

**An Introduction to the Coming of Age - The Credo Statements**  
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Two weeks ago our partner church in Romania held a confirmation service for 7 of their youth, all 14 years old. I asked Rev. Istvan Berei, their minister, to tell me a little bit about how their youth spend the year preparing for the ceremony.

He said that during the year, the youth meet weekly for confirmation classes. They have to learn a lot about biblical history, about the psalms, and about Unitarian beliefs, and they have to memorize the Unitarian catechism.

The Unitarian Catechism, by the way, consists of 136 questions and answers, about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, about the purpose of religion, and about the history and theology of the Unitarian church.

It may not sound very Unitarian to you to have to memorize a catechism, but our Hungarian brothers and sisters are Unitarian in the classic theological sense. They believe in one God. They believe that Jesus was fully human. They define “Holy Spirit” not as a person in the Trinity, but as the power of the one God that works within us.

They affirm reason as a “spiritual gift which helps us to gather knowledge, to think and form opinions about God, ourselves, our neighbors and the world.” And they believe that our calling in this world – our purpose – “is to build the Kingdom of God in this earthly life with the spiritual gifts received from God” – in other words, to make the world a better place.

From what Rev. Berei wrote, it sounds as if they have an exam on the material, which I imagine consists of some questions asked of each youth as they stand before their parents and the congregation on their confirmation Sunday. And then they take their first communion, for once they’ve completed their confirmation they become members of the congregation.

And finally there is a big party with family and friends. Rev. Berei said that confirmation is one of the most important events in the life of the congregation and the village. He closed by wishing our youth good luck this Sunday, and I wanted to make sure to pass his blessings on to you.

Today we are celebrating with 7 of our youth who are coming of age. They’re preparation was very different from that of their Hungarian Unitarian cousins. They did not have to memorize a catechism.

Instead they met with their advisors and sometimes with me to talk about what **they** believe. They hosted guests from within our congregation who shared **their own** thoughts and beliefs about God and about human nature. Together they grieved the loss of their friend Jessie

Peterson. They asked and answered some big questions about death and life and purpose and meaning. They learned from some of you about different spiritual practices. They went on a retreat and sat around a fireplace, and played basketball, and enjoyed one another's company.

And through it all, they each had a chance to really wrestle with what it means to be a North American Unitarian. And I think – I hope – that they came to appreciate more deeply and identify more closely with their own religious tradition.

In the Hungarian Unitarian Catechism, it says, “Through confirmation we become independent members of the church and we assume responsibility...for all of our deeds and our faithfulness.”

In our tradition, through the process of articulating and sharing their own beliefs, our youth, too, are learning to assume responsibility for what they believe, for the choices that they make, for the way they live their lives.

I think I can safely speak not only for myself, but also for your advisors when I say that it has been a remarkable privilege to have been part of this phase of your journey to adulthood! We are very proud of you and have more faith in you than you can probably imagine! And we look forward to the privilege of continuing to watch you grow and mature.

But now without further ado, I invite this year's Coming of Age participants to share with you their Credo Statements...