

Community/Connections in Search for Truth/Meaning: **PETS/OTHER CREATURES, 2018**  
**Need:** Animal puppets or stuffed animals. Invite people to select a puppet for the session.

**Opening words:**

Here in the middle of the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles is the fourth UU Principles--  
The free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

The first Principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person – including you and me. I have my values and ideas, and so do you. And your ideas and values and my ideas and values engage every time we meet! This is *individualism* – with the need for connections.

The seventh principle is being part of the interdependent web, or all of us are in this together. *Interdependence* is evident in our community.

We come as individuals, on our own spiritual journey for truth and meaning. In community, our search enriches our lives and the community itself. This is precisely what we are doing together now!

**Covenant for this session:**

We value our time together and revere each person who is present. We share and we are silent to accept the sharing of others. We speak from our hearts and for ourselves only, without needing to respond or give advice. We hold our sharings in confidence within our circle.

**Check-in/Sharing:** Because the session today is an hour rather than the usual two hours, check-in will be brief, like a few sentences. How is it with you today?

**Scavenger Hunt:** Please sign the Scavenger Hunt card and return to a facilitator.

**TOPIC: Pets and Other Creatures**

Everyone needs a spiritual guide: a minister, rabbi, priest, therapist, or wise friend. My wise friend is my dog. He has deep insights to impart. He makes friends easily and doesn't hold a grudge. He enjoys simple pleasures and takes each day as it comes. Like a true Zen master, he eats when he's hungry and sleeps when he's tired. He's not hung up about sex. Best of all, he befriends me with an unconditional love that humans would do well to imitate.

So my dog is a sort of guru. When I become too serious and preoccupied, he reminds me to frolic and play. When I get too wrapped up in abstractions and ideas, he reminds me to exercise and care for my body. On his own canine level, he shows me that it might be possible to live without inner conflicts or neuroses: uncomplicated, genuine, and glad to be alive.

Rev. Gary Kowalski, Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont, excerpts

**Questions for group reflection**

1. Introduce the puppet and why you selected it. You may speak through the puppet, if you wish.
2. Have you ever had a spiritual encounter with an animal? What made it spiritual?
3. "And God said to (Adam and Eve), Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28)  
How do you feel about humans having "dominion" over every living being?  
What does that mean?

**Check-out/Likes and Wishes:** How was the session for you? What are you taking with you?

**Closing:** How it is that animals understand things I do not know, but it is certain that they do understand. Perhaps there is a language which is not made of words and everything in the world understands it. Perhaps there is a soul hidden in everything and it can always speak, without even making a sound, to another soul. ~ Frances Hodgson Burnett