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## December 2012 Forming a Faith for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

When I was a seminary student in the late 1980s, I had the opportunity to take classes with Rev. Peg Gooding on religious education in Unitarian Universalist churches. Peg was one of the pioneers of religious education who taught the most current thinking in what we now call faith development. We were still drawing upon the work of Rev. Sophia Lyon Fahs who had developed the foundation of liberal religious education thirty years before. Some of you may remember some of the books she authored which were essential reading for educators and ministers. In the 1960s the UUA developed newer curricula such as *About Your Sexuality* which was trend-setting among religious faiths. The revised version is known as *Our Whole Lives* and is very popular with our congregations.

With the advent of the internet the UUA has stayed current with developing trends. Now anyone can download any number of curricula from the UUA website for all ages. At last count there were 47 different Tapestry of Faith offerings that could be used for helping a congregation deepen the faith journey of its people.

A few years ago a document was published called *Faith Formation 2020*. Here is one relevant trend from that report that is affecting our congregations.

### Trend 12. Educating in New Ways

What kinds of education and teaching are likely to help people engage in meaningful learning that will allow them to manage the fast-changing, knowledge-based society of the twenty-first century? Here are eight key ideas influencing education today, and that will most likely strengthen in the coming decade:

1. Applying Howard Gardner's research on the eight multiple intelligences to education and providing a greater variety of ways to learn.
2. Applying research on learning styles to education by incorporating a diversity of learning activities and methods in a learning experience.

3. Engaging in active, in-depth learning through well-designed projects, problems, and design tasks that focus learner inquiry around central questions in the disciplines and engage learners in doing the work of writers, scientists, mathematicians, musicians sculptors, and critics.
4. Incorporating project-based learning which involves completing complex tasks that typically result in a realistic product, event, or presentation.
5. Having learners engage in collaborative learning—working in small groups—to create, discuss, practice, and make presentations.
6. Engaging learners in practicing and performing what they are learning by incorporating real life application activities into the learning experience.
7. Developing visual literacy in all learners: learning to “read” or interpret visual images and learning how to use visual images to communicate.
8. Utilizing digital media to exploit the potential of the learning opportunities available through online resources and networks, Digital media promotes engagement, self-directed learning, creativity, and empowerment by using the Internet, computers, cell phones, and many other digital tools to learn and communicate in ways that were not possible in previous generations. Digital media allows learners to be active creators and producers who use a wide range of digital tools to express themselves, interpret the world around them, and deepen their understanding of academic content. Their products include original music, animation, video, stories, graphics, presentations, and Web site. They can become actively engaged in their learning processes rather than passive recipients of knowledge passed down from adults.

The future of faith formation will be challenging, but we will rise to meet it like we always have.

Yours in the Faith,

*Rev. Dr. Richard Speck*