

Sample Coming of Age Credo Statements

1. Credo by Sam Neff, 2007

UU Church of Palo Alto

When I finally sat (well, actually lay) down to finally write this little speech, after the whole Coming of Age program dealie, I found myself oddly clear of thought. Not in a good way, though. I mean clear of all thought. So I'm sitting there, waiting for inspiration to what it is I know I believe, absolutely frustrated! How could I not know what I believe?

I finally asked the empty space in front of me why I didn't know. I was flabbergasted when it answered back, with a curt "You haven't asked."

Scared out of my wits, but nonetheless desperate for something, anything to write down. I asked the question, "What do I believe?" and prepared to write down the answer.

I was surprised at how long the list was. When I looked closer, though, I found gems like my belief in the universal uniting force of love hidden in piles of "Ice Cream is Good" and "Whales exist", those sorts of things that really aren't what I'm looking for.

So I've spent the last week or so digging through those for the really good ones, the hidden gems. I can tell you about the positive power of change, or the living systems of this world, for example.

And very last on that very long list was one word on it's own line. The very last, the most important of the things I believe.

Myself.

2. Credo by Elizabeth Berry, 2007

UU Church of Palo Alto

Who am I? I am the daughter of Timothy and Maribea, and the sister of Katherine. But so far you do not know the rest, and neither did I. I have now completed the Coming of Age program. Because of it I believe I know what I want more out of my life, and who I want to be when I grow up. I have become more self-reliant over the past few months and believe in myself. I have become more responsible, and have taken the consequences and the pride for my actions. I have found my value in life as well. I have found out what I need from my family, my friends, my peers, my teachers, and everyone around me. I have also learned what I believe in, and what I think are the answers to the unanswerable questions of the world.

I believe:

My family should treat me with respect, and act as if I am an intern in a company, learning from the experienced and most knowledgeable boss. You need to guide me along the route without too much help, just boundary points, to say, you're straying off the road, so I have freedom to walk and zigzag on the dirt road, stumbling on rocks, running into horse drawn carriages, and find my own route. I can do what ever I want on the road, as long as I stay on it. My family will and have always been my boundary points. If I need to be steered in the right direction. They have the knowledge that I will learn from into my future.

Now that I have gone through the Coming of Age program, I believe that others should treat me, as a young adult, and with the same respect you would give another member of the church.

I have found out that my friends need to support me and let me be myself. I have found out that I need to have a person to make me laugh and make me happy. I also need someone that I can make happy, because that's what makes me feel good.

I have learned through the Coming of Age program, what really gets through to me, and what people have to do to really get my attention. I have found out that I need a model from which to learn, and from which to make my own goals. With a model you can find your own route, and either avoid what happened to the model or mimic in a way so that you can repeat the same joy.

I have found out what I care about through the Coming of Age program, one thing is the environment. I believe in saving the environment, because without a clean and healthy environment, we would all die. Also there are more than humans here on the earth who need a place to live. If we continue to destroy the environment we will destroy the animals, the plants, the air, the fresh water. I want to protect this environment for those born after me.

I believe that cruelty is in the world to show, what the world would be like without love and care. We should not tolerate cruelty, but when it happens, see thru it to truly appreciate the good things in life. Without suffering there can be no joy. Without an up there is no down. Cruelty shows us what the world would be like without compassion and tolerance.

I believe that death is for the finishing of life if everything lasted forever and more and more things grew, we'd run out of room and we'd have chaos, and be cramped. We don't want that and so we must die and give ourselves back to the earth where we once came, so that others can be born and have joy. Death is important to make life look so special.

I believe that the reason for life is so that we can have a purpose, to do something new, to help others and the living world. How much good we can do! Life is meant so that things can mature, not just be cold dirty rocks, boring and useless. We have emotions so that we can grieve, laugh, smile and many other things like being creative and inventing something new.

I believe that happiness is the best value in life, because it creates an environment where everyone feels comfortable, and ready to have fun. And if you are happy nothing seems wrong and you feel as if you're on top of the world.

I believe in being nice to everyone, even if they are mean to you. Because if everyone is mean to each other then everyone will be upset and isolated from the people they used to love. By being nice to everyone I am showing a loving example, and hopefully some will mimic this example, and create a nicer world.

3. Credo by Maya Lozinski, 2007

UU Church of Palo Alto

For a long time I felt I was an atheist. I thought religion was stupid. Why would people just randomly choose to believe in some completely supernatural, irrational, unproven being? I highly doubted that there was a god up there counting all our sins and deciding if we went to heaven or hell.

But recently, I find that spirituality is necessary, at least for me. The more I thought about it, the more I found it depressing to think that there was no higher being or purpose in life. Because without a god, what am I supposed to live for? I am just one in billions. On a global scale, I matter so little. If we are completely without a higher being, then I am just one of teeming mass of people. Whether I live or die has essentially no effect on the world.

Then, recently, I visited a Baptist church. They started their service with a joyous, "Let us praise god for letting us be here today, alive and healthy and breathing." They were so grateful just to exist and be able to go to church. It made me happy just to be. All of the imperfections, in both myself and my life, just faded away. And from then on, I decided I wanted a faith that gave me that same sense of peace and contentment. Not a constant desire for more, like that of a false

god, of achievement or money. But a God that moves me beyond my small sense of self to a place of joy.

4. Credo by J. S., 2009

Edmonds, Wash., UU Church

I think I am someone who is just starting their journey and learning who I am. I think my purpose in life is to help make the world a better place. I really want to help animals the most. Some ways I might do this are by becoming a veterinarian or an animal rights lawyer. Right now I am planning to help out at a local shelter just for cats.

I believe that all beings are connected somehow. There is something that holds us together. It could be religion, music, love, or something else. I think what holds us together is love and music.

I'm not sure how to define love, but whatever it is, it holds humans and animals and the earth together. Love can hold us together, and it can also create wounds that might tear us apart. It's like everything on the earth—there is a good side and a bad side to it. Love means so much to me. My parents flew all the way to China to adopt a five year old girl that they didn't even know. Ever since the day my parents adopted me, I have always been loved.

Music can be so many things, but it has a way of bringing us together. Music is really important to me. It is in my life everyday—either I'm listening or playing. It is a form of beauty and peace, and we need more of that on earth.

I believe that there will be a time when humans will live in peace and love with each other and their surroundings. I'm not sure when this will happen, but I won't stop believing. It's the believers and dreamers that have changed our world and our lives, and I want to become one of those believers.

I believe there is a spirit in charge of the universe. It can take any form. It can be God to some people, or Buddha, or other names or things that people worship in other religions. But this spirit does not judge us on what we have done or what we haven't done.

I believe when we die we leave behind our bodies and a story and move on to another world. Everyone is accepted into this place. It's kind of like heaven, but you don't have to be good your whole life. If you had to be good your whole life to get there, then none of us would ever get to this "heaven" because no one is good all the time, and that is what makes us human.

5. Credo by Olivia Baldwin, 2004

First Parish UU Church, Arlington, Mass.

Honestly it's sort of hard to sum up what I believe in two- or three-hundred words, but I'm going to try.

Early one morning when I was eight years old my father died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack, and I did not understand it. I was only eight years old and my family had been attending First Parish forever, so I had had no exposure to any other religions. Each weekend morning I would wake up early, which was sometime between six and seven, and I would lie on my couch watching the home shopping network, hoping with all I could that my mom and brother would still be alive. Those hours spent alone before they got up were the most stressful nerve-racking of my day, and I could not imagine living without either of them. However that moment when my mother opened her bedroom door, or I heard my brother coming down the stairs was the most pleasant of my day and I could not help, but be overwhelmed with a sense of relief and happiness.

Every year I have gone to as many summer camps as my mother could cram into my schedule. The summer before I entered fifth grade when I was 11, I went to a Baptist horseback riding camp. I signed up solely for the purpose of being with my friends and learning how to ride horses. They had neglected to tell me how much religion was involved in the camp and I was shocked when we received our schedules which included vespers, an hour long chapel every day, and praying constantly. I had had no previous experience with this kind of thing so I winged it. As the week progressed I couldn't help, but become more interested in the religion and the stories of the counselors. Their faith in God fascinated me and the stories they told me about how God changed their lives inspired me.

As much of a cliché as this may seem, I also developed a faith in God. This was partially related to the death of my father. When he had died I had nothing to turn to for help except my family and my friends, and truthfully, as much as my friends tried to understand they couldn't really understand, because it hadn't happened to them. As opposed to actually being able to talk about it seriously and tell them how I felt, they responded with pity for me, when all I really wanted was someone to talk to. I knew it was hard for my family to talk about it so I didn't bother trying to the degree I needed to, because I didn't want to hurt them. I found an answer to this problem, God. Some lose their faith in God when a loved one dies, but at this camp I developed a faith in God after my father died. I finally had faith that my mother and brother would be kept safe, and faith that I would too. I no longer had to worry about my mother and brother coming down the stairs or through their bedroom every morning, praying that they had not died in their sleep, I had God, and I knew God would take care of them.

I have continued to attend this camp every year, returning reading bible verses, singing religious songs and having a stronger faith in God. It's important to have faith, whether it's in a religious figure, or yourself, or a friend, or family member, everyone has to have faith, because otherwise, you'll end up living your whole life worrying about what could happen. God has taught me to live the life I wish, not worrying about the past or what happened, and could happen again, and by no means forgetting my father, but by making the best of what I have.

6. Credo by Paul Jaffe, 2004

First Parish UU Church, Arlington, Mass.

I was in the middle of a cornfield in Nebraska. Now don't get me wrong, Nebraska is not a giant flatland full of only corn as many people believe. Anyway, I was there with all of my friends at one of their grandparent's farms and we were all having a great time. We had just gotten out of a stream and to our unpleasant surprise, found several leaches greedily feasting on our blood. We plucked them off as we got out of the stream and there we saw our friend Eli holding a baseball bat. Well, he wasn't just holding the bat, he was holding it and swinging it, swinging away at several scarecrows guarding one of a few vast cornfields. There were tattered clothes, smashed pumpkins, and loose straw lying all about his feet.

I ran over to him and yelled "What are you doing!"

He replied, rather nonchalantly, "I'm destroying scarecrows."

"Well, yeah, I can see that, but why are you destroying them?," I said.

He then replied, staring at me as if I were an ignorant little child, "Well, the birds need to eat too." Apparently he hadn't noticed that there was plenty of food lying for miles around that the birds could easily get to. But, nonetheless, I caught on to his line of thinking.

From that moment on I realized a critical factor that affects the entire world around us. The world is based on opinions and values, and that's basically what I believe. Eli valued the

well-being of the crows rather than how well my friend's crops did. From one person's perspective, he might be doing wrong but from other eyes he is doing the right thing. One country's opinion of another country often depends on the other's opinions and values. For example, part of the reason why we are loathed by many Muslim nations is that some of us value our cars, our food, ourselves, more than other people.

This also ties in nicely with the UU principle, to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. People should all be searching for what they believe is best. Although Eli wasn't exactly being responsible, he was searching for his own truths in life, in his own way, and I believe we all are.

7. Credo by Tessa Collins, 2011 First Parish Church, Watertown, Mass.

Going into Coming of Age, I had no idea what I believed, and I didn't really care. But now that I have finished Coming of Age, I still don't have a clear idea of what I believe, but I do care now. I'm not sure if I believe in one God, because sometimes it seems totally irrational, but sometimes it makes total sense. Instead of believing in one God or doing whatever your religion tells you to do, I think you should have your own "mini-religion" if you can't decide.

We learned about the 7 principles of Unitarian Universalism and here are the two that stand out: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth. The first part of this makes a lot of sense—simply accept people for who they are and what they want to do. But, the second part doesn't make so much sense. I agree that people should encourage others to grow, but not necessarily spiritually if they don't want to. Affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. This means respect them even if you don't believe in the same things. However, it does not mean to respect everyone for the actions they make. In general it's important to at least acknowledge other people's views, but in no way to you have to accept them, especially if their views create violence or if their views make them do bad actions.

I think the biggest challenge is dealing with when views contradict each other and when they can't be accepted/ live peacefully together without causing problems. That's why I think people should follow their own values, but don't do crazy actions based on them, and be open to other ideas.

8. Credo by Tara Umbrino, 2003 All Souls, New York City

Last September I was first faced with the question "What do I believe in?" I thought it was a simple question, but when it came time to write my credo, I learned what a hard question it truly is. There are so many things in this world that I could say I believe in, most of which are obvious and tangible. But there's a deeper meaning to this question, that has a better answer than simply "anything I can see and touch". I knew I had the answer inside me somewhere, but it took one of my English classes for me to realize what it was. Most of the books I've read in my lifetime are fiction, and every tiny detail that was put into the book was created in the author's mind. From simply telling the story to any symbolism, which was put into the book, the author had to imagine it. This is when I realized what I believe in: Imagination.

Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited; imagination encircles the world" and he couldn't have said it better. Imagination has allowed for all of the simple things in life to take place. From entertainment, to inventions, to art, it took some imagination to think of a movie plot, the structure for a chair, or the scene a painting

depicts. The great thing about imagination is that once one person has imagined anything, a second can either build upon that idea, or dream another, which is completely different.

Imagination is the thing that allows us to picture God, heaven, hell, along with all of the other unknowns in our lives. The Bible says that man was made in the image of God, and that image has typically been portrayed as a white male with a flowing beard. However, people are free to imagine that God is any color and can have any form. Heaven and hell have also come to be stereotypically portrayed. Heaven is generally associated with white and gold, and is a place with clouds, angels, and harps—something that one person imagined heaven to be. Hell tends to be a place in the center of the earth with fires and Satan who is red, and has horns. But there’s no proof that heaven or hell looks like that at all, or even that there is a heaven or hell. Heaven could be an idea that someone just imagined to make death seem less scary, and hell so that humans would live better lives in order to escape doom.

Whatever it is and whatever the reason, our thoughts and beliefs—caused by our imaginations—are the things that make us unique individuals. They set us apart from each other, and let us have our own set of beliefs, something which this church encourages very much: the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Imagination makes this possible and truly is the thing that I believe in most.

Six Hints for Writing a Better Credo Statement

(1) Start with a story, or a strong statement of what you believe. You don’t need to start with “Hello, I am ——,” or some other introductory statement. So in Olivia Baldwin’s credo (number 5 above), she could have skipped the whole first paragraph and her credo would have been better. Paul Jaffe (number 6) and May Lozinski (number 3) have good opening sentences.

(2) Try one of these three basic approaches:

(a) Make a list of what you value and believe, as Elizabeth Berry (number 2) and J.S. (number 4) do.

(b) Focus on a single story that captures what you value or believe in, as Olivia Baldwin does (number 5) when she tells about her dad’s death, or as Paul Jaffe does with the scarecrow story (number 6).

(c) Focus on a single concept, the way Tara Umbrino focuses on imagination (number 8), or the way Maya Lozinski focuses on God (number 3).

(3) Most credos are written in a straight-forward, matter-of-fact style. Sam Neff (number 1) manages to pull off a humorous approach, but to do that you have to be a pretty good writer.

(4) End with a good strong statement that captures the essence of what you believe. Don’t bother saying “thank you,” or “Good bye,” or something like that — let your strong summary statement end in a silence that allows people to take in what you have said.

(5) Above all, write what’s really true for you. You don’t have to bare your soul totally, but whatever you do say should be true.

Seven Big Religious Questions To Get You Thinking

Who am I? What should I do with my life?

What is the nature of human beings?

What is the most important thing in the universe?

Why are we here? What happens after we die?

Why is there suffering in the world?