

WOMEN AND RELIGION TASK FORCE

A Committee of the
Pacific Central District,
Unitarian Universalist Association

*Please note this is
a historical document
and contact info is
likely no longer
accurate.*

Reply to: Elizabeth Fisher
1408 Delaware St.
Berkeley, CA 94702
(415)548-1619

Resources for Feminist Worship

When Unitarian Universalist feminists -- women and men who believe in each other's intrinsic worth as equal human beings -- explore how to worship together, exciting results emerge. Our Unitarian and Universalist roots encourage us to experiment with new ideas and search for spiritual truth. This packet, produced by The Women and Religion Task Force of the Pacific Central District, offers a sampling of the results of these explorations.

Dynamic worth-shaping (the root of the word wor-ship) brings a time and a space for opening to one another. Dynamic worship comes in many forms that help us to recognize value in our everyday experience. Worship can be an opportunity to express our intimate thoughts and feelings, and a time to share our inspirations and deepest yearnings. Because we experience this touching of one another, we become a community of connection in a profoundly religious sense.

This packet represents the beginning of the W&R Task Force's efforts to assemble the rich expressions we as feminist Unitarian Universalists have created as we quest for community through worship. We have compiled stimulating suggestions to consider when creating your own ritual or service. A developing resource list that includes books of readings, full program scripts, and sermons that the Task Force is making available completes the booklet.

We hope this packet will become a valuable tool for those of you who wish to worship together. Please pass it along to others who may find it useful. Feel free to adapt any of these materials to your particular needs. We also want to hear your suggestions, and we welcome submissions for the next edition. We feel this written exchange can become a unique and powerful form of "gathering together." (Additional copies of this packet are available at the PCD District Office.)

For the Women and Religion Task Force, PCD

Liz Fisher and Sue Ayer
April, 1988
Berkeley, California

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WOMEN AND RELIGION TASK FORCE
PACIFIC CENTRAL DISTRICT
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION**

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Some thoughts on Circle Worship
by Beverly S. Smrha

Yes, we must sit down together and face each other without anything to hide behind.

We must say what we feel and what we want, what we fear for ourselves and each other, and how we are prepared to celebrate living.

We must listen ourselves into speech.

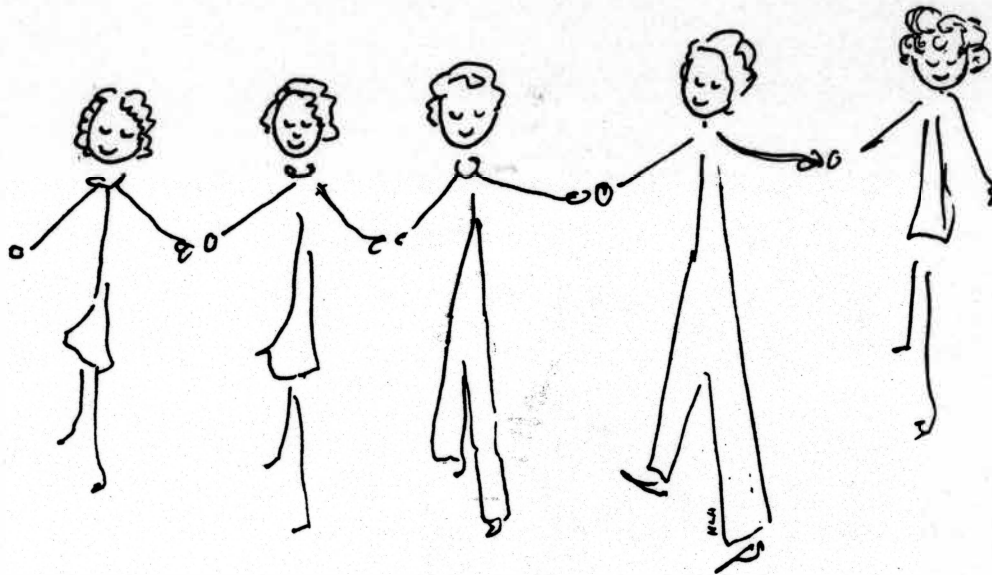
Circle worship is far more than merely sitting in a circle. It is a community of people making an intentional commitment to see and be seen, to hear and be heard.

Worship is a worth-shaping, an intentional and care-fully designed process, an art form, an ethical act, filled with the passion and the celebration of the living of our lives.

For we create worship from the fabric of our lives. We create a weaving of words, music, and movement that speaks to something that is of significant importance to the living of our lives.

As Unitarian Universalist women and men, we must honor the richness and diversity of each other's symbol systems and metaphors and uses of language and be very sensitive to how we each hear language. And.....we must also honor our own personal symbol system and personal use of language; we must speak from our own center and strength. For if we do not, if we attempt to speak only those words that are safe and bland enough to be easily accepted by all, we will merely create soft-mush which will be neither evocative nor empowering.

Each of us can create worship. We create it from the fabric of our daily lives by focusing in on something of significant importance to us. We start with a quieting and centering and then weave words, music, movement, color, beauty so that the community connects with each other and the entire cosmos, speaks to each other and listens to each other. We can then close the service with a knowing of our own personal strength and connection that grows from the community's strength and connection. We leave the service with a knowing and a hope.



A GRAB BAG OF IDEAS FOR CREATING WORSHIP

***by Sue Ayer and Liz Fisher
Drawings by Mary Lou Hadditt***

So you are considering facilitating creative worship. Now is the time to open your mind to any possibility. Enlist all the senses and all the arts. Use old traditions, start new ones. Think in cycles or seasons. Let your mind play with color symbolism. Think about affirming community through circle worship where rituals are created from personal experiences. A willingness to share concerns and wishes can be brought forth by incorporating one or several of the following into your service: speaking in turn, with a unison response after each speaker finishes; linking hands and arms, greeting, hugging, kissing, passing the peace; or enclosing and blessing one or all members. Remember to be inclusive in language, imagery, settings, and even in location. Don't forget to allow the full emotional range--from laughter to tears--to feel welcome. Then worship can create connection among participants. After all, worship at its best is a community celebration!

You may wish to set up a binder or folder where you can store sudden flashes, themes, readings, poems, and prayers that you collect as you are browsing through books, magazines, newsletters, and other worship materials. These will undoubtedly come in handy when you decide to plan a particular worship event.

Following is our grab bag of ideas that could become the beginning of your worship binder. As you scan this potpourri, your own brainstorming will bring forth additional ideas.



CREATING OUR SPECIAL AND SACRED SPACE

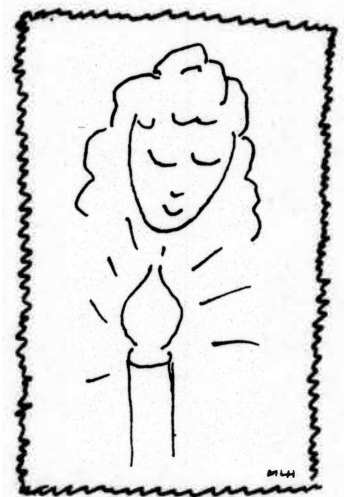
Start assembling a collection of ritual objects and containers. If you keep them in one place, it will be easier to select what fits your worship idea. Even the most ordinary things can play a role in worship. Think symbol and metaphor, whatever the theme. For instance, what concrete objects remind you of love, hope, work or community?

Most of us already have around our homes quite a few items of special significance to us that we might decide are just right for a worship theme we have selected. Following is a list of objects that may help create the sensory experience you are seeking during your ritual. We're sure you'll think of more once you get going.

Paraments A parament is an ornamental ecclesiastical hanging or vestment. Sounds serious doesn't it? However, if we think for a minute we can come up with many paraments we live with every day. All manner of textiles such as tablecloths, place mats, quilts, banners, wall hangings, fringed shawls, silky scarves, yarn, ribbons, rebozos, and bandannas can become paraments. Long lengths of bright fabrics can be used for draping and falling in rich folds on tables and walls; short remnant lengths can act as accents or covers on small altars creating a center of focus. Seek out combinations of colors, textures, and patterns. Pieces deep with personal meaning that we use for special activities such as crib blankets, towels, wedding veil, and old lace or linen deserve thoughtful consideration.

Ceremonial Garments What can we do to visually bring our bodies into the sacred space? Wearing vestments is what religious professionals do. Webster says vestments are articles of ceremonial attire worn by ecclesiastical officiants that are appropriate to the rite being celebrated. Another intimidating word? But what about caftans, stoles, shawls, capes, scarves, headgear, "goddess dresses," jewelry, beadwork, medallions, or symbolic pendants? They sure fit the definition and they have the double significance of bringing something of ourselves into the gathering.

Symbolic items When we look around us with an eye toward creating worship, suddenly metaphor becomes reality. So much of what we surround ourselves with every day has profound meaning. We very likely relate to this deeper significance regularly although often unconsciously. Why not include some of these precious items in our worship? Just a few suggestions: Candles and candle holders of many colors, sizes and shapes--votives, menorah, flaming chalice, tapers, pillars, scented, drip or birthday candles; crystals, gems, stones, plants, garden flowers, bonsai, greens, driftwood, pine cones, clay, pebbles, rocks, lichen, feathers, eggs, "corn dollies" shells, sand dollars, and other natural materials; stained glass miniatures, mirrors, stuffed toys, dolls, icons, wheels, hoops, fans, beads, bubbles, balloons, kites, butterfly and rainbow stickers, colored stars, sparklers, streamers, confetti, origami, paper, silk flowers, statuettes and figurines in ebony, ivory, brass, jade, or alabaster. . .



Containers Traditionally forms that can hold water or food were considered feminine and very sacred. Including them in the design of worship creates an unconscious connection that can only enhance the experience. Containers can be: bowls and serving pieces of china, pottery, metal, glass, wood; vases, chalices, cauldrons, cast-iron pots, cups, dishes, shells, trays, planters; baskets of all sizes, shapes, and colors; wine glasses, tiny bottles and flasks, pitchers, basins, tureens; decorative boxes and canisters; grape leaves and other containers from nature; odd ceramic pieces made in children's clay classes.

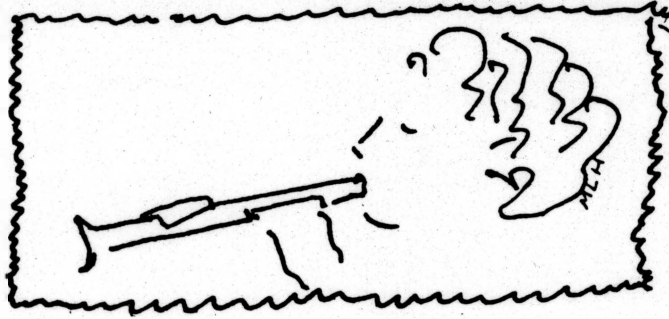


Sacramental Foods The sharing of food has always been a part of religious ritual. Finding a way to include food and possibly share it can expand a ritual. Here are a few that come to mind: breads, seeds, nuts; wines (including nonalcoholic ones), juice, milk, water, and herbal teas; eggs, fresh seasonal produce, raisins, apples and honey, pomegranate, cherries, lemons, onion, artichokes, carrots; candy hearts, chocolate kisses, angel food, birthday or coffee cake; the four sacred gifts of corn, beans, squash and tobacco. . .

WHERE AND WHAT HAPPENS

Where you choose to hold your worship service greatly determines its effect. Of course many of us will hold our services in our own churches or fellowships. You might also want to consider a variety of other settings when developing your service. It's surprising how much is available to us simply for the asking. What we do in these settings can also vary dramatically. Active participation by everyone makes the experience much more personal and meaningful for each one of us. Songs and chants are an important and powerful part of a ceremonial gathering. They can be learned from books, records, tapes, and other singers. Consider starting a binder or make your own tape of old favorites and likely new ones. This way you can add to the tape when you come across an additional tune.

Settings Where will we meet? Consider various architectures, given or created such as: Churches, chapels, homes; meditation sites, out-of-doors in groves, clearings, caves, grottos, meadows, gardens, parks, cemeteries or churchyards; at fountains, pools, springs, streams, waterfalls, hilltops, natural amphitheaters, ruins. When choosing a location, please make sure the setting is accessible to everyone who may want to attend.



Sound and Music We all know how music enriches our worship. Considering the choice available, it's hard to understand why so many of us sing the same hymns over and over. Consider including: vocal music that is performed; melodies, then harmonies; music of many periods and cultures played on the organ, piano, flute, guitar, or other instruments; bells, chimes, gongs, cymbals, clappers, drums, tambourines and other rhythm markers; tapes and records for background, foreground or singing along; nature sounds, humming, choral reading. It can be fun to develop an entire worship service consisting of anthems, hymns, rounds, chants, folk songs, childhood songs familiar to most.

Body Language, Stance, and Movement We've all heard that a much larger percentage of our communication is carried on through body language than through the spoken word. Consider involving participants in a variety of movements in your gatherings. Try simple dance steps or forms like follow the leader, creating lines, circles, spirals; moving up, down, into, out of and through the worship space; using arm, hand and head gestures as blessings of self and others; laying on of hands; sign language, mime; yoga positions; guided relaxation, centering, grounding; folk culture movements most people know, like "London Bridge" or "Hokey Poky"; teaching less familiar movements that can be easily learned, like dances from Shakers, Sufis or other cultures.

Special Language/Words/Liturgy These types of readings can help those participating to feel present rather than preoccupied with their individual worlds and worries. A great variety of inspirational literature can be called upon such as: invocations, dedications, prayers, chants, benedictions, readings, repetitions, responses, litanies, poetry, biography, storytelling, drama, sacred scriptures and commentaries, myth, legend, parables, homily, folk wisdom, fairy tales, personal statements, silence, guided meditations, divinations like tarot, runes, I Ching. . .



Cleansing, Purifying, Anointing To create a ceremonial atmosphere and more intimate connections among those participating you can consider cleansing, purifying, or anointing depending on the content of your service. Try using oil, lotion, water, perfume, soap, ashes, incense, or burning cedar or sage. You might consider including hand, face or foot washing or massage as integral parts of your worship experience.

THEMES AND OCCASIONS

Rituals and circle worship are held or created for any number of reasons, centering on any life event or theme that people feel is important to mark or explore. Here are just a few that have been done by friends.

House Blessing or Room Blessing Raising the energy by having the group encircle the site and if appropriate kindling the hearth fire.

Viking Burial-at-Sea Sending afloat a burning box or "boat" of old letters and mementos to mark the end of a relationship or time of life.

Stages of Womanhood Gather with friends and relatives of all ages to share stories, apprehensions, and wisdom at important stages in life such as puberty, childbirth, significant career events, culmination of creative projects, menopause, and becoming a crone.

Bonding between Mothers and Daughters Organize a gathering of mothers and daughters at the seashore or a meadow. As part of the festivities ask mothers and daughters to run together along the beach or through the field or woods with daughters continuing on after mothers tire and drop out.

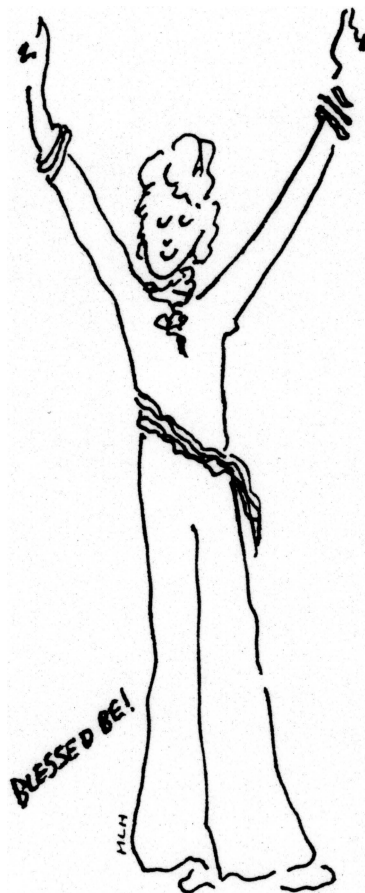


Ceremonies of Restoration and Healing After a burglary, assault, or other traumatic experience or life-threatening illness, hold a gathering to allow expressions of fear, shame, guilt or anger and to seek resolution and healing.

Celebration of Wholeness or Achievement When a work is completed, especially one of internal growth or when a major step is taken in life, acknowledge the event with ritual.

Rituals to Mourn Unacknowledged Loss Those deaths that are not formally marked by our culture--miscarriages, death of beloved pets, the end of loves, hopes, or dreams--are important milestones and can be commemorated with creative memorials.

Sendoffs, Welcomes, Homecomings, Leave-takings Any occasion that engages the emotions has spiritual significance and worth. Why not acknowledge these truths with worship?



ANNOTATED LIST OF PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

HOW FEMINIST VALUES MAY SAVE THE WORLD \$1.50

A speech delivered by Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz, President, Unitarian Universalist Association, January 10, 1987 at the Pacific Central District winter meeting. Reverend Schulz explores the important feminist principles that he feels express a new way-of-being in the world. He discusses the profound effects they are having on contemporary Unitarian Universalism.

GODDESSES, WITCHES AND THE PARADIGM SHIFT, 3 versions \$5.00

Original prepared by Meg Bowman

First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Jose

Second Version prepared by Greta Keenan

Unitarian Fellowship of Redwood City

Third Version, Early Service Committee

Palo Alto Unitarian Universalist Church

This popular service uses song, readings, drama, and prose to explore: prehistory when the Great Mother Earth and Goddesses were revered; the dark time when women and "heretics" were persecuted; and the now emerging non-hierarchical understanding of the universe that will stimulate all of us to restructure the ways we relate. Each version provides varied material that you can select to shape your own service. The original script can be performed with 4 readers -- 3 women and 1 man.

THE COVENANT OF UU PAGANS by Shirley Ranck \$1.50

In this informative sermon Shirley Ranck, author of Cakes for the Queen of Heaven, explores the similarities between pagan values and traditional Unitarian and Universalist beliefs. These include: the internalization of religion; concern for the well-being of the earth; and a non-authoritarian attitude.

THE DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE MYTH \$2.50

Prepared by members of the Olympia Brown Society

First Parish, Framingham, Massachusetts

A unique service in words, music and dance. This script includes choreographic notes and sheet music. The centerpiece of this service is drawn from the version of the Demeter-Persephone myth that appears in Lost Goddesses of Early Greece by Charlene Spretnak that is used in the seminar Cakes for the Queen of Heaven. Interesting historical notes on the activities of women in the Framingham Church to implement the Women and Religion Resolution are included.

COMING HOME -- LIKE A RIVER TO THE SEA (THE WATER CEREMONY)
by Carolyn McDade, Lucile Longview, and Jan Bjorklund \$2.50

An historic service held at the Unitarian Universalist Women and Religion Convocation on Feminist Theology in 1980. This wonderful piece explores the symbolic meaning of water in all its forms and provides a ritual for mingling of waters from distant places which can be used by all of us in our own communities.

WOMANSPIRIT RISING ... AND RISING AGAIN, UUA/GA - 1983 \$1.25
Compiled by Linnea Pearson

This service includes statements from those who are involved in Women and Religion from across the Continent gives a great sense of the Women and Religion movement. Full of ideas that can be excerpted.

CLAIMING OUR BIRTHRIGHT: TROUBLE AND BEAUTY \$0.50
Order of Service from Opening Celebration, 1987
Biennial Continental Convention
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

Includes song, poem and notes from this circle worship. Good example of how several women participated in weaving the theme.

FAMOUS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN \$3.95
by Henry Van Dyke, Lakeland Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
revised (with permission) by Meg Bowman

This excellent dramatic reading is a panel presentation by four distinguished Unitarian Universalist women -- Clara Barton, Dorothea Dix, Susan B. Anthony, and Margaret Fuller. A moderator provides informative introductions after which each of the four women tell their own very personal stories. This packet includes pertinent readings and graphics that can be used to complete the Order of Service.

LESBIAN MARRIAGE CEREMONY. . .A SERVICE OF UNION \$1.50
by Reverend Jody Shipley, Marilyn Gentile
and Reverend Emily Champagne

This service created on the occasion of Jody and Marilyn's wedding, September 22, 1985, includes notes and description and can be adapted for any wedding.

THE WIDENING CIRCLE ... A CELEBRATION OF NEW LIFE **\$1.50**
by Reverend Jody Shipley in conjunction with the parents of
Adrienne Westwood and Adam Keineth on the occasion of their birth

This service of dedication for infant girls and boys acknowledges the times into which our children are born today ... and the significance of being born a woman or a man. The service is designed for a full Sunday morning and includes notes.

COMMUNIONS ... USING THIS WORSHIP ELEMENT **\$1.50**
by Reverend Jody Shipley

The sharing of food has always been a part of religious ritual. It is a symbolic act that celebrates our common humanity and can be a rich part of our worship together. Included in "Communions" are several communion ceremonies given in a variety of congregations that can be central to a large worship service or stand on their own as short services. This collection includes notes on their use.

CRADLING OUR CHILDREN by Reverend Jody Shipley **\$1.50**

A community ritual to acknowledge the importance of younger children to all of us, it is both fun and powerfully moving. This is a service that was developed for a summer family camp and lends itself to a holiday atmosphere of an inter-generational gathering.

Copies of the above programs can be purchased from:

Women and Religion Task Force
Pacific Central District
c/o Liz Fisher
1408 Delaware Street
Berkeley, Ca. 94702
(415)548-1619

Please use enclosed Order Form

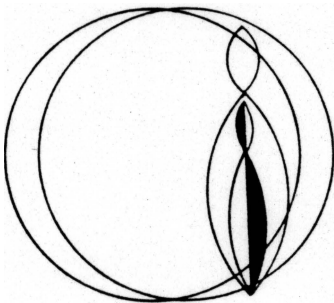
ORDER FORM

RESOURCES FOR FEMINIST WORSHIP

How Feminist Values May Save the World	___ @ \$1.50 ea	\$ ___
Goddesses, Witches and the Paradigm Shift	___ @ \$5.00 ea	\$ ___
The Covenant of UU Pagans	___ @ \$1.50 ea	\$ ___
The Demeter and Persephone Myth	___ @ \$2.50 ea	\$ ___
Coming Home -- The Water Ceremony	___ @ \$2.50 ea	\$ ___
Womanspirit Rising	___ @ \$1.25 ea	\$ ___
Claiming Our Birthright	___ @ \$0.50 ea	\$ ___
Famous UU Women	___ @ \$3.95 ea	\$ ___
Lesbian Marriage Ceremony	___ @ \$1.50 ea	\$ ___
The Widening Circle	___ @ \$1.50 ea	\$ ___
Communions	___ @ \$1.50 ea	\$ ___
Cradling Our Children	___ @ \$1.50 ea	\$ ___

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ ___

Postage and Handling Included



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Sponsored by the Women and Religion Task Force,
Pacific Central District, Unitarian Universalist Association

**FOLLOWING ARE LISTINGS OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
PLEASE MAKE USE OF THEM**

VOICES CONVOCATION

Voices, now in its fifth year, is an annual fall gathering of women of the Pacific Central District for a weekend of rituals and spiritual renewal.

The 1988 gathering, **Rhythmic Voices: Rituals in Harmony with the Earth**, will be held at the time of the full moon on September 23-25 at Point Bonita Conference Center on the Marin Coast.

For information, contact Barbara Davis at the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, (415) 893-6129.

CAKES FOR THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Many churches and fellowships in our district have offered this new UUA adult seminar in Feminist Thealogy with great success. If you are interested in considering the seminar and wish to review the kit, the W&RTF has a copy you can use for evaluation. Contact Liz Fisher if you are interested in borrowing it. The District Office also can provide loaner copies.

Copies can be purchased from: UUA
Religious Education
25 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

(see the following flyer that describes the kit)

A very exciting training session for those who planned to facilitate Cakes in their societies, lead by Emily Champagne and Shirley Ranck, was held November 1987. Many who attended the training have now lead the seminar. A follow-up evaluation and brainstorming session will be organized soon. If you have facilitated Cakes (even if you did not attend the training) and are interested in being in touch with others who have also offered the seminar, drop a note to Liz Fisher and she will forward your name to those coordinating future events.



CAKES FOR THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

By Shirley A. Ranck

An adult seminar in feminist theology for churches, schools, women's groups and women's studies programs.

(*The a logy: from the Greek, thea, meaning goddess*)

"Women have no past, no history and no religion," wrote Simone de Beauvoir in 1949. Today we know that women definitely have a rich past, an illustrious history, and a great variety of religious experience.

Cakes For The Queen of Queen of Heaven is a program primarily for women to explore and reclaim female religious history and its meaning for their lives. Its ten sessions, each approximately two hours in length, are designed to be led by an experienced leader. Resources for each session include readings, visual images, presentations, learning activities, discussion guides, songs, and simple rituals.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Ancient Goddess religion and imagery;
- Demeter-Persephone myth and mother-daughter relationships;
- Voices of women in Judaism and Christianity;
- "Heretical" ideas and beliefs of the Gnostic Christians;
- Female and male issues of power and dominance;
- Contemporary routes to female spirituality;
- Women's impetus for change in religious communities.

The title, "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven," comes from the Book of Jeremiah in the Hebrew Bible in which Jeremiah chastises his people for continuing to pay homage to the Goddess, thereby disobeying Yahweh's commandment to hold no other gods before him. The people prepare a festival in her honor during which they offer "cakes" in supplication for a good harvest and her continuing beneficence.

THE PROGRAM PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- The Leader's Guide
- Handbook of Readings and Resources
- Filmstrip Programs
- Three books published by Beacon Press: *Changing of the Gods* by Naomi Goldenberg, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* by Jean Baker Miller, *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece* by Charlene Spretnak

ORDER FORM

Please send _____ copies of CAKES FOR THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN (7503000)

@ \$49.75 each

\$ _____

Plus postage & handling (orders totaling \$50-100, add \$4.50; \$100.01-200, add \$6.00; \$200.01-300, add \$8.00; over \$300, add \$9.50)

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FEMINIST READINGS

OFFERED BY

Women and Religion Task Force
Pacific Central District
Unitarian Universalist Association

READINGS FOR WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

Poems, sage sayings and statements, responsive readings and more—all chosen because they reflect feminist consciousness. Drawing on a wide range of historical as well as contemporary sources—both international and domestic—this collection provides many effective ways to introduce feminist values. Ideal for opening meetings, for reading at services or gatherings, or quoting in newsletters. The uses for this unique resource are limitless.

ISBN 0-940-48300-9, 98 pages, illustrated. \$5.95

Wherever women gather together failure is impossible.
SUSAN B. ANTHONY

MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR WOMEN

Contains literary quotes, responsive readings, poems, philosophical statements and practical information on what needs to be done when someone close to you dies. A great aid to those confronting the death of a loved one. But more than just meeting an immediate need, this volume can help each of us prepare for the day when we will face the loss of someone close to us, as well as our own death.

ISBN 0-940-48301-7, 155 pages, illustrated. \$5.95

Ultimately we return everything in our bodies to the world around us.
ELIZABETH DODSON GRAY, theologian



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DRAMATIC READINGS ON FEMINIST ISSUES

Five Dramatic Readings in One Volume



OUR STUNNING HARVEST: DRAMATIC READING

Based on a poem by Ellen Bass, this anti-war, anti-rape, anti-violence reading will move an audience to see the interconnection between these three. Also includes supplementary songs, responsive readings, and poems. Cast of 7-4 women, 2 men, and 1 young girl. (Also available individually—see order form.)



WHY WE BURN: SEXISM EXORCISED

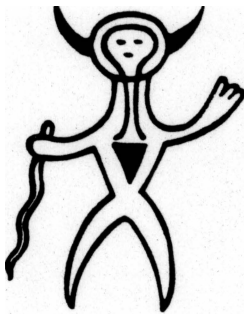
Educate yourself and others on sexist religious and philosophical traditions by performing this lively ceremony that symbolically rids us all of their influences. 5 Participants.

DOUBLE-CROSSED BY THE DOUBLE STANDARD

Trace the history of the double standard, compare "How To Tell A Businessman From A Businesswoman", and perform a satirical sex role reversal skit using this script. Cast of 3 to 10 people.

MILITANT MENOPAUSAL WOMAN

Includes "Celebration of Mid-Life and Menopause" by Marylou Hadditt, a moving prose poem written in the tradition of the chanting folk song. Provides a creative experience you can use to dramatize the cycles of women's lives. Cast of 6 women.



SENECA FALLS—1848

Reinact the planning of the first women's rights convention. Wearing long skirts and bonnets, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and friends launched the women's rights movement over tea. Dialog based on actual historical material. Cast of 7 or 8 women.

ISBN 0-940-48302-5 \$10.95

Use Order Form on previous page

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT