the picture?
4. What is your responsibility as an individual human being?

5. Why do we die?
6. What happens after death?

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven Principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides.

As Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove explains, "The Principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities." *And to practice and teach in our living on this planet!*

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