

Credo Workshop

First Unitarian Society in Newton



Coming of Age Program

What is a Credo?

1. Credo comes from Latin and has several roots or meanings:

A stated system of principles or beliefs

Experience, as in personal experience

To what I set my heart (literal translation)

2. One of the Latin derivatives for credo is *I believe*. Therefore, many think of it as a statement of belief. In fact, the Catholic Mass begins with the *Credo*. *The Apostle's Creed*, used in many Christian faiths, also begins with Credo:

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord...*

3. Some have pointed out another root, *experience*. Here the question is not belief vs. unbelief, but personal vs. the impersonal. Or *I* vs. *you* or *one*. Personal means *connection, engagement, presence*; not an abstract idea or *A Great Truth*. It means what is happening to you at a specific time and place, perhaps even what is going on inside you.

In Unitarian Universalism the ultimate source of religious authority is you and your conscience!



What do you ultimately value?

For what greater purpose do you live?

In what do you have faith?

What does this mean for Unitarian Universalists? Our personal credos are about what we ultimately value and what greater purpose we live for. Our credos are also deeply about what we have faith in, what ultimate meaning we bind our lives to.

What Does 2 Minutes Mean?

Just 1 page of single spaced text
or
1.5 pages of double spaced text.

200 - 300 Words in all

Between 3 and 6 paragraphs
(50-70 words per paragraph)

WARM-UP EXERCISE:

Pick 3 items (for example: sunglasses, stapler, and stress ball).

Set a timer for 2 minutes

Make up a story about all 3 items

You must speak for the full 2 minutes without pausing.

Repeat, picking 3 different items.

March CoA Friday

Spiritual Autobiography

To be done in your assigned groups, either as a whole group or divided into quartets (2 mentors/candidate pairs).

Answer some or all of the following questions:

Your name:

- What is the story of your name?
- Is there significance in the name you were given?
- What about the name do you like and identify with?

Your family:

Create a family tree or diagram that shows the different religions and cultures of your family. Include the present members and as many generations back as you can. Reflect on how the different religious and cultural identities in your family affect your own identity.

March CoA Friday

Your lifeline:

Draw a line all the way across a page of paper; the left end represents your birth, and the right represents today.

Make marks for important personal events that have occurred between your birth and today, including both happy and sad things. When you have made a basic timeline of your life, think about how each event made you feel.

- What did you learn from it?
- Did what you learned change your understanding of yourself?
- Did it change your views on life, on death, on people, on G*d, on religion?

Your communities:

- Who are the three or four people who have had the greatest impact on your life? Why?
- What communities, religious or not, have had a lasting influence on your development?
- Think of the important decisions in your life. Discuss what they mean to you, how they were made, and the results.

March CoA Friday

How do I find my credo?

Remember, you are the underlying topic. If you are not in it, your credo will be an empty shell. Your credo is not out there somewhere; it is in you - in the life you are now living, in your past, in your heart and your soul. You must draw it out of yourself. But there are words and questions that may help you in this process. Below are some questions that might help:

PURPOSE	Why are we here?
MEANING	What does it all mean?
AWE/WONDER/MYSTERY	Do I have these emotions?
	What are they like?
	Do they make me a believer?
NATURE	How and What do I feel?
FATE	What will happen to me?
AFTER DEATH	Is there an afterlife?
LOVE	How do I experience love?
HEALING/COMFORT	How am I comforted?
BELIEF	What makes me believe?
PRAYER/MEDITATION	Are these important to me?
GOOD/EVIL	Is the world good, bad, both?
GOD	Is there a God?
CONNECTION	What connects me to others?
SOLITUDE	How do I feel when I'm alone?
CREATION	How did the world start?
	What/Who started it all?

March CoA Friday

To What Do You Set Your Heart?

1. “What do you value most in life?” (Feel free to brainstorm a list in bullet point format or to write out a longer response)

2. Look over list and note which things will always remain and which things might go away with time.

3. Circle the things that are valued most and can never go away. These might be abstracts, like truth or enlightenment or love. They may also be such things as human community, life force, or G*d.

The list can provide guideposts for Credo writing because it contains some things in which you have enduring faith.



March CoA Friday

Below are some questions that might also help in Credo writing:

- How have you come to value this being/idea/concept?
- What do you think is the most important thing about it?
- What do you do in your life to support it, celebrate it, or participate in it?
- How is it related to Unitarian Universalism and/or FUSN?
- How does it help create the kind of world you want to see?

Some additional questions to consider answering in your Credo Statement:

- What are some of your beliefs about how humans should act?
- What are some of your beliefs about the origins of the universe?
- What do you believe about how the universe functions?
- What are some of your beliefs about a higher power?
- What are some of your beliefs concerning life, death and the afterlife?
- What do you think is sacred?
- Which of these beliefs affect the way you act? How?

Between CoA Fridays

Next Step: Write Your First Draft

Over the next few weeks, spend some time writing your first draft. Many Candidates have found it helpful to share this draft with their Mentors before sending it to their Credo Leader.

The next few pages will provide you with some things to think about as you write your draft.

How Do I Know I am Writing a Credo?

In the end, only you can answer this question. But there are what seem to be non-credos. For example:

- * an entertaining speech
- * a tribute to your family
- * a tribute to someone you admire
- * a testament of what you like and do not like
- * a declaration of pride in who you are or an explanation of who you would like to be.
- * a story or anecdote

Elements of the above may be part of a credo , but they are *not credos in and of themselves*. These are not credos because they do not necessarily touch on any transcendent connection, any faith or belief beyond yourself, any deep experience of how you view the world.

Phrases that may capture your credo:

- * _____ gives meaning to my life
- * I believe ...
- * _____ is how I want to live my life
- * _____ sustains me in times of difficulty
- * how my beliefs have developed...
- * my deepest commitments are ... (spiritual, religious, ethics)
- * my moral code is ...
- * _____ fills me with joy
- * _____ connects me with something larger than myself, beyond my own being.
- * I choose to tune my heart to ...

How do I write my Credo?

Create a strong opener. You can't waste any time; you need to connect with your audience immediately.

Limit your topic - FOCUS! Cover 2 items in depth, not 6 superficially.

Use shorter paragraphs than you might use in your usual composition.

Use shorter sentences; your audience cannot follow long complicated sentences (But do not sacrifice detail!)

If you use a story or anecdote, limit yourself to one.

Limit or eliminate asides.

In so short a piece, you have few opportunities to change your tone of voice. (Remember that a credo is written to be spoke; it needs to be a dramatic piece.)

What form should I use?

A credo has form as well as content whether it focuses on belief or experience (or both). Although forms or structures can come from the inside, they are most often learned. You have already learned many. Below are some suggested forms. Some will remind you of what you already know; others may be new to you.

- * a statement of how I see the world or of my beliefs
- * a narrative or anecdote about myself that illustrates my beliefs.
- * a description of one major shift or change in belief that I have experienced (a moment in time that changed you, made you different in some way.)
- * an autobiography of belief on which you record your changes in belief over time.
- * a comparison of how your beliefs differ from another's.
- * a parable illustrating a moral truth important to you.
- * a history of a conflict within yourself.
- * a poetic description of poem illustrating your belief.

The Overall Structure of Your Credo

Focus or Topic or Theme or Dominant Question:

Structure / Design / Architecture / Shape

Introduction

Part A

Part B

Part C

Part D

Conclusion

What about my opening sentence?

Since it is so important to connect immediately to your audience and to use your time efficiently, give some care to your opening sentence. Revising this sentence may, in fact, be the last thing you do. Here are 10 examples of the types of sentences that grab the listener:

1. a straightforward statement of belief
2. a startling comment
3. a very short sentence
4. a single word
5. a striking image or metaphor
6. a rhetorical question
7. a question and answer
8. a quote
9. an anecdote
10. an aphorism

April CoA Friday

During the April CoA Friday you will share your Credo with your assigned Credo Group. This gives you the opportunity to practice saying your Credo aloud in front of others. Credo Groups will provide feedback on what is shared, using the method and format outlined below.

Please bring enough copies of your Credo to share with your Credo Group (Mentors, Candidates and Credo Leader).

Process:

1. Sit in circle
2. Credo Leader passes out Credo Reflection pages
3. Pass out copies of the Credo about to be read
4. Choose what order the Credo statements will be read
5. Reader reads hir draft Credo statement
6. Listeners:
 - a. Use provided yellow highlighter to mark sections that they find especially engaging and/or interesting.
 - b. Use provided pencils to write down questions and comments
7. Giving feedback:
 - a. Candidates take turns to share their responses to Reader's statements.
 - i. Focus on strengths
 - ii. Be positive
 - iii. Speak in first person
 - iv. Address specific words or sections
 - b. Mentors take turns to share their responses using above guidelines
 - c. Reader may direct questions to the group if desired
8. Reader rereads hir draft Credo statement
9. Listeners:
 - a. Make additional comments using the Credo Reflection page and/or a copy of the Credo being read
 - b. When Credo is finished allow for some silence and then share observations and suggestions (i.e. something to add or subtract or expand upon).
10. Collect all written material and give to Reader
11. Repeat steps 5-10 for each Candidate

April CoA Friday

Credo Reflection Review Sheet *(page 1)*

Credo by: _____ Name of Listener: _____

Instructions:

- Use yellow highlighter to mark sections that you find especially engaging and/or interesting. Include sections that get your attention and/or impress you in some way.
- Use pencil to write down questions and comments you will share with the reader later.

Highlighter part(s)

- Effective use of humor
- Powerful use of detail
- Crisp and to the point
- Colorful images

Overall structure or whole paragraph

- engaging opening
- very readable, flows smoothly
- focused and on topic
- easy to follow
- good transitions between paragraphs

Examples of Suggestions for Improvement

- cut or delete (sentence, paragraph, quote, word, etc.)
- add paragraph or sentence sequence
- add detail, elaborate on a given point or theme
- rearrange (move paragraph/sentence to new place)
- clarify meaning
- use more colorful language
- make your voice clearer and/or more present
- include more of your own experience
- shift to first person (“I” statements)

April CoA Friday

Credo Reflection Review Sheet *(page 2)*

Credo by: _____ Name of Listener: _____

Topic or Focus of Credo:

What do you remember about the opening sentence/paragraph?

What do you remember about the closing sentence/paragraph?

Elaboration of Positive Comments

Suggestions for Revision

Credo Writing Timeline

March CoA Friday	Credo Writing Workshop I
March - April	Write first draft and share with Mentor
April CoA Friday	Credo Writing Workshop II (peer reviews)
3 rd April Wednesday	Last Draft due <i>(send to assigned Credo Leader)</i>
1 st May Wednesday	Final version due to Credo Leader
1 st May Fri/Sat	Graduation Dress Rehearsal
2 nd May Saturday	Graduation Service (10.15 am)

Place label here:

Credo Leader Contacts
and
annual date information

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