

**MORAL TALES**  
**A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children**  
**Grades 2-3**



**BY ALICE ANACHECKA-NASEMAN AND ELISA PEARMAIN**

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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The Reverend Alice Anacheka-Nasemann has served as a director of religious education for eight years, first at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Oneonta (New York) and currently at the Unitarian Church of Marlborough and Hudson (Massachusetts). A graduate of Andover Newton Theological School, Alice is also an ordained minister in preliminary fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. Alice earned a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Development at Friends World College. Her college years included travel and study in Kenya, Costa Rica and Nicaragua and internships focused on the educational needs of homeless children, gifted learners, adolescents with special needs and orphans.

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Elisa Davy Pearmain has been a professional storyteller for over 25 years. She received her Masters in Education from Lesley University in Creative Arts in Education. She has been a storyteller-in-residence for the Boston Public Schools and has taught teachers to integrate storytelling across the curriculum through the Lesley University Masters Program for 14 years. Elisa earned a second Masters, in Counseling Psychology, in 1998 and works part-time as a licensed mental health counselor. The author of two award-winning books, *Doorways to the Soul: 52 Wisdom Tales from Around the World* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998) and *Once Upon a Time: Storytelling to Teach Character and Prevent Bullying* (Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group, 2006), Elisa is a lifelong member of the First Parish Church in Lincoln, MA.

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## THE PROGRAM

*Good stories, then, enlarge our student's minds and hearts. They help them to shed their preoccupation with self and to see what they have the potential to give or do. In other words, stories not only nourish the imagination. They nourish the soul. — Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin*

Every day our children go forth into a complex world where they are often faced with difficult decisions and situations. Moral Tales attempts to provide children with the spiritual and ethical tools they will need to make choices and take actions reflective of their Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values. As Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin suggest in their book, *Building Character in Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), stories such as the ones woven throughout Moral Tales can activate and inform children's learning about how to make moral choices.

The first five sessions make up the Seeking Truth/Discernment unit of Moral Tales. These sessions introduce tools for discerning truth and justice in a complex world. Participants are encouraged to draw upon inner resources such as conscience, intuition and empathy; spiritual resources such as faith, prayer and forgiveness; and external resources that include wise teachers and the larger community.

The next six sessions constitute the What Would Love Do unit of Moral Tales. These sessions focus on the ways love calls us to act in the world with humans, other living beings and the Earth. Participants are introduced to spiritual practices that are grounded in love, including generosity, welcome, and nonviolence. Relationships among the participants in the group are reinforced as all are made welcome without prejudgments and participants are encouraged and guided to honor one another, and all people, in a deep and meaningful way. Love is extended to the Earth through learning about the importance of ecological balance.

The final five sessions introduce tools and attitudes that are necessary to bring goodness and justice into the larger world. Here participants explore responsibility, courage, persistence and cooperation. The aim of Moral Tales is to help raise children who have been provided with tools that will help them to discern what is right and true, to hear and follow the call of Love, and to turn their moral beliefs and ethical concerns into concrete action.

Each session has a central story in which participants meet real and fictional heroes and heroines who have displayed moral courage and spiritual greatness. They will hear about characters who have struggled, but who

have chosen justice, goodness, and love. If you implement the Gems of Goodness Project (introduced in Session 2 and continued through the remainder of the program), children will have regular opportunities to create and share their own stories, in which they are actors for justice and goodness.

The stories in Moral Tales draw upon many of our Unitarian Universalist sources, portraying moral dilemmas and paths to goodness and justice through a variety of cultural and religious lenses. Yet every story resonates with Unitarian Universalist principles and purposes, which are intentionally integrated into the sessions. In this way participants will develop awareness and understanding of other religions as they strengthen their own identity as Unitarian Universalists.

All sessions include hands-on activities to make learning accessible to individuals with various learning styles as well as structured exercises for questioning, reflecting and self-expression. In sessions that rely heavily on discussion or other modalities which emphasize verbal learning and expression, alternative activities are suggested which may work better for learners who are more active. Religious educators may feel free to craft each session using the activities that best match the learning styles of the children in their programs.

Each session of this program includes rituals such as sharing opening words, a chalice-lighting, centering in silence before hearing a story, and singing together, with the option of lighting a chalice or candles of joys and sorrows (Alternate Activity 1 in every session). Most young children love ritual, and the use of ritual in the sessions mirrors the use of ritual in family homes, in our congregations, in the wider Unitarian Universalist community, and beyond. These spiritual activities form an important element of the program. They familiarize children with specific practices which their families or your congregation may continue after the life of this program, and they provide a common experience for the group. Practicing rituals together builds community and reminds children of their connections to something deeper and more significant than their own experiences, wants, and needs.

An undertaking to teach children how to be "good" and "just" in just 16 weeks is indeed ambitious. This curriculum is not, nor could it be, absolutely inclusive or comprehensive. Infinite nuances of goodness and justice, as well as many spiritual tools for discerning and performing goodness and justice, exist beyond these sessions. However, it is our sincere hope that participants will begin to build a personal moral compass in this program. Their exploration of goodness and justice here, we hope, will ground participants in

Unitarian Universalist ethical beliefs, moral values and spiritual practices that can not only transform the individual, but transform the world, as well.

cooperation, non-violence, responsibility, and balance as necessary to moral, ethical and spiritual health

## GOALS

Moral Tales will:

- Provide participants with an ethics- and faith-based framework for thinking about what it means to be just and good, introducing and reinforcing concepts such as interdependence, conscience, faith, empathy, forgiveness, compassion, awe, respect, non-violence, responsibility, courage, perseverance, cooperation, ecological balance, fairness, and being welcoming.
- Strengthen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity by demonstrating the connection between the choices we make in our lives and the beliefs and attitudes we hold as Unitarian Universalists, including our Principles
- Introduce participants to stories drawn from a range of our Unitarian Universalist Sources including Christian and Hebrew scripture; worldwide cultural and religious sources; and biographies of Unitarian Universalists and others who have demonstrated Unitarian Universalist values in their actions
- Provide explication and experiences to acquaint participants with some key tools and resources we use to search for truth and make moral decisions, including conscience, faith, prayer, empathy, and external help from wise others
- Nurture spiritual growth by fostering spiritual practices such as generosity, forgiveness, empathy, faith, non-violence, living in balance
- Empower participants as agents of justice and goodness by providing them with opportunities to share real life dilemmas and solutions — including their own, concrete actions — that reflect their learning in the Moral Tales sessions
- Encourage participants to be responsible, courageous, and persistent in working for goodness and justice in the world
- Foster the creation of a learning community in which everyone is respected, welcomed and honored, diversity is embraced, justice is practiced, and children can learn, grow and have fun together
- Promote participants' understanding of the world's interconnectedness, reinforcing

## LEADERS

A team of two or more adults should lead the Moral Tales program. Having two leaders present at all times helps assure child safety and optimum conditions for learning. While one leader implements an activity, the other can focus on logistics and children's engagement, behavior, and safety. A collaborative teaching style would be preferred, as some Moral Tales discussions and participatory storytelling activities will best be run by two adults. It may be useful for one person on the leadership team to take primary responsibility for the Faith in Action activities, most of which occur primarily outside regularly scheduled session time.

Ideally, co-leaders will be individuals familiar with Unitarian Universalist beliefs who have attempted, as adults, to intentionally translate those beliefs into lifestyles that reflect a quest for goodness and justice. It will be helpful if leaders are comfortable talking about morality with children. Leaders should be able to take a stand for particular virtues while acknowledging and accepting theological diversity within a discussion and within the group. Flexibility of thought along with moral integrity are important.

Several sessions call for the group to participate in the life of the congregation, for example, by participating in worship or in an outreach program. It will be helpful if your leadership includes at least one congregational member who is familiar with the rituals of the congregation.

Finally, the leaders of Moral Tales should enjoy stories. Ideally, leaders will be comfortable telling, rather than reading, the stories, although that is certainly not a requirement for effective learning to take place.

## PARTICIPANTS

The Moral Tales program is designed for use with children in second and third grades. You may find it useful to think about the developmental norms for this age group. Not all children arrive at each developmental stage at the same time, but knowing what to expect overall from seven-, eight-, and nine-year-olds can be quite helpful, especially to first-time leaders.

In her book *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd discusses developmental characteristics of school-age children. She notes that by age seven, children's learning disabilities and behavioral or psychological issues may have appeared and been identified.

Individual learning styles and strengths may also be apparent. Children who need glasses often get their first pair around this age.

In a section on moral development, Hurd notes that the typical child in this age group is "passionately interested" in moral issues:

She seeks what is fair and right... By developing games with rules, playing sports, or creating or belonging to clubs, the school-age child practices figuring out what is fair... This play is practice for more generalized moral decision making.

In general, a child in second or third grade is:

- Able to use gross and fine motor skills, which are almost fully developed
- Influenced by media images and messages; beginning to compare him/herself to norms perceived as desirable
- Engaging in logical thinking based on "concrete operational" thinking
- Practicing cognitive skills of acquiring, storing, and retrieving information
- Developing his/her individual learning style, which may be auditory visual, sensory, and/or kinesthetic
- Showing his/her domain-specific intelligence, which may be verbal/linguistic, musical/rhythmic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and/or naturalist
- Finding self-esteem in his/her knowledge and his/her student identity
- Engaging peers; learning through mutual friendships
- Able to comprehend the perspectives of others
- Likely to engage in gender-segregated play
- Interested in his/her own racial, ethnic, and gender identity, and seeking affirmation of these identities from peers
- Learning and negotiating early understandings of social scripts about sexuality
- Aware of and able to apply the Golden Rule (treating others as he/she would wish to be treated)
- Energized by developing rules for play or work that ensure fairness

- Interested in personal moral issues and able to wrestle with moral dilemmas in relationships
- Aware of societal moral issues
- Interested in helping to solve community and world problems
- Showing interest in concrete aspects of faith and religion
- "Doing" religion or spirituality by participating in rituals, practices, and traditions

Hurd offers a variety of strategies that speak to these developmental considerations and may help you shape your sessions effectively. Some of these include:

- Provide for children's overall physical needs, including nutrition, exercise, and rest.
- Allow children to be active; avoid extended times of sitting and listening.
- Provide time for play and hands-on activities.
- Present challenges that promote children's use of their thinking skills.
- Support different learning styles.
- Encourage problem-solving and discussion; allow children opportunities to role-play to experience others' perspectives.
- Support children's natural impulse toward rule-making and peer-to-peer negotiation of what is fair.
- Allow time with like-identity peers; support or facilitate mixed-peer time, as well.
- Intervene appropriately against exclusion or bullying, yet affirm children's need to work out relational complexities as a part of their moral development.
- Recognize the unique needs that attend the identity development of children who may be multiracial, multiethnic, transgender, and/or a "minority" in another way.
- Offer children many ways to contribute to the community.
- Give opportunities to "do" religion and be part of a faith community.
- Welcome large spiritual questions; encourage questioning of religion.
- Support self-esteem; affirm the child's developing body and identity.

- Support the whole child as an individual and as a member of the group.
- Provide encouragement and love.

## INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

By adapting activities or using alternate activities, you can help ensure that every session is inclusive of children with a range of physical and cognitive abilities and learning styles, food allergies, and other sensitivities or limitations. The program offers general guidance on adapting activities along with some resources for implementing inclusion. Within the sessions, some activities suggest specific adaptations under the heading, "Including All Participants."

As you plan your Moral Tales sessions, be aware of activities that might pose difficulties for children who are differently abled. All spaces, indoor and outdoor, need to be accessible to anyone who might be in the group. Check the width of doorways and aisles, the height of tables, and the terrain of outdoor landscapes.

Find out about participants' medical conditions and their allergies, particularly to food. Sessions 6, 9, 15, 16 and the Gems of Goodness celebration, if you have one, include food or food preparation activities. Make sure all of the children can eat the ingredients you plan to use, or adjust the recipe. You will also want to consider food allergies when planning a mid-session snack.

Each session mixes active and quiet, expressive and listening, and whole-group and individual activities, along with alternate activities that you can substitute for core activities if you feel they better suit a group. As you begin to recognize different learning styles among the participants, let this information guide your selection of activities for each session.

You will often find the suggestion to bring out the "fidget objects" basket in the "Including All Participants" sections. This is a basket full of manipulatable objects, such as pipe cleaners or clay, to keep restless hands and minds busy. It may be helpful to make fidget objects available if or when you feel some or all of the children are having difficulty sitting through longer periods of listening or discussion. Find more information about fidget objects in the "Before You Start" section of this Introduction. A full description of what they are and how to use them appears in "Leader Resources" in each session.

Some activity descriptions mention specific concerns or suggest adaptations under the heading "Including All Participants." Feel free to devise your own adaptations to meet any special needs you perceive. As the leader, you will know best how to provide a fully inclusive learning experience for the group. If you have questions

about the accessibility or adaptability of a particular activity, please ask your director of religious education for advice.

A helpful resource book for inclusion in a religious education setting is *Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities* by Sally Patton (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004; out of print, available [online](#)).

## FAMILIES

Families are the primary influences on the faith and moral development of their children. As a program leader, you take on a special role: supporting families in your faith community to shape their children's Unitarian Universalist faith and moral development. By involving parents in the Moral Tales program, you can deepen the moral and spiritual experience for children and their families, preparing and encouraging them to work together for goodness and justice.

Each session offers Taking It Home resources including conversation topics and other ways for families to extend the session at home. These may include a family game, a family ritual, or links to informative and/or interactive websites. Exploring the session topics further at home will allow children and parents to practice the skills, personalize the concepts, and make connections among congregational life, home and family life, and life's daily challenges. Through these experiences, families deepen their experience of Unitarian Universalism. Adapt each session's Taking It Home section to reflect the activities the group will have engaged in and, if you like, to help families prepare for sessions yet to come. If you have an email address for each family, you may wish to provide Taking It Home as a group email, either before or immediately after the session. Or, you can print, photocopy, and distribute Taking It Home at the session's closing.

Invite families into your sessions. Adult or teen volunteers can be extremely helpful when you implement arts-and-crafts activities. Parents who bring musicianship, storytelling, or artistic skills into your sessions will help foster participants' sense of connection between their family and their religious education experience. The Faith in Action activities for each session offer ideal opportunities to engage parents and other congregants. Find out who can enrich your long-term Faith in Action activities with their personal interests, professional networks, or simply their time.

The leader/parent relationship is very important and must be both welcoming and reassuring. When parents bring their children to experience Unitarian Universalist religious education, they need to feel confidence not only in the safety and enjoyment you will provide, but

also in your faith leadership. Strong partnerships can foster parents' commitment to becoming strong faith leaders in their own families. As a leader, you can support and inspire parents to bring intentionality and excitement to their role in their children's faith and moral development.

## **PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

All 16 sessions in Moral Tales follow the same structure. Between an opening and a closing ritual, participants engage in up to seven activities. The opening includes a chalice-lighting and the sharing of opening words together. If time allows, immediately after the opening would be a good time to insert candles of joys and sorrows, provided as Alternate Activity 1 in every session.

After the opening rituals, Moral Tales introduces a personal story-sharing experience for children called the Gems of Goodness Project. This regular activity is introduced in Session 2 and appears as a core activity in every subsequent session. It is discussed further in the "Activities" and "Before You Start" sections of this Introduction.

Every session revolves thematically around a central story which participants hear and explore in one or more of the activities. To ready the children for the story and to activate their interest, an activity called "story Basket and Centering" precedes storytelling in every session. The story Basket is a basket into which you will put an object or objects that relate to the story in each session. The centering exercise requires a simple sound instrument. Both the story Basket and the centering exercise are described in each session, and discussed further in the "Before You Start" section of this Introduction.

Beginning in Session 3, each session offers at least one Faith in Action activity. While these activities are optional, Faith in Action is an important element of the overall Tapestry of Faith curriculum series. Some Faith in Action activities can be completed in one meeting ("short-term"); others are longer-term and require the involvement of congregants or community members outside your group.

Most sessions offer alternate activities. Depending on your time, the group's interests, and learning styles you observe in the group, you may choose to replace one or more of the session's core activities with an alternate activity, or add an alternate activity to your session. You may also find the alternative activities useful outside of the program for gatherings such as family retreats, intergenerational dinners, or other events where some interesting child-friendly programming is needed.

As you design your program, decide whether the group needs extra meetings to incorporate additional activities or to complete a long-term Faith in Action project. Long-term Faith in Action projects usually involve meetings outside your regular meeting time and/or at another location. Before you commit to extending the Moral Tales program, make sure you obtain the support of your congregational leadership and the children's families.

### **Quote**

A quote introduces the subject of each session. You may decide to read a quote aloud to your group as an entry point to the session. However, the quotes are intended primarily for leaders, and are not always at a child's level of understanding or experience.

Co-leaders may like to discuss the quote as part of preparation for a session. Exploring a quote together can help you each feel grounded in the ideas and activities you will present and can help a team of leaders get "on the same page." Quotes are included in the Taking It Home section for families to consider.

### **Introduction**

The Introduction to a session gives an overview of the session concepts and explains how you can use the activities to teach the concepts. The Introduction also describes the session's thematic connection with the other sessions in the program.

### **Goals**

The Goals section provides general participant outcomes for the session. Reviewing the goals will help you connect the session's content and methodologies with the four strands of the Tapestry of Faith religious education programs: ethical, spiritual, Unitarian Universalist identity, and faith development. As you plan a session, apply your knowledge of the particular group of children, the time and space you have available, and your own strengths and interests as a leader to determine the most important and achievable goals for the session and the activities that will serve them best.

### **Learning Objectives**

The Learning Objectives describe specific participant outcomes which the session activities are designed to facilitate. They suggest what a participant will learn, become, or be able to do as a result of the learning activities. It may be helpful to think of learning objectives as the building blocks with which the larger, "big picture" goals of the Moral Tales program are achieved. If particular learning objectives appeal to you as important, make sure you select the activities for this session that promote these outcomes.



## Session-at-a-Glance

The Session-at-a-Glance table lists the session activities in a suggested order, and provides an estimated time for completing each activity to conduct a 60-minute session. The table includes all of the core activities from the Opening through the Closing. The table also shows any Faith in Action activities provided for the session; note that you will need additional time, beyond the 60-minute session, when you include a Faith in Action activity.

Below the Closing on the Session-at-a-Glance table you will see any alternate activities provided for the session, with estimated times — again, not calculated into the basic 60-minute session.

Session-at-a-Glance is a guide for your own planning. Choose which elements to use and how to combine these to best suit the group, the meeting space, and the amount of time you have.

Keep in mind that many variables inform the actual completion time for an activity. Whole-group discussions will take longer in a large group than in a small group. While six teams can plan their skits as quickly as two teams can, the group will need more time to watch all six skits than to watch two. Remember to consider the time you will need to relocate participants to another area of your meeting room, and the time you will need to set up and clean up an art activity that requires a variety of materials.

The time estimates for Faith in Action activities include only the work the group will do when you meet together. Leader planning and preparation are not included. For most Faith in Action activities, you will need to make special arrangements for participants, their families, other congregants, and sometimes members of the wider community to undertake activities outside the group's regular meeting time.

## Spiritual Preparation

Each session provides a spiritual exercise that teachers may use to prepare themselves for leading the session. Taking five or ten minutes to center yourself within the session's purpose and content will support and free you to be present with the children and focus on providing the best possible learning experience. The exercise will guide you to call forth your own life experiences, beliefs and spirituality and relate these to the session you are about to lead.

The session activities often engage the children in sharing personal stories related to concepts they are learning. If you implement the Gems of Goodness project as suggested, the children will share their own stories of goodness and justice near the beginning of the session, each time they meet. By preparing yourself to

share your own personal stories with them, you will provide the children with a bridge to their own experiences and understanding.

## Session Plan

The session plan presents every element of the session in detail, in the sequence established in the Session-at-a-Glance table. Additionally, the session plan presents a Taking It Home section with extension activities for families and a Resources section. The Resources section includes all the stories and other resources you need to lead all of the session activities. Under "Find Out More," the Resources section also suggests additional sources to help you, the leader, further explore the session topics. It can be useful to scan the resources in "Find Out More" before you lead a session.

If you are reading Moral Tales online, you can move as you wish among a session's elements: Opening, Closing, Faith in Action, Activity 4, Resources, etc. Each element occupies its own web page. You can click on "Print this Page" at any time. However, if you click on "Download Entire Program" or "Download Workshop" you'll have a user-friendly document on your computer that you can customize as you wish, using your own word processing program. Once you decide which activities you will use, format and print only the materials you need.

Welcoming and Entering: Guidance is provided for greeting, orienting and immediately engaging children as they arrive for each session. For Session 1 (or whichever session is the group's first) Welcoming and Entering may involve making and putting on nametags. From Session 2 forward, during the Welcoming and Entering time before the session formally begins, children may go directly to a table where a pile of colorful gems has been laid out. They will choose a few gems and bring them with them to the circle where the opening ritual begins. This activity serves to remind them of the call to justice and goodness and prepares them for the regular Gems of Goodness activity, which directly follows the Opening.

Shape the Welcoming and Entering activities to suit the needs of the group and the limitations of your physical space.

Opening: Each session begins with a chalice-lighting, an optional candles of joys and sorrows ritual, and a sharing of opening words. To ensure safety, obtain an LED/battery-operated flaming chalice or use a symbolic chalice.

The Opening is a time for centering, both for individuals and the group. The shared opening words encourage the children to remember the goal of practicing justice and goodness, and committing themselves to making

moral tales a place of safety, love and friendship. Take the liberty you need to shape an opening ritual that suits the group, works within space limitations, and reflects the culture and practices of your congregation. You will find alternate Openings in the Leader Resources section of Session 1.

Activities: Up to seven activities form the core content of each session. The variety of activities presented within each session addresses different learning styles you may find among participants. Generally, the sequence of activities is designed to activate prior knowledge, pique interest, engage children in experiential learning including hands-on interaction with the topic, and help them process and apply their observations and new knowledge. While you are free to re-order activities as suits the needs of the group, presenting activities in the sequence suggested will help you provide a coherent learning experience. The suggested sequence alternates listening and talking, sitting still and moving about, individual exploration and team or whole group exploration, to provide variation that will help keep seven-, eight- and nine-year-olds engaged and on track. As you mix and match activities, keep in mind young participants' journey of learning and the benefits of a well-paced session that includes different kinds of activities.

### **Gems of Goodness**

Starting in Session 2, the children will participate in an activity called the Gems of Goodness Project which encourages them to recognize, document and tell the group about acts of goodness and justice that they participate in between sessions. If you wish, you can allow participants to include acts of goodness and justice that they witness. You will give the children notebooks to take home in which to record acts of goodness and fairness, with their parents' help. As children describe an act of goodness to their Moral Tales peers, they will add a "gem" to a clear plastic or glass jar that is kept in the meeting space.

When the jar is full or reaches an agreed upon mark, you may wish to provide a celebration or a special treat. Session 16 suggests a culminating Gems of Goodness celebration (Alternate Activity 4: Gems of Goodness Party).

The Gems of Goodness project empowers children as agents of goodness and justice. They will learn to recognize acts of goodness and justice in many different forms and practice affirming others for discerning and implementing goodness and justice. The Gems of Goodness Project is fully introduced in Session 2 (Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project). In the Session 2 Leader Resource section you

will find a letter to parents describing the Gems of Goodness Project and encouraging their participation.

In each session, the activity, "Story Basket and Centering," builds curiosity about and readies the group to focus on the central story that you will tell to illuminate the session theme. You will show the group a basket containing one or more objects that relate to the story. You may decide to pass the basket around the circle or to simply talk about the object(s). You can display the objects on a table or altar during the storytelling. If you have a map or globe, you can show the children where this story originates from or takes place.

The second part of the "Story Basket and Centering" activity is a centering and listening exercise. You will lead the children to focus on breathing calmly and listening to a chime or other sound instrument, to prepare their bodies and minds for listening to the story. You will find complete directions for the story Basket and Centering activity in each session.

### **Storytelling**

The story is central to the learning experience of this curriculum and will be most effective if you take the time to connect to it personally and to share it with expression and enthusiasm. You will find numerous storytelling tips throughout the curriculum. Find particular guidance for telling each story in the story activity, under "Preparation for Activity" and "Description of Activity."

These suggestions include ways to involve the children in audience participation. You will have to experiment and find how participation works for the children in the group. Most children of this age respond positively and listen attentively when given the opportunity to join in on the telling, whether they are repeating phrases or movements, singing along or playing characters' roles. It is best to practice telling or reading the story in advance so you are prepared to involve the children in the telling when appropriate. Most of these stories are folk tales which means that they have been passed down from many people over many generations, changing with each new teller. You will be most effective as a story reader or teller if you take the time to make each story and each storytelling your own.

At times it will be suggested that you utilize fidget objects during a storytelling. These can be useful if you have students who find it very difficult to sit still for any prolonged period of time. Base this decision on your particular children and on the length and nature of the story being told. You may wish to not use them if the story is short or calls for participation; the fidget objects could be distracting. See "Before you Start" in this Introduction and the information included in every

session's Leader Resources section for detailed information on setting up and using fidget objects.

**Materials for Activity:** Provided for each activity, this checklist tells you the supplies you will need.

**Preparation for Activity:** Review the bulleted preparation "to do" list for each activity at least one week ahead of a session. The list provides all the advance work you need to do for the activity, from securing parent permissions for an off-site walk to downloading Leader Resources, practicing telling a story aloud and organizing art materials.

**Description of Activity:** This section provides detailed directions for implementing the activity. For many activities, the description includes a rationale which links the activity thematically to the rest of the session and to the entire program.

Read the activity descriptions carefully during your planning process so that you understand each activity and its purpose. Later, when you are leading the group, use the description as a step-by-step how-to manual.

**Including All Participants:** Adaptation to include all participants should always be part of your planning process. For certain activities, "Including All Participants" suggests specific modifications to make the activity manageable and meaningful for children with limitations of mobility, sight, hearing or cognition.

**Faith in Action:** An important component of the program, Faith in Action activities give children practice at being Unitarian Universalists in the world. When you lead a Faith in Action project, you create an opportunity for participants to actively express faith values.

By design, Faith in Action activities engage leaders, participants, their families, other congregants, and sometimes members of the wider community, often outside the group's regular meeting time and place. They are a place for children to meet, work with and be inspired by other members of the congregation and to strengthen bonds between the generations. Faith in Action projects usually require special arrangements to be made in advance. Like the core and alternate activities, Faith in Action activities include a materials checklist, a list of preparations you must make ahead of time, and a detailed description of the activity.

Most sessions (starting with Session 3) either introduce a new Faith in Action activity or describe a step the group will take in a long-term Faith in Action activity. However, when you get to a particular session, the group may not be ready for a new Faith in Action activity. Or, you may be "on hold" midway through a long-term Faith in Action project, perhaps waiting for supplies to arrive or for an environmental organization to

schedule time to visit your religious education program. It is perfectly fine for the Faith in Action component of Moral Tales to deviate from the suggested timetable!

Before your first Moral Tales session, decide which Faith in Action activities you will do over the course of the program. As you plan each session, make sure you allocate the time you'll need to move Faith in Action project(s) forward. Sessions that present Faith in Action activities also provide estimates of how much time the group will need to complete this particular stage of the project.

Plan well, but remain flexible. Be aware that inclement weather, the last-minute cancellation of a scheduled visitor, or other surprises may bump a planned Faith in Action activity to a later session.

**Note:** Faith in Action activities can also be used independently of the Moral Tales program for a wide age span of children or for multigenerational groups.

**Closing:** Each session includes a closing ritual which reviews and honors the ways in which the children worked and practiced the session concepts together. The main focus of the session is restated and a word or phrase to represent it is added to the Moral Compass poster. (See descriptions of the Moral Compass poster in Session 2, and in the Before You Start section of this Introduction.)

Closing words are shared together in the form of a reading or song that reminds the children to carry the goodness and justice they have experienced out into the world.

The Closing signals the end of the group's time together. As you plan each session, allow plenty of time for the Closing. Avoid rushing through it. You may wish to use your Taking It Home handout to describe the sacred intent of opening and closing rituals and their importance in the Moral Tales program.

As with the Opening, repeating the same basic Closing at the end of each session will be both enjoyable and educational for children. Before the program begins, evaluate the suggested Closing ritual, alternatives you will find in Session 1 (Leader Resource, Alternate Closings) and other resources you may have, such as closing words your congregation traditionally uses. Shape a closing ritual for Moral Tales that fits the group and your congregation's culture and practices.

**Leader Reflection and Planning:** This section provides guidance, often in the form of questions, to help co-leaders process the session after it is concluded and use their reflections to shape future sessions.

**Taking It Home:** Taking It Home resources for each session are designed to help families extend their

children's religious education experiences and to engage all members of the household in faith development. Taking It Home resources may include games, conversation topics, ideas for incorporating Unitarian Universalist rituals into the home environment, and/or online sources for session themes or stories. For each session, adapt the Taking It Home section to make a parent handout/email that reflects the actual activities you have included in the session. Print and photocopy the Taking It Home section for children to bring home, or send it to all parents/caregivers as a group email.

**Alternate Activities:** Most sessions feature one or more alternate activities. You can substitute these for core session activities or add them to the core activities. Sometimes the alternate activities are simpler, useful if the group as a whole seems unready for the core activities or if the group includes children with vast developmental differences. Materials checklists, preparation, and descriptions for alternate activities appear in the same format as they do in Openings, Closings, core activities, and Faith in Action activities.

**Resources:** In a session's Resources section you will find the stories, handouts, and all other resources you will need to lead every element of the session.

Under the heading "Stories," find full text of the session's central story and any other stories that you will need for session activities.

Under the heading "Handouts," find any material that needs to be printed and photocopied for participants to use in the session.

Under the heading "Leader Resources," you will find all the components you need to lead the session activities. These may include a recipe; a puzzle for you to print out and cut into pieces; or an illustration to show the group which you may print as a hard copy or display on a computer as a PowerPoint slide.

Under the heading "Find Out More," you will find book and video titles, website URLs, and other selected resources to further explore the session topics.

## **LEADER GUIDELINES**

Children in Moral Tales will be presented with difficult justice issues, including disparities in wealth. Although many Unitarian Universalist children may be privileged economically, others may be living in poverty. It is very important to be sensitive to the wide range of economic circumstances represented in the group. Avoid using language that assumes wealth or categorizes people who lack financial resources as "other" or "different."

Be ready to talk privately with a child who begins to describe a situation in her/his home that suggests a safety concern. Speak to your religious education

director to ensure that your congregation and state safety policies can be followed.

As children learn about aspects of goodness and justice it is possible that there will be children who feel shame or guilt for times when they believe they have not acted morally or ethically. Throughout this curriculum, remember to speak about good choices versus bad choices, rather than good people and bad people. Moreover, you can frequently reassure the children that everyone makes mistakes — after which we can attempt to make things right again and try to do it differently in the future.

In leading Moral Tales it will be important to create a learning environment that reflects the values of goodness and justice that you are teaching. Ensure that everyone is welcomed and honored. Emphasize the importance of treating everyone fairly. Identify and praise actions that take place among the group which reflect goodness and justice. Encourage children to resolve any conflicts using the tools and values represented on the Moral Compass poster. In this way, participants will learn experientially how to translate the concepts they are learning into their own, real-life situations and moral dilemmas.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Every congregation has its own approach to structuring religious education. You can implement the Moral Tales program with any model your congregation uses.

As leader, you will choose the combination of activities for each session. You know best how to shape the Moral Tales program to fit your congregation's religious education model, the culture of your congregation, the children in the group and the time and space allocated for each session.

Moral Tales offers many ways to expand activities to include the larger congregation. Before you begin this program, talk with your minister or director of religious education about ways to integrate Moral Tales into intergenerational experiences. For example, you could have a month during which everyone in the congregation collects Gems of Goodness. During the worship service, a few volunteers could share about the actions represented by their gems. Another possibility would be to design a "WWUUD," or "What Would UU Do," intergenerational worship service in which everyone would receive a WWUUD bracelet. These ideas are described more fully in Sessions 11 and 16.

Many of the Faith in Action activities in Moral Tales can involve the larger congregation. Participants' learning will be reinforced by activities that create bonds between the generations in your congregation.

Session 9 includes an activity based on sharing an activity time with younger children. Be sure to arrange this well in advance with the leaders responsible for the younger group, so it is mutually convenient.

Some activities call for adult visitors. Arrange visits at least a few weeks in advance and confirm the arrangements a week before the session. For the Gems of Goodness activity, you can invite parents to come in to describe an act of goodness or justice that their child has done. You may wish to engage a musical volunteer or a congregational member with arts and crafts skills to participate in particular aspects of a session.

While the planning takes time and effort, visits offer valuable opportunities for children to interact with adults in the congregation and the wider community whom they might not otherwise meet. As their circle of Unitarian Universalist role models widens, children will gain a sense of belonging in their faith home and begin to imagine themselves as adults in the congregation.

An alternate activity in Session 1, We Are All One, requires you to take the group outdoors for a nature walk. Also, some of the games suggested in various sessions would work well outdoors, depending on weather and the availability of a suitable location. Identify outdoor locations well in advance, obtain necessary permissions to take the children there, and arrange for additional adults to accompany the group, if necessary. Make sure you will not disturb others in the outdoor space at the time you plan to go there. Plan to bring water and snacks. Check ahead for insects and poisonous plants.

Within the sessions, you will find suggestions for adaptation. Feel free to add your own. Choose what you feel is best for your space, time, and group. Remember, you are the best guide for these young learners.

## **BEFORE YOU START**

As soon as your program has been scheduled, prepare a calendar with the dates for each session. The more co-leaders and parent volunteers a program includes, the more useful a calendar will be. Post the calendar in your shared meeting space, and duplicate it for each adult participant.

Use the calendar as a "to do" list. Once you know which activities you will include in each session, go carefully through the activities' materials and preparation sections. Put advance preparations on the calendar and, if possible, assign them.

Plan to obtain any materials which your religious education program does not keep at hand in your supply closets, particularly those which may be a little difficult to find or you will need to collect in quantity. For example,

in one session, each participant will need a cardboard shoebox to make a take-home story theater.

For sessions with activities that need assistance from others in the congregation or community, write reminders to contact these people well in advance and to confirm their engagement shortly before the session date.

Your communication to parents and families can powerfully boost the impact of Moral Tales. Note on your calendar when you will download, customize, and distribute the Taking It Home handouts provided for each session. If the group will go off-site for a Faith in Action activity or take a walk beyond the grounds of your congregational meeting place, mark on the calendar the dates you need to create, distribute, and collect permission forms. Mark dates to email or hand out reminders or requests to parents.

If someone on your leadership team has the expertise to create a shared, electronic calendar, take advantage! Designate one person to keep the calendar up to date. If different leaders will lead different Moral Tales sessions, make sure to assign responsibilities as appropriate for distributing permission forms, requests for volunteers, and other communications to parents. Note these tasks and who will execute them on the calendar.

Make nametags for participants and leaders before the first session. Keep extra materials to make additional nametags for newcomers or guests.

To lead a session, you will need to download, customize, and print out materials from this curriculum on the [UUA website](#). These materials may include story scripts, handouts, the Taking It Home handout for parents, and Leader Resources such as arts and crafts templates, discussion questions, recipes, or role play scenarios. Do this before the day of your session, to give yourself time to familiarize yourself with the materials and use them to prepare for the session.

### **The Moral Compass Poster**

Second and third graders are beginning to expand their awareness out into the larger community and world. They will relate to the idea of taking a journey in Moral Tales, using a moral compass to guide them toward goodness and justice. They can understand, and will explore in this program, the concept that each of us has a moral compass inside us which serves as a guide, pointing us toward the many directions or virtues that promote goodness and justice.

Having an actual "Moral Compass" to use in your meeting space strengthens this metaphor, making it visible, tangible and familiar for the children. You can make a Moral Compass poster that is as elaborate or

simple as you wish. Find directions and a template in Session 2, Leader Resources.

As Moral Tales progresses, you will write or post a new concept or virtue on the Moral Compass poster during each session, each time offering participants a new tool to use, or direction to go, in search of goodness and justice. In the sessions, you are directed to display the Moral Compass poster at particular times. Of course, you may use it whenever and however you wish. The compass is designed to accommodate all the concepts as you will be teaching in Moral Tales as well as other concepts you may like to teach the group. Feel free to add ways to go toward goodness and justice that you do not find in this curriculum but believe are important. Use the Moral Compass poster to remind children of their learning in previous sessions and help them develop fluency in the vocabulary associated with Moral Tales. The Moral Compass poster can be used anytime you wish to refer back to a previous session or put a new concept in context for the group to deepen their understanding.

Finally, Session 16 offers two culminating activities that work with the Moral Compass poster. Both are presented as alternate activities. Alternate Activity 2 is a game called, "What Would UU Do?" which guides you to utilize the compass to review and solve dilemmas. In Alternative Activity 3: Compass Making, the children assemble their own small versions of the Moral Compass to take home as a reminder of all they have learned and to signify that their journeys are continuing.

### **Gems of Goodness Project**

The Gems of Goodness Project begins in Session 2 and continues with a five-minute activity in every subsequent session. In Session 2 you will find a full introduction to the project (Session 2, Activity 8) and a letter to parents (Session 2, Leader Resource 2).

To prepare for the Gems of Goodness project, purchase plastic gemstones either at a craft store or online. You will also need to purchase or find a narrow clear glass or plastic jar, and a small notebook for each child. Copies of the letter to parents will also need to be printed in advance.

If you plan to include the Alternate Activity 5, Gems of Goodness Cooperative Treasure Hunt, in Session 2 as part of Introducing the Gems of Goodness Project, you will need to arrive early to hide the gemstones around the meeting space.

### **Fidget Objects**

The idea of providing children with pipe cleaners or other quiet, manipulatable objects to use during sedentary, listening-oriented group activities comes from

a recommendation of Sally Patton, author and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving. In Moral Tales, this idea is expanded to a basket of "fidget objects" that you can put together if you think children in the group can use it. A full discussion of fidget objects and guidance for using them appears in every session's Resource section.

Children who may especially benefit from access to fidget objects include kinesthetic learners, children diagnosed with ADD or ADHD, and children who simply tend to be physically restless or highly social during religious school. Once you get to know the particular children in Moral Tales, you can decide whether to make fidget objects available for the duration of a session or to limit accessibility, bringing the basket out only for storytelling or other activities that require children to sit still for a prolonged period of time. Quite a few stories and listening-based activities in this curriculum involve, indeed require, children's full engagement and active participation. At these times, it may be best not to introduce fidget objects unless there is a child who cannot attend otherwise.

### **Story Basket and Centering**

The Story Basket is described in the Activities section of this Introduction and in Session 1 (Activity 3, Introduction of story Basket and Centering). You are guided in each session to use the Story Basket, filled with objects related to the story, to focus the children's attention and build curiosity about the story. You will want to use a fairly large basket that can accommodate objects of different sizes and shapes.

The Story Basket should also have room for at least one sound-making instrument, such as a chime, a rain stick, a bell, or a small drum. You may wish to have both a soft and a loud sound instrument. A calming sound that lingers and fades is part of the centering activity that transitions the group from exploring the Story Basket to listening to or participating in your storytelling. At other times, you will need a sound-making instrument to start and stop the action during a game.

### **Requirements for Your Meeting Space**

Work with your religious education team and congregational leaders to ensure that the program has an adequate meeting space. Multiple activities occur in each session: lighting the chalice, sitting in a circle for a story or sharing, stand-up role plays, group games, and hands-on projects for which children need to sit together at tables and share arts and crafts materials. The ideal meeting space for this program is spacious, with multiple areas including a carpeted space for storytelling,

another floor space large enough for cooperative, group games and child-size tables and chairs.

Within the meeting space, decide where you will gather the group for opening and closing rituals, storytelling, and Gems of Goodness. Decide where you will display and, if necessary, store between sessions the Moral Compass poster. You will need a wall space or a sturdy easel where you can post newsprint and write on it.

## RESOURCES

Find Unitarian Universalist stories in these books:

[A Lamp in Every Corner](#): *Our Unitarian Universalist Storybook* by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004)

[Stories in Faith](#): *Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales* by Gail Forsyth-Vail (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2007)

Another book with a variety of stories and guidance on using storytelling is *Once Upon a Time: Storytelling to Teach Character and Prevent Bullying* by Elisa Pearmain (Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group, 2006)

*Raising Resilient Children* by Robert Coles and Sam Goldstein (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2001) gives guidance on developing social conscience in children.

This picture book makes the demographics of the world's population more concrete and is informative for

people of all ages: *If the World Were a Village: A Book about the World's People* by David J. Smith (Kids Can Press, Ltd., 2002).

Learn about the global distribution of wealth with these books which use respectful photographs from around the world to visually demonstrate levels of wealth as displayed in material possessions and differing food habits and expenditures:

*Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio (Ten Speed Press, 2007)

*Material World: A Global Family Portrait* by Peter Menzel, Charles C. Mann and Paul Kennedy (Sierra Club Books, 1995)

These books, all available from the Unitarian Universalist Association [online bookstore](http://www.uuabookstore.org/) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/](http://www.uuabookstore.org/)), offer information, reflection and guidance that may help leaders prepare to teach Moral Tales:

*Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook* by Tracey Hurd (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2007)

*The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children* by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar, second ed. (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003)

*Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities* by Sally Patton (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2004, out of print, available [online](#))

## **FACILITATOR FEEDBACK FORM**

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Faith Development Office  
Ministries and Faith Development  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
24 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, MA 02210-1409  
[religiouseducation@uua.org](mailto:religiouseducation@uua.org)

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)?

Your name:

**Overall, what was your experience with this program?**

**What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?**

**In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?**

**Did you enrich the program with any resources that you would recommend to others?**

**What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?**

**What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?**



## **PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM**

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

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[religiouseducation@uua.org](mailto:religiouseducation@uua.org)

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation or group:

Your name:

**Overall, what was your experience with this program?**

**What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?**

**In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?**

**What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?**

**What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?**

# SESSION 1: WE ARE ALL ONE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Rain does not fall on one roof alone. —  
Cameroonian proverb

This session introduces the notion that our interconnectedness with one another and the Earth forms the basis for understanding justice and goodness. Our well being is linked to the well being of those around us. Not just the well being of humans, but also the well being of the animals and plants that share this planet with us; not just our friends and neighbors, but also people who live on the opposite side of the world. When we understand the full implications of our interdependence, justice and goodness are natural and necessary responses.

Before this session, plan the Opening and the Closing you will use throughout the Moral Tales program. When you open and close each session the same way, you help participants conceptually connect all the sessions together and give them an experience as practicing Unitarian Universalists. In addition to reviewing the opening and closing words suggested in the Opening and Closing, you may also like to read Leader Resource 1, Alternate Openings, and Leader Resource 3, Alternate Closings. You might also check in with your director of religious education and Moral Tales co-leaders before choosing Opening and Closing words.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Help participants develop empathy for other living beings, extending care even to the least among us
- Give participants opportunities to experience themselves as part of a larger whole, connected to all that exists
- Encourage participants to begin to form community with their peers and leaders in Moral Tales
- Guide participants to understand the importance of and acknowledge their own responsibility for establishing safety and trust in the group.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Deepen their understanding of the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, respect for the

interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

- Learn that help can come from unexpected places
- Begin to understand concepts of power and vulnerability and the links that connect those with power to those who are vulnerable
- Practice empathy for others
- Develop their awareness of differing perspectives.
- Begin to establish a Moral Values session routine and become familiar with the expectations associated with this program
- Consider aspects of and recognize their responsibility to help maintain a positive learning environment, as they form a covenant of behavior.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Web Name Game	5
Activity 2: Group Behavior Covenant	10
Activity 3: Introduction of story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 4: Story – We Are All One	10
Activity 5: "We are All One" Game	20
Activity 6: Clean-up	2
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joy and Sorrow	10
Alternate Activity 2: Bugs Nature Walk	30
Alternate Activity 3: Living Being Masks	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read the story, "We Are All One." Think about the children you will see this morning and their families,

whether newcomers or long-time members of your congregation, strangers to you or old friends. Envision a roomful of children coming together. Repeat the refrain in your mind: We are all one. Consider what that means for the group.

If you are someone who feels disgust or fear in response to insects and other small creatures, try to let it go. As you tell the story and lead the session it will be important for you not to communicate your negative associations to the children. You need to model the oneness we share with all creatures.

If you like, do a brief meditation on the session's central message. Sit comfortably. Close your eyes or find a focal point to gaze at with a soft focus. Pay attention to your breathing. As you breathe in, imagine peace and calm entering your body. Feel your oneness with the universe. As you breathe out, let go of any stress you are experiencing. With each breath, inhale oneness. As you experience calm and inner peace, repeat the refrain inside your mind: "We are all one." Continue for two or three minutes.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Markers
- Peel-off nametags

#### Preparation for Activity

- Set out nametags and markers on a table.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and invite them to create and put on their own nametags. Show them where to gather in a circle after they have finished.

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first session of Moral Tales, choose a reading or song for the Opening. This is a good time to establish a ritual Opening to use each time the group meets. You may use the adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition* provided under "Description of Activity." Explore some alternatives in Leader Resource 1, Alternate Openings, or choose a reading or song you prefer. It is recommended that you use the same words or song to open every Moral Tales session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

With children gathered in a circle, light the chalice.

Show the children where you have posted the opening words. Teach them by saying or singing each line slowly for the children to repeat, then inviting them to join you in saying or singing the line together. If your opening words are a song, you might say the words first, and then add the tune.

You may wish to use this adaptation of Reading 418, *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

When the children seem ready to say or sing the opening words with you, recite or sing them together.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WEB NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- A ball of yarn

#### Preparation for Activity

- Review the Closing, where a ball of yarn is used in a similar way. If you want to use this ball of yarn again for the Closing, be ready to begin untangling the web of yarn and re-rolling the ball once this activity is done. You may wish to choose a volunteer to roll the yarn while you tell the story, "We Are All One."

#### Description of Activity

Invite the children to sit in a circle. When everyone is settled, hold the ball of yarn in your hand and say:

Hello. My name is (your name).

I love to (something they love to do).

Holding onto the end of the yarn, pass the ball to someone else in the circle. Greet that person by saying:

Hello, (person's name).

Prompt the person to respond with these words:

Hello.

My name is (person's name).

I love to (something that they love to do).

Instruct the person to hold onto a piece of the yarn, pass the ball of yarn to someone else in the circle, and say:

Hello, (person's name).

The new person holding the ball of yarn repeats the process, saying "Hello," sharing their name, and telling something they love to do before passing the ball of yarn along to someone new.

As the ball of yarn gets passed, the yarn will begin to form a web. Encourage children to gently toss the ball of yarn across the circle. If the ball of yarn is only passed and never tossed, no web will form.

When all participants are included in the web, invite everyone to stand up and hold onto their pieces of yarn. Then, gently tugs on the yarn you are holding. Ask the group:

- If I pull on my yarn, who here can feel it?

Then, drop the yarn you are holding. Ask:

- When I drop my yarn, what happens to the web? What would happen if more people dropped their yarn?

Allow some children to drop their yarn to see what happens. After the children have offered a few observations, tell the group in your own words:

The Earth is a lot like this web. We are connected to everything in our world by a web just like this one — only you can't see the yarn. When we pull on the web or if we break it, all of the other animals and plants feel it, just as you could all feel it when I pulled on this yarn. Just like our web fell apart as some of us began to let go.

That's why we have a Unitarian Universalist principle that says we are all part of the interdependent web of all existence.

This exercise serves multiple purposes. It gives the children a chance to become familiar with one another's names while introducing the session theme, "We are all one." A tangible web of yarn can help make the notion of interconnectedness more concrete for seven- and eight-year-olds. In addition, by greeting one another as the yarn is passed, the children get to welcome and be welcomed into the Moral Tales community.

## **ACTIVITY 2: GROUP BEHAVIOR COVENANT (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Write "Covenant" at the top of a sheet of newsprint and post it where you can write on it while leading a discussion.
- Designate an adult to take home the newsprint after the session to compile a covenant document for children and co-leaders to sign. The covenant-signing activity is guided in Session 2, Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice. If your group will not do Session 2, review Session 2, Activity 1, Signing the Behavior Covenant now, and plan to take five

minutes for everyone to sign the covenant next time Moral Tales meets.

### **Description of Activity**

Creating a covenant empowers the children in Moral Tales to take responsibility for their individual and collective behavior. In addition, the covenant helps you create a safe place for learning.

Tell the children that their time in Moral Tales is a lot like the web they just created with yarn. You may say:

When we are together, each one of us is tugging on the yarn and everyone feels the effects. Sometimes those are good effects and sometimes they can be hurtful to other people or make it hard to learn.

Indicate the newsprint you have posted and ask if any of the children know what a "covenant" is. If they do not know, tell them it is a promise. Explain that the group will make a list of the sorts of behaviors which will help create a positive learning environment. You may ask:

- What kind of behaviors will help our Moral Tales group be a place where everyone feels safe, everyone feels welcome, and everyone is able to learn and have fun?

Write on the newsprint children's suggestions. If you need to prompt the group, you may suggest listening to one another, including everybody, sharing, taking turns, helping one another, keeping our hands to ourselves, or kindness. Whenever possible, help the children reframe "don'ts" such as "don't insult others," "don't steal," or "don't lie" as their opposite, desirable behaviors such as using kind words, respecting property, or honesty.

When ideas have stopped flowing or the list seems complete, tell the children that their suggestions will be included in a group behavior covenant that everyone in Moral Tales can sign, next time the group meets. Tell them that even co-leaders will sign the covenant. You can say:

When you sign the covenant, it means you agree to promise the rest of us that you will follow it.

Assure the children that if anyone in the group ever feels that the promises in the covenant are being broken, they can talk to a leader, who will make sure the matter is resolved.

Note: Keep this exercise brief. If children are not engaging in the process, be sure the most important rules are included and then move on to the next activity.

## ACTIVITY 3: INTRODUCTION OF STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "We Are All One," such as plastic ants, centipedes or other animals; a plant or a representation of a plant which could be the healing herb; a toy or picture representing a web; a globe or a ball representing Earth; universe pictures or images; or a picture of the Rousseau painting, Peaceable Kingdom
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a storytelling area in your meeting space to use each time Moral Tales meets. A space where children can sit comfortably in a circle, perhaps on a rug, is ideal.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the basket. Place the filled basket in your storytelling area.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the storytelling basket. Explain that every time they will hear a story in Moral Tales, you will have special things inside the basket for them to look at and touch. As this ritual is repeated in future sessions, children will come to expect it. They will be curious each

time and tune in to find out what the objects and story will be.

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the storytelling basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story Basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story Basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (or turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

The goal of this activity is to help the children settle in and deepen their ability to listen. The sound made by the instrument helps children focus their concentration.

### Including All Participants

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the

group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest they find a single point of focus to look at, instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## ACTIVITY 4: STORY — WE ARE ALL ONE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[We Are All One](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Read through the story a few times. If at all possible, consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try changing your voice when you are speaking as the ant or the centipede.

### Description of Activity

Before you begin telling the story, "We Are All One," look around the room and make eye contact with each person.

Use the sound instrument to signify that the story has ended.

### Including All Participants

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who find themselves in situations where they are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If there are children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in the Leader Resources section. Fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for a child's need to move.

## ACTIVITY 5: "WE ARE ALL ONE" GAME (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of [Leader Resource 2, Animal Posing](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource, Animal Posing. You may wish to think ahead of additional living beings, poses children can do to portray them and things the living beings might say, if they could talk. Jot your own ideas on your copy of the Leader Resource to use during this activity.
- If the group has made masks of the story characters and other living beings in Alternate Activity 3, Living Being Masks, you may like to ask the children with the appropriate mask to come to the center of the circle as you call out a name. Once these children find their poses, invite the others to imitate the pose(s) and add their own ideas of what this living being might say. As in the regular version, shift focus to a new character or living being by calling, "In our web of life... " As you call out characters or living beings not represented by any masks, allow any volunteer to come to the center of the circle.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, children explore empathy by pretending to be human and non-human characters in the story, "We Are All One," and other living beings. You will guide participants to stretch their innately human perspectives to imagine the perspectives of other living beings.

Gather children in circle, in a large floor space where they have room to move without touching one another. Say, in your own words:

Just like the ants in the story, all living beings might have things they would want to say to people if they could and if we could understand them. We can't really know what other living beings are thinking, or even if they think at all. But by watching them carefully and by using our imaginations we can have ideas about what they might say to us.

I am going to call out a character from the story or say the name of another living being. You will make up a motion or pose to become that character or animal.

Using the list provided in Leader Resource, Animal Posing, say the name of a character in "We Are All One." Once children have found a pose or a motion to represent that character, invite them to call out things the character might like to say. For example, if they are being the ants, they might say, "Help! We're drowning!"

You may allow all of the children to call out at once. Or, ask them to go around in a circle. If you go around in a circle, start in a different place each time so the same children do not always go first or last.

When it seems to be time to move on to a new character or animal, call out:

In our web of life...

Instruct the children to as quickly as possible re-form their circle, hold hands, and respond:

We are all one.

Then, give the group another character or living being to act out.

If the group is large, you may prefer to select two or three volunteers to demonstrate a pose or motion in the center of the circle for each story character or living being. Only these volunteers will speak as the character or living being you name. Instruct the volunteers to be ready for you to say "In our web of life..." and quickly rejoin the group holding hands in the circle. Choose new volunteers to act and speak as the next character or living being.

As a practice round, have everyone pretend to be the woman searching for the healing herb. Show them the suggested pose (Leader Resource, Animal Posing) of placing a flat hand above the eyes, as if searching for something. Once the children are in the pose, invite them to say things that the woman might have said in the story. Model using first-person language, speaking as the woman; for example, "I hope I can find the herb," rather than "The woman wants to find the herb." After a minute or two, say "In our web of life..." and guide the children to respond, "We are all one."

When you've finished with the characters in the story, give the group other living beings to portray. Use the suggestions on Leader Resource, Animal Posing, or come up with your own living beings and poses. Once the children have gotten into the swing of the activity, invite them to think of their own living beings to portray. When it is time for children to say what theirs might like to say, if it could, prompt with these questions:

- I wonder what this living being loves or hates?
- I wonder what it needs?
- I wonder how this living being would like to be treated by humans?

### **Including All Participants**

Guide children with limited mobility to pose as they are able. Engage all who can participate in the speaking part of the game.

## **ACTIVITY 6: CLEAN-UP (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials.
- Waste basket lined with a bag.
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers.

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity the children are asked to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it and to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify any aspect of clean-up that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and to gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### **Including All Participants**

All children should assist as able.

## **CLOSING (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A ball of yarn
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument



## Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find suggestions in Leader Resource 3, Alternate Closings.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants, or prepare Taking It Home and email to all parents.
- Optional: If you want to use the same ball of yarn you used in Activity 1, Web Name Game, make sure you re-roll or have a volunteer re-roll the yarn after that activity, perhaps while you tell the story, "We Are All One."

## Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something that you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

With a ball of yarn, repeat the web game, this time saying, "Goodbye, (child's name)" to the person to whom you pass the yarn. Encourage children to throw the yarn to someone new this time. Invite the group to stand up together, holding the web.

Lead the children in singing "As We Leave This Friendly Place," Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Sing together while holding the web:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Say in your own words:

As Unitarian Universalists we believe that all creatures in the web of life are important and we are all one. See you next time!

Ask the children to help you carefully put down the web. Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared, and dismiss the group.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Rain does not fall on one roof alone. —  
Cameroonian proverb.*

## IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We heard the story, "We are All One," and tried to imagine what various living beings — human and non-human — might say to us if we could understand them. We made a web together and learned about the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### **EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...**

Ask your child to tell you about the web the group made in Moral Tales. Draw them out about how and why the group made the web together. Talk briefly with your child about their understanding of the Unitarian Universalist seventh Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." Share your own thoughts and beliefs.

Ask your child to tell you about the game, "We are All One." Take turns pretending to be different animals or plants. Imagine together what they might say if they could speak.

### **EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...**

#### **A FAMILY RITUAL**

**Gratitude circle.** Gather around a chalice or candle. Light the chalice or candle, and have each family member light another candle from it (with assistance, as needed). Take turns naming things that humans receive from nature using the phrase, "I am grateful for ( )." End the gratitude circle by saying together, "In this web of life, we are all one," and blowing out the candles.

#### **A FAMILY GAME**

Go on a nature walk together and challenge yourselves to find as many examples of interdependence as you can. Possibilities include bird nests in trees, spider webs on grass, bees pollinating flowers, and tree roots in the soil. In a city, go to a neighborhood park for the nature walk. Or, look for signs of plant and animal life such as grass poking through gaps in the sidewalk, pigeons or gulls seeking food, or window and rooftop gardens in window sills and on rooftops.

#### **FAMILY DISCOVERY**

Learn together about nature and its cycles, food chains, and ecological systems. Your local library probably has many books about ocean, rainforest, desert, savannah or forest habitats. Recommended reading from the Magic School Bus series by Joanna Cole are *The Magic School Bus Gets Eaten: A Book About Food Chains* and *The Magic School Bus Hops Home: A Book About Animal Habitats*.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Large, shallow container, such as ceramic or metal bowl or a plant window box
- Play sand or unscented cat litter
- Candles, at least one for each participant and leader
- Basket to hold candles
- Matches or lighter

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Check the fire codes and policies of your congregation to affirm that you can light candles in your meeting space. If not, consider doing this activity using a felt board and felt candles, or using real or artificial flowers and a large vase.
- Obtain a large, shallow container made of ceramic, metal, or another non-flammable substance.
- Obtain play sand or unscented cat litter to fill the container. Play sand can be found at a hardware or home improvement store; unscented cat litter can be purchased at a supermarket or pet supply store.
- Fill the container with sand or cat litter.
- Obtain enough candles for each participant to light one. Set the candles in a basket.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the group around the container and the basket of candles. Tell them, in your own words:

Candles of joy and sorrow give each of you the opportunity to experience a ritual that the adults do every week in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. When you light and place your own candle, you can share with us about things that make you happy, which are your joys, and things that might be making you feel sad or worried today. Those are your sorrows.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. As you firmly place the candle in the sand so it stands up in the container, you can offer a joy or sorrow of your own, if you feel the modeling will be helpful to children in the group.

Invite the children to come forward, one at a time, and light a candle of joy or sorrow from the starter candle

and push it into the sand. Encourage each child to then face the group and tell them what the candle is for.

If the session has time for it, use this activity as part of the Opening to deepen the group's sense of community. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages their listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

Do not leave candles burning unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### **Including All Participants**

If a child is reluctant to name a joy or concern, assure them that they will be welcome to do so another time, and invite them to light and plant a candle in silence. If a child cannot physically light and plant a candle, invite them to choose another child to do so while they name a joy or sorrow.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: BUGS NATURE WALK (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Optional: Plastic magnifying glass(es)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Scout for an outdoor location within quick, safe walking distance of your meeting space where children can view insects, particularly ant hills, and look for other evidence of interconnectedness in the natural world.
- Obtain needed permission to take children to the outdoor location you have chosen. Make sure you have enough adult supervision for the walk.

### **Description of Activity**

A nature walk is an ideal learning modality for children who learn best by doing. It is also friendly to kinesthetic learners, who learn with movement. Through guided, first-hand encounters with other living beings, children develop empathy and experience awe.

This activity is obviously dependent upon weather and season.

If you are a new co-leader and/or the children are new to each other, you may prefer to stay on the grounds of your congregational building for this nature walk. New children and/or their parents may not be comfortable with a longer field trip during the very first session of Moral Tales. If you do plan to leave the grounds, factor the walking time into your planning; remember, children

walking in a group do not walk as quickly as an adult walking alone.

As children ready themselves to go outdoors, talk a little bit about the story, "We Are All One." Remind the group about how the peddler helped the ants and the centipede? Say something like,

We are going to go on a walk, just like the peddler did. We're going to look for ants and other insects. Like the peddler, we'll see if any need our help.

Ask the children to imagine what it would be like to be that small in the world:

- What would a human being seem like to you, if you were an ant?

Explain the following rules for the walk:

- Everyone must stay with the group at all times.
- Gentleness is expected with any plants or animals or insects that are found (except, perhaps, mosquitoes or ticks). Point out that even though sometimes people kill ants or other insects in their homes, the class will be going into the insects' homes now.
- All living beings want freedom. No insects will be collected and put in jars.
- Even though it's tempting, no one may handle the insects or other creatures, unless doing so helps it survive better.
- Anyone who finds an insect to watch or help should whisper to it, "We are all one."

Walk with the children to a good insect-finding location. Encourage them to turn over rocks and look under leaves for signs of insects. If possible, find some anthills to observe together. As the children look, circulate and continue to foster empathy, asking questions like:

- I wonder what that ant is trying to do right now?
- I wonder how much food would be the right amount for a creature that small?
- I wonder what that worm would say to you if it could talk?

### **Including All Participants**

If any children in your class use a wheelchair or are otherwise mobility-challenged, be sure that your nature walk takes place on level ground, on wheelchair accessible paths. Be ready to carefully lift an insect, for a child in a wheelchair's closer inspection.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: LIVING BEING MASKS (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Copies of [Handout 1, Mask Template](#), for all participants
- Color markers
- Feathers, cotton balls, mini pompoms, pipe cleaners
- Glue
- Large popsicle sticks

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Print out and photocopy Handout, Mask Template for all participants. You can use any color paper for the masks.
- Place markers, feathers, cotton balls, mini pompoms, pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks and glue on worktables for children to share.

### **Description of Activity**

If you have time, add this activity before Activity 5, "We Are All One" Game. The masks are meant to help children step into the roles of other living beings, either the characters in the story, "We Are All One," or other living beings you will introduce during the Activity 5 game.

Invite children to make a mask representing a character in the story (the woman searching for the healing herb, one of her children, the queen ant, another ant, or the centipede) or any other living being. You may suggest a cat, a snake, a tree, a bumblebee, a frog, an elephant, a bear, a fish, or a wolf.

Allow children to decorate their masks with feathers, pipe cleaners and markers. It is not important for children to accurately portray the character or living being they have chosen. Help each child glue a popsicle stick on one side of the mask. When the glue on the popsicle sticks dries, show children how to hold the stick to keep the mask in place.

When you do Activity 5, "We Are All One" Game, use this variation: Ask the children with the appropriate mask to come to the center of the circle as you call out the name of a character or living being. Once they find their poses, invite the others in the circle to imitate the pose(s) and add their ideas of what this living being might say. As in the regular version, you will shift focus to a new character or living being by calling, "In our web of life... " at which time the group stands in a circle, holds hands, and replies, "We are all one." Make sure you know what each child has drawn on their mask, so you can call them forward. As you call out characters or living beings that are not represented by any of the children's masks, allow any volunteer to come to the center of the circle.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 1: STORY 1: WE ARE ALL ONE

Adapted from the story, "We Are All One," in *Stories in Faith* by Gail Forsyth-Vail (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2007), which was adapted from a Cantonese tale adapted by Lawrence Yep.

Once there was a young woman who lived simply but happily with her husband and their three children until one day a strange illness of the eyes came into their home. First her husband and then their eldest son started having trouble with their eyesight. Everything looked blurry and grey to them. They went to the local doctor and they tried medicine after medicine. But nothing worked, and soon they found they could not see at all.

Within a week, the illness had spread and now their middle son also could not see, and their youngest, a daughter, was showing the beginning symptoms of the illness, rubbing her eyes and complaining that everything looked blurry. Some of their neighbors, as well, were afflicted with this strange illness. The people of the village began to wonder if they would all soon lose their eyesight.

The woman was beside herself with worry. She visited doctor after doctor until finally one doctor told her of a miracle herb that might cure this illness. This healing herb was a plant that grew only in the deepest part of the forest. The woman decided she must leave her family to seek the herb.

Early the next morning she headed into the forest. She looked under bushes. She looked behind trees. She looked everywhere, but the herb was nowhere to be seen. Many hours later, exhausted, but still determined, the woman came upon a small stream. She sat down to rest, still looking around her for the herb.

Then she noticed a big rock had fallen into the stream, making the water run out of the stream to form a little pool. That little pool of water was flooding an anthill. Although she was in a hurry to find the herb, her heart went out to the ants. The woman stopped looking for the herb long enough to remove the big rock and dig a new channel for the water. With satisfaction, she watched as the water flowed away from the anthill. "We are all one," she stated simply, and she continued on her way.

The woman slept soundly that night, curled up under a large tree with a blanket to keep her warm. As she slept a strange dream came to her. In it she was inside the anthill, surrounded by cheering ants. The queen ant stepped forward majestically. "Do not be afraid," she

reassured the woman. "We have brought you here to thank you for saving our home and our lives. In return, if you ever need our help, all you need do is call for us, and we will hear you and come to your aid." As the dream faded and the woman began to wake, she heard the queen ant's voice calling after her, distinctly saying, "We are all one."

All through that day, the woman searched for the herb. She wondered if she were already too late — and if everyone in her village was already blind. She was startled from her thoughts by the sound of a bird, intent upon catching a small centipede. The centipede was scurrying across the ground as quickly as his many legs would carry him. Taking pity upon the defenseless centipede, she quickly scooped him up and frightened the bird from her prey. Saying, "We are all one," she carried the centipede to some leaves and placed him gently in their cover.

That night she again had strange dreams. This time she was visited by the centipede. "Thank you for saving my life," the tiny voice proclaimed. "And now I will help you as you helped me. The herb you seek can be found by an ancient oak tree, in the very center of the forest." An image of a gnarled and twisting trunk came to her mind as she heard the centipede state, "We are all one." Then she awoke.

The woman spent the next morning making her way into the heart of the woods, searching for the oak tree. As the day progressed she noticed that the trees around her were getting blurry. Gazing towards the sky, she saw that the sun was still high in the sky. With a dawning horror she realized that she, too, must have contracted the strange illness. Quickening her pace she continued toward the center of the forest, but with every step her eyesight worsened.

Just as she was giving way to despair, she found the ancient oak tree! Even though she could barely see, she could tell it looked just like the one she had seen in her dream. Stumbling and out of breath, she began to search for the herb frantically. It was no use — her eyes could no longer tell one plant from another. Crying with frustration she wept for her husband, her children, herself, and the people of her village.

She turned to try to retrace her steps to her home and then she remembered. The ants! Perhaps they could help her now. She called to them and soon enough small voices responded.

"Bend down," the queen ant's voice called. "The herb you seek is right here. I am standing on it."

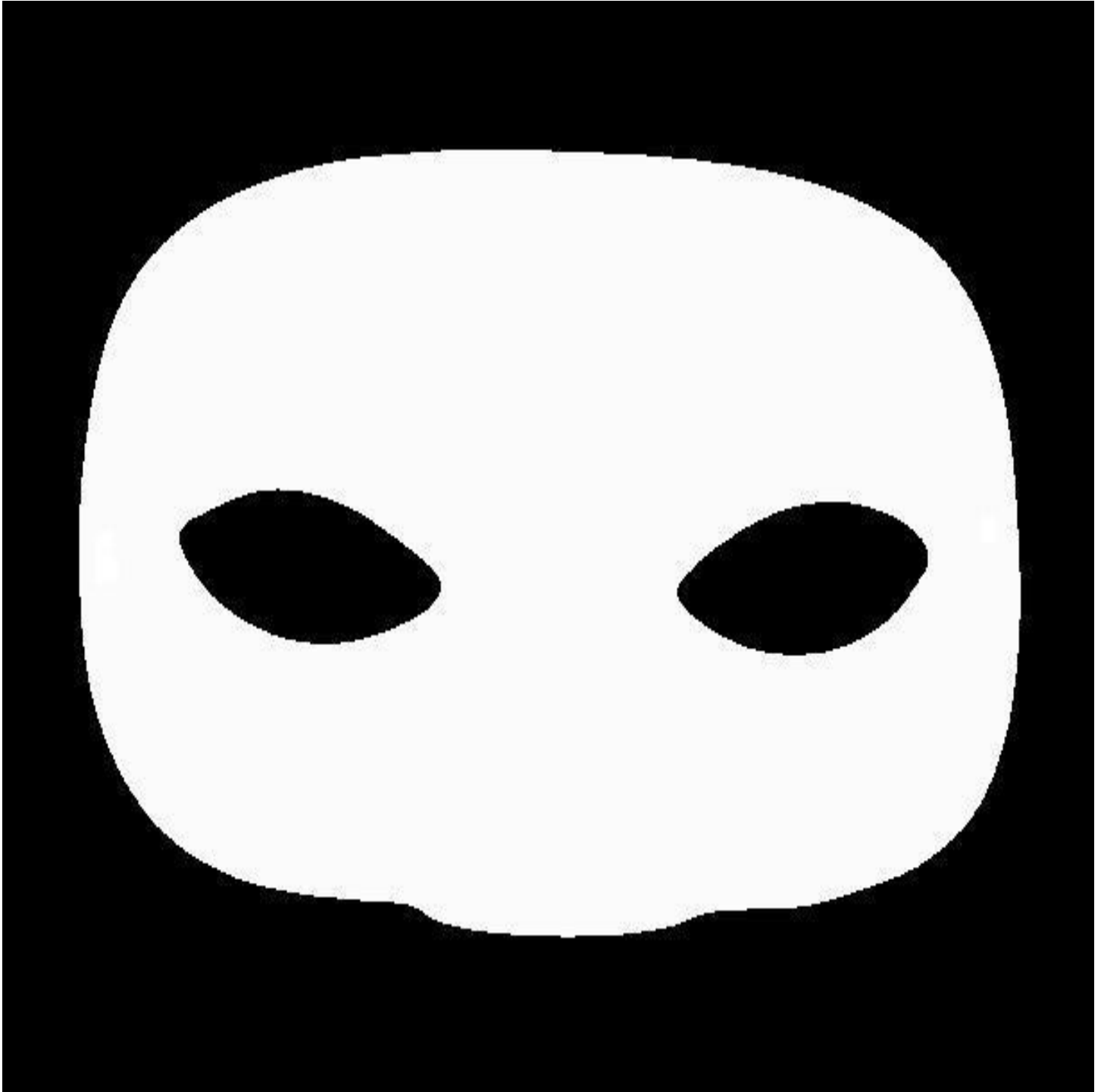
Gently the woman knelt and reached towards the sound. With cautious movements so as not to harm the queen ant, she found the herb and plucked it. Slowly and carefully she tore a small piece of the leaf and chewed it. Almost instantaneously, her sight was restored! Joyfully she harvested the herbs and prepared to return to her village. Before she left, however, she thanked the ants and proclaimed one last time, "We are all one."

The woman walked as swiftly as she could — all day and then all night, by the light of the moon. She hoped, oh, how she hoped, that she would return on time to save her village from blindness.

Finally she reached her home. As she called to her children they followed her voice, for by now they were all completely blind. Anxiously she gave them bits of the herb and then she waited to see what would happen. One minute passed — and then another — and then her eldest son laughed with joy. "I see you!" he shouted, "I truly see you!"

Soon everyone in the village had been cured of the strange illness and the woman who had saved them all returned to her simple but happy life with her husband and their three children. And she never forgot that "We are all one."

**MORAL TALES: SESSION 1:  
HANDOUT 1: MASK TEMPLATE**



## MORAL TALES: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 1: ALTERNATE OPENINGS

Young children appreciate ritual. Repeating the same opening words or singing the same song at the start of each session supports a structure and consistency of practice that will strengthen each child's sense of belonging in Moral Tales as well as their Unitarian Universalist identity.

An adaptation of Reading 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition* is suggested for opening words to begin each session of Moral Tales. However, you may prefer to use opening words that are usually used in your congregation's religious education program; another reading or song, such as those offered below; or a completely different opening ritual that you design for this group.

If you want to use a hymn or song you do not know well, consider asking the music director of your congregation to teach it to you or to record it for you to play during your Openings to accompany the group. If you are uncomfortable teaching or leading a song, invite a musical volunteer from your congregation to join the group for the Opening and teach/lead the song for you, at least for the first few sessions of Moral Tales.

### Alternate Openings

1. Have children sing the first verse of "Enter, Rejoice and Come In," Hymn 361 in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Enter, rejoice and come in.

Enter, rejoice and come in.

Today will be a joyful day.

Enter, rejoice and come in.

2. Sing the first verse of "Come, Sing a Song with Me," Hymn 346 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Come, sing a song with me.

Come, sing a song with me.

Come, sing a song with me,

That I might know your mind.

And I'll bring you hope

When hope is hard to find,

And I'll bring a song of love

And a rose in the winter time.

3. Teach the children these traditional opening or chalice-lighting words and the hand motions that accompany each line:

We are Unitarian Universalists

with minds that think (hands tap head lightly),

hearts that love (tap chest lightly),

and hands that are ready to serve (hands outstretched).



## MORAL TALES: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 2: ANIMAL POSING

Characters in story, "We Are All One"	Suggested pose/motion	Suggested statement
Woman looking for herb	Put a hand above one's eyes as if searching for something	"I hope I can find the herb." "I've been searching for a long time." "Poor ants. I should help them."
Woman's family members and other villagers who have the illness	Cover eyes with hands	"Everything looks blurry. I cannot see!" "I hope a cure is found."
Ants	Huddle on the ground	"Help us!"
Centipede	Arch back forward, then back, and wiggle arms	"I've got to get away."
Hungry bird	Flap arms	"I am so hungry!"
Living Beings Suggested pose/motion		
Cat	On all fours with backs arched	
Tree	Extend arms, as branches	
Snake	Wriggle on floor	
Bumblebee	Point finger in front of face, as a stinger	
Frog	Crouch and bounce on bent legs	
Elephant	Stand with arms dropped straight down and swung as a trunk, with hands clasped	
Bear	Stand with knees slightly bent and arms crooked in front of body	
Fish	Press palms together with back and forth swimming motion	
Wolf	Cup hands around mouth and point face up, as if howling	

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 3: ALTERNATE CLOSINGS

Young children appreciate ritual. Using the same Closing for each session helps to give a clear end to your time together, each time, and reinforces each child's sense of belonging in Moral Tales as well as their Unitarian Universalist identity.

Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," is the suggested closing song for each session of Moral Tales. However, you may prefer to use a Closing that is the usual one in your congregation's religious education program; another reading or song, such as those offered below; or a completely different closing ritual that you design for this group.

If you want to use a hymn or song you do not know well, consider asking the music director of your congregation to teach it to you or record it for you to play to accompany the group. If you are uncomfortable teaching or leading a song, invite a musical volunteer from your congregation to join the group for the Closing and teach/lead the song for you, at least for the first few sessions of Moral Tales.

### Alternate Closings

1. Pass the peace. Have children stand in a circle holding hands. Pass a gentle squeeze to the person on your right. As each person receives the squeeze, they pass it along until it travels around the circle back to you. You may want to end passing the peace with a short phrase such as "Go in peace" or "Peace and love to you."

2. Have children sing "Go Now in Peace," Hymn 413 in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Go now in peace.

Go now in peace.

May the love of God surround you,

Everywhere, everywhere you may go.

3. Have the children sing "This Little Light of Mine," Hymn 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

For a second verse, replace "This little light of mine..." with:

Everywhere I go...

For a third verse, replace "This little light of mine..." with:

Building up a world...

## FIND OUT MORE

### Fidget Objects

The idea of having a basket of "fidget objects" available during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, koosh balls and other quiet, manipulatable objects.

When you introduce the fidget object basket to the group, begin by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help

themselves to items they may wish to use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children that the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the basket available for the duration of the session, or bring the basket out only during activities, such as hearing a story told, that require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

Two picture books in the Magic School Bus series touch on interconnectedness:

*The Magic School Bus Gets Eaten: A Book About Food Chains* by Joanna Cole (Tandem Library, 1999)

*The Magic School Bus Hops Home: A Book About Animal Habitats* by Joanna Cole (Tandem Library, 1999).

# SESSION 2: CONSCIENCE: HEARING THE INNER VOICE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Why look for truth in distant lands? Seek it in the depths of your own heart. — Buddhist saying, adapted

In this session, children are introduced to their own conscience as an inner voice that can guide them to make choices that effect goodness and justice. The quote that opens this session comes from *Kindness: A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children and Parents* by Sarah Conover (Boston: Skinner House, 2010). The children will hear a Buddhist story about a boy who recognizes that whatever action he takes, he will be watching himself, and questioning whether it feels right or wrong. Through the story, the children explore times in which they listened to their inner voice and acted on their conscience. They will also explore why it is sometimes hard to hear or follow our conscience.

This session introduces a Moral Compass poster. Make the poster using Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster. Use the poster, as guided, in this and subsequent sessions to visually represent a variety of "directions" we can go in pursuit of goodness and justice. In this session, children learn that listening to their inner voice is one way to move toward goodness and justice. In other Moral Tales sessions, children will explore other ways to point themselves toward goodness and justice, such as faith (Session 3), forgiveness (Session 5), generosity (Session 9), and perseverance (Session 15). Another way to talk about these "directions" is to describe them as "virtues."

This session also introduces the Gems of Goodness Project. In Activity 1, children receive a notebook and the invitation to document their own acts of goodness and the acts of goodness they witness between Moral Tales sessions. Each subsequent session in Moral Tales provides an opportunity for children to tell the group about these acts of goodness. The children see goodness accumulate as they place plastic gems for each act of goodness into a glass jar.

This session includes an opportunity for the group — children and co-leaders — to affirm the group behavior covenant drafted during Session 1 by signing it together.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the concept of having an "inner voice" or conscience

- Identify the conscience as one of many tools that Unitarians use to search for truth and make moral decisions
- Strengthen participants' understanding of the concepts included in both parts of the fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle, "right of conscience and the use of the democratic process"
- Guide participants to notice and document their own acts of goodness and talk about these acts each time Moral Tales meets, in the Gems of Goodness project
- Strengthen participants' connections to their faith community
- Strengthen participants' sense of responsibility to the community.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Hear a story about a group of children that learns about conscience
- Practice recognizing and sharing about times when they have been guided by their consciences, and times when they did not listen to their consciences
- Articulate an experience they had in which they demonstrated or observed goodness or justice in action
- Apply multiple perspectives to a moral dilemma by engaging in a role-play
- Learn each other's names in a name game activity
- Experience a cooperative clean-up exercise
- Experience democratic empowerment by signing the behavior covenant they wrote together in Session 1, We Are All One.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2

Activity 1: Signing the Covenant	5
Activity 2: Introducing the Moral Compass	8
Activity 3: Active Name Game	5
Activity 4: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 5: Story — The Wise Teacher's Test	5
Activity 6: Dramatic Exercise — What Happened Next?	10
Activity 7: Story Sharing	5
Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project	10
Activity 9: Clean-up	2
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Have You Ever... ?	15
Alternate Activity 3: Barnyard, A Cooperative Listening and Moving Game	10
Alternate Activity 4: Drawing "I See Myself... "	15

Alternate Activity 5: Gems of Goodness Cooperative Treasure Hunt	5
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## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Take a few moments to prepare yourself spiritually for leading the session. It will be helpful to read the short Buddhist story, "The Wise Teacher's Test," several times. Close your eyes and imagine that you are watching the story take place, hearing, and seeing the characters and feeling what they might have been feeling. Imagine how the children in Moral Tales may feel as they listen to this story.

Take some time to mindfully observe your own conscience and how it works as you go through your day. Remember some times when you were challenged to follow or ignore your conscience, both as an adult and as a child. Imagine what you yourself would have done, had you been a student in that Buddhist monastery.

When you help children process the story, you will use "wondering" questions to guide their discussion. Wondering questions have no right or wrong answers, only possibilities and discoveries. You might like to practice by asking yourself some wondering questions about the story or about the role your conscience plays in your daily life.

# SESSION PLAN

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for each child
- Markers
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on the cover of the notebooks you have purchased for each participant.
- Place the notebooks and markers at children's work tables.
- Optional: Provide additional materials for decorating notebooks at the work tables.

### Description of Activity

As children enter, welcome them and invite them to choose a notebook and write their name on it. If you have additional materials for decoration, point these out.

When you are ready to begin the session, invite the children to leave the notebooks on the work tables and join you for the Opening. Tell them they will have more time to decorate their notebooks later.

## OPENING (2 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first session of Moral Tales, choose a reading or song for the Opening. This is a good time to establish a ritual to use each time the group meets. For opening words, use the adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition* provided under "Description of Activity." Or, explore the alternatives in Leader Resource 1, Alternate Openings, or choose a reading or song you prefer. It is recommended that you use the same words or song to open every Moral Tales session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

### Description of Activity

With children gathered in a circle, light the chalice.

Show the children where you have posted the opening words. Teach them by saying or singing each line slowly for the children to repeat, then inviting them to join you in saying or singing the line together. If your opening words are a song, you might say the words first, and then add the tune.

You may wish to use this adaptation of Reading 418, *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

When the children seem ready to say or sing the opening words with you, recite or sing them together.

Extinguish the chalice.

## ACTIVITY 1: SIGNING THE BEHAVIOR COVENANT (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- The behavior covenant rules that children brainstormed in Session 1: We Are All One, transcribed onto a single, large sheet of paper or poster board
- Colorful markers
- Tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Transcribe the list of desirable behaviors that the children suggested in Session 1 onto a large sheet of paper. Leave room at the bottom for all of the children and co-leaders to sign their names.
- Identify a place in the meeting space where you can post the covenant for the duration of Moral Tales.
- Optional: Place colorful markers in a basket.

### Description of Activity

The goal of this activity is to give the children ownership over the behavioral rules for Moral Tales and establish a sense of safety and community. Show the group the covenant. Lay the covenant on the floor, in the center of the group. Remind the children that the covenant is a

promise to one another to keep a safe, cooperative community in Moral Tales. You may wish to tell the children that making this covenant is a way to practice Unitarian Universalism's third Principle of "acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth." By keeping this covenant, each child will help create a safe place to ask questions, to wonder, and express themselves freely.

Read the covenant aloud. You may like to sign the covenant first, to model. Then invite the children to sign it as a promise to abide by its rules. Ask them to go two or three at a time to sign their names using any color marker they wish. When all have signed, including the adults, post the covenant.

Tell the children, in your own words:

If anyone feels at any time that the rules of the covenant are not being followed, they can ask for a time outside of our group activities to discuss it, either with the whole group or one of the leaders.

### **Including All Participants**

If any child is unable to get down on the floor, bring the covenant to them to sign, or place it on a table where all can reach it. If a child is physically unable to sign their name, invite the child to choose another child to write their name.

## **ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING THE "MORAL COMPASS" (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A bold marker, or two pieces of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: A hand-held compass
- Leader Resource 1, [Moral Compass Poster](#) (included in this document)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Make a poster-size Moral Compass as directed in the Leader Resource 1, Moral Compass Poster.
- If you have done Session 1: We Are All One, write the word "Interdependence" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, write the word "Interdependence" directly on the poster.
- Write the phrase "Inner Voice" on a separate piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, write the phrase "Inner Voice" directly on the poster.

- Display the Moral Compass poster on a wall or easel where the children can see it and you can easily reach it. If you cannot display the Moral Compass poster continually for the duration of the Moral Tales program, identify a place to store the Moral Compass in between sessions.

### **Description of Activity**

If you have brought a real, hand-held compass, show it to the children. Ask if anyone knows what it is, and what it is used for. Affirm correct answers.

Pass the compass around. Tell the children that this is a compass just like the ones that travelers used in the old days to find their way when they were lost or exploring new lands. Show them how the needle always points to the North.

Say, in your own words:

Sometimes when people need to figure out which way to go, they use a compass. The compass has a special needle. No matter how you hold a compass or whatever you do, the needle always points in the direction of north.

If people go on a long hike, and are not sure if they are on the right path, or if someone is looking at the stars in the sky at night and wants to know which constellations are in the north, they might look at a compass.

Sometimes we have tough decisions to make in our lives. It can almost feel like we are lost, like we do not know which way we are going, when we do not know the right thing to do. Has anyone ever felt like that?

Allow a few responses. If you like, let one or two children tell a story if the stories seem relevant. Then continue:

Sometimes we know how to act for goodness or for justice. Other times, we are not so sure. We might wish we had something like a compass to help us figure out the right direction to go.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Ask the children:

- In what ways does our poster look like a real compass?

Allow some responses. Then say,

In Moral Tales, our compass poster will help us learn about some different directions we can take to find goodness and justice. Each time we meet, we will explore a new way to move in the direction of goodness and justice and will write it on our Moral Compass poster.

If the group has done Session 1: We Are All One, write or post the word "Interdependence" on the Moral Compass poster. Ask:

- What do you remember about the story we heard last time we were together in Moral Tales?

You may need to prompt. Bring the group to a recollection of the story's refrain, "We are all one." Say, in your own words:

"We are all one" means that everyone and every living thing on this Earth is connected. When we don't know what is right and what is wrong, sometimes it helps to remember that every one of us, and every animal, and even every plant on our Earth are connected and depend on one another.

We have put the word "Interdependence" on our Moral Compass poster, to remind us of that.

Now tell the children, in your own words:

Another thing that can help people figure out how to point themselves toward goodness and justice is to use their conscience.

Ask if anyone knows what a conscience is. Affirm correct responses. Then say,

Everyone has a conscience. Adults and children. Every human being. Your conscience is like a voice inside your head that tells you when something is unfair, or when you are about to do something that is mean or wrong. Sometimes, if you are not sure what you should do, listening hard to your own conscience can help you figure it out.

In a few minutes, we are going to hear a story about a time when one boy used his conscience — his own inner voice — to figure out the right thing to do.

Post or write "Inner Voice" on the Moral Compass poster. Turn the "goodness and justice" needle toward the phrase "Inner Voice." Then say,

Let's point the "goodness and justice" needle on our Moral Compass to "Inner Voice," to help us get ready for the story.

### **ACTIVITY 3: ACTIVE NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- A light weight ball such as a small beach ball or other plastic or foam ball

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Arrange chairs in a circle.
- It is assumed in this game that the children may not know everyone's name. Name tags should be put away.

#### **Description of Activity**

The goal of this activity is to help the children learn one another's names as they play a game which includes everyone. Ask the children to stand in a circle if they are able. Say:

I'm going to throw the ball to someone. When you catch the ball, say your name, and throw it to someone else. After you throw the ball, put your hands down at your sides so we can see who still needs a turn.

Start by saying your name and then throw the ball to a child in the circle. The child who catches will then say their name and throw the ball to another child in the circle. When everyone has had a turn, ask for the ball back and ask the children to put their hands up again. Say:

Now I'm going to say someone's name and throw the ball to that person. When you catch the ball, throw it to someone else, and say that person's name. After you throw the ball, put your hands down at your sides.

This time, begin by saying the name of a child in the circle and then throwing the ball to that child. The child who catches the ball will then say another child's name and will throw the ball to them. If the children seem to know each other's names, you can suggest that they try to go faster and faster. If someone cannot remember someone else's name, they can ask for help from others in the circle.

To end the game, put up your hands, ask for the ball, and put it away.

#### **Including All Participants**

This activity can be done sitting down if any child is unable to stand easily, or if the children's energy is too high.

If a child has difficulty catching or throwing, they can hold a basket that others can throw the ball into or designate another child to throw for them.

### **ACTIVITY 4: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket



- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "[The Wise Teacher's Test.](#)" (included in this document) such as an item suggesting Japan, a picture of Japanese Buddhist monks or a monastery, a book for children about Buddhism, or an old-fashioned looking purse with some coins in it
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or world map

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a storytelling area in your meeting space to use each time Moral Tales meets. A space where children can sit comfortably in a circle, perhaps on a rug, is ideal.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the basket. Place the filled basket in your storytelling area.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the storytelling basket. Explain that every time they will hear a story in Moral Tales, you will have special things inside the basket for them to look at and touch. As this ritual is repeated in future sessions, children will come to expect it. They will be curious each time and tune in to find out what the objects and story will be.

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the storytelling basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story

with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story Basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate Japan and tell the children that the story they will hear is a Buddhist story from Japan.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story Basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### Including All Participants

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 5: STORY — THE WISE TEACHER'S TEST (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of story, "[The Wise Teacher's Test](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Moral Compass poster

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. You may find it helpful to close your eyes and to picture the place where the story happens, and to observe the action and characters in the story as if you were watching a movie.
- This story does not lend itself to audience participation during the telling. However, you may make it more interactive by choosing several places to stop the telling to ask questions of the children. Examples might be, "I wonder what those students were talking about, outside the gate?" or, "I wonder how each of you would feel if your school principal told you that you had to steal to keep the school going?" If you use this "stop and go" method of storytelling and inquiry, you will need more time to tell the story, but you probably will not need to do Activity 6, Dramatic Exercise — What Happened Next? which follows the story.

### **Description of Activity**

In the story, "The Wise Teacher's Test," a Buddhist teacher offers his students a lesson by testing them. He pretends that their school needs money, and tries to convince them that they must steal money in order to keep the monastery going. Students at this age are concrete thinkers and will probably want to discuss the idea that a teacher would condone stealing. You may like to introduce the story by telling your students that Buddhist stories and teachers often use tricks, tests and riddles to help their students to learn something for themselves.

Tell the group they are going to hear a story from the Buddhist tradition that will help to show them what conscience is. Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Show them how the arrow says "goodness and justice" and that it now is pointing to "Inner voice".

You may also wish to tell the children that there are five Buddhist simple rules of conduct (the Precepts) that lead to happy and peaceful lives for all who practice them. The second Precept states "Respect others' property; take nothing that is not freely given to you." You may wish to compare this precept with the eighth Commandment from Hebrew scripture, "Thou shalt not steal."

Take time to make eye contact with each person in the room before beginning the story. Take a deep, calming breath and then begin.

When you have finished telling the story, sound the chime or other instrument to signify that the story is ended.

## **ACTIVITY 6: DRAMATIC EXERCISE — WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A bell

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Make sure you can create a large enough space for this activity in your meeting space, or plan to bring the group to a larger space. You will need to move out of earshot to give the "Buddhist students" a chance to confer with one another. If you will be in a different room from the children, make sure another adult is available to be with the group.
- If possible, be ready to send another adult with the children to guide their discussion. Coach the adult to take the role of an older Buddhist student. They can ask the children — the "Buddhist students" — "What should we do now?"

### **Description of Activity**

After the story, "The Wise Teacher's Test," tell the children that they are now going to act out what might have happened next in the story. Tell the children that you will pretend to be the Buddhist teacher and that they can pretend to be the children in the story. Ask one child to volunteer to be the Buddhist student who stayed behind. You may say:

Let's pretend for the next few minutes that our meeting space is the Buddhist temple in the story. I am going to pretend to be the wise old teacher. Most of you will pretend to be the students who stopped outside of the gate when their teacher sent them into town.

Tell the children where they will go when it is time, in the dramatic play, to go outside of the gate. If they will leave your meeting space, indicate the adult who will go with them. If the adult is willing to help guide the children's conversation when you are not present, suggest they may be one of the older students in the group. Say:

When you are outside the temple gate, please pretend you are the students in the story. Please talk quietly about what the teacher has asked you to do, and what you are going to do about it.

Tell the group that the student who stayed behind (the child who volunteered) will come to get them when it is time to return to the temple room. Then say:

Do you think the students in that temple sat in chairs? No, they sat on the floor. Will you agree to pretend this for the next few minutes?

To begin dramatic play, sound a bell — you may like to use the sound instrument from your story Basket. Then say, in an altered voice, if you like:

Students, our school is in big trouble. We need money. If we don't have money, our school will close. Then none of you will have a school. Here is what you must do. Go out into the marketplace. Sneak around, looking for rich people. Take their purses, and steal money for our school. Make sure nobody sees you!

Go now! Go to the city and steal for our school!

When most of the children have left, stay in character as the Buddhist teacher and say to the child who stayed behind:

Why did you not go with your friends to steal?  
Don't you want to save our school?

Guide the child to formulate an answer that echoes the answer given by the student in the story. If possible, engage the child to say something like, "Even if no one else saw me, I would always see myself." As the Buddhist teacher, congratulate the child on their good response. Then say:

Go quickly and bring back your friends before we get into trouble!

Send the child to get the others. As the children return, invite them to sit on the floor in front of you, still in character. Say:

Welcome back, Buddhist students. I apologize for confusing you and pretending to ask you to steal. You are right that as Buddhists we do not take anything that is not freely given to us. Sometimes Buddhist teachers feel that students learn best when put to a test, or surprised by something different. I hope today you will learn a valuable lesson.

Now say to the child who stayed behind:

Why did you not go with your friends to steal?  
Didn't you want to save our school?

Help the child answer, as needed: "Even if no one else saw me, I would always see myself." Then engage the other children with these questions:

- I am wondering what you were feeling when I asked you to go and steal.
- I am wondering what you were talking about outside of the gate.
- I am wondering if you know what (name of the child who pretended to be the student who stayed behind) meant when they said, "I would always see myself."
- What else did you wonder about or feel from what happened today?

A child will probably express that they felt that it would be wrong to steal. Tell the group that those feelings show that their consciences are working.

End the drama by saying, in your own words:

All right, Buddhist students. Enough lessons for one day. It is time for morning chores. When the bell (or other sound instrument) rings, this dramatic lesson will be over.

Sound the bell to end dramatic play.

### **Including All Participants**

When you ask the children to pretend to be the Buddhist students, you may observe behavior such as a non-Asian child pulling on their eyes to make them look slanted or speaking in a stereotypical manner mimicking an Asian accent. It is very important to immediately ask the child to stop. Remind them that their behavior is hurtful to people of Asian descent and could make Moral Tales a place where children might feel afraid they will be made fun of if they are different from some of the others. Suggest that to act like the characters in the story, the children need only imagine how they it would feel to be that person.

Some children are extremely reluctant to engage in dramatic play. If gentle encouragement does not work,

you may offer a child a place out of the action to sit and watch.

## ACTIVITY 7: STORY SHARING (5 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review the questions you will ask the children. Try to think of a story or two from your own experiences that might stimulate the children to think of their own stories and help them to get to know you. Sharing your real-life stories will also help the group transition from dramatic role play, in which you were the Buddhist teacher.

### Description of Activity

After Activity 6: Dramatic Exercise — What Happened Next?, gather the children in a circle. In this activity you will share your own stories and encourage the children to share their own experiences with using their consciences. This activity helps the children connect their own experiences with the ideas in the story and their experience in the drama.

Ask the children to share some personal stories relating to times they have used their consciences. You may frame this as questions:

- I wonder why it was so hard for those students to refuse to steal when their teacher told them to. (You may wish to help the children identify fear as a motivation, as it was for the children in the monastery when the teacher told them that they might lose their home/school.)
- I am wondering if you have ever been in a situation like the students in that story where someone wanted you to do something that you felt was wrong.
- I am wondering if this story made you think of times when your conscience or inner voice was working and helped you to make a good choice.

As children share, look for opportunities to remind the group that they all do use their consciences on a regular basis. Also look for opportunities to normalize that it is often difficult to listen to or hear one's inner voice.

### Including All Participants

When a child shares a story, avoid commenting on the story. Unless the story provides an important learning opportunity ("It can be hard to listen to our conscience sometimes, can't it?" or "Notice how many different ways/how often we all use our consciences, every day."), simply say, "Thank you for sharing." You do not want to praise some children more than others for their

experiences. You do want to model "democratic process" as expressed in the fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle: We may not all share the same ideas of conscience, but we respect one another's.

## ACTIVITY 8: INTRODUCTION TO THE GEMS OF GOODNESS PROJECT (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones in a variety of colors
- Clear glass vase or jar
- A bright, solid color cloth
- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for each child
- Markers
- Copies of the Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents for all participants](#) (included in this document) Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers

### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a clear glass vase or jar you can use for the duration of Moral Tales. A narrow vessel will nicely show the accumulation of "gems of goodness." In a small vessel, the gems will visibly accumulate faster than in a large one.
- Purchase mosaic gemstones. You will need at least three per participant per session. You may use glass or plastic gems. Most craft stores offer a variety of types, and, there are many [online sources](#) (at [www.beachcrafters.com](http://www.beachcrafters.com)).
- Lay a bright, solid color cloth on a low table that everyone will be able to see and reach. Place the empty vase or jar and some gemstones on the cloth.
- Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on the cover of the notebooks you have purchased for each participant.
- Optional: If you want to have the children decorate their notebooks, have stick-on gems, stickers, and other materials ready to distribute.
- Download and customize the Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents. You may hand out copies of the letter for children to take home, and/or email or send the letter directly to parents.
- Decide whether you will invite children to earn gems by documenting occasions when they

witness someone else acting with goodness — not just their own acts of goodness. Doing so may include more children and will probably speed the group's accumulation of gems.

- Consider whether you would like to celebrate with the group in a future session, as the children accumulate gems. If you plan to tie a celebration to a particular goal, choose a glass vessel that will fill quickly and allow easy measurement of progress. Check with co-leaders to ensure that a Gems of Goodness celebration will fit into a future Moral Tales session.

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity, you will introduce the Gems of Goodness Project. Gather the children in a circle around the gemstones and the jar.

Tell them:

Each time we meet in Moral Tales, you will be invited to choose a gemstone and add it to the jar if you can think of an act of goodness you did during the week (or an act of goodness you saw someone else do).

Hand out the notebooks and markers. Invite children to return to their seats and write their names on the front cover of their notebook. Tell them they will take the notebooks home so that an adult can help them think about and write down their acts of goodness. If you would like the children to decorate the covers of their notebooks, distribute stick-on gems, stickers, and other materials.

Say, in your own words:

There are many ways to act from goodness.

You may ask the children if they can think of any actions that come from goodness. Affirm their responses. Then say, in your own words:

You can act kind. You can be generous. You can do something that takes courage. You can be honest when it is easier to lie. You can do something that is fair to all people, not just yourself or your friends.

Tell the group you will call out some examples of acts of goodness that they might have done in the past week.

Say:

If you hear me say an act of goodness that you have done, come up and add a gemstone to our jar. These may be things you have done at home, at school, with your friends, or someplace else.

Offer these suggestions. Add your own, if you can think of more. Leave time after each suggestion for children to remember something they have done and to come up to place a gemstone in the jar.

- I helped someone.
- I shared with someone.
- I stood up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- I told the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- I included someone rather than leaving them out.
- I was patient with my sibling or another younger child.
- I recycled.
- I took care of a pet.
- I worked really hard at something.
- I thanked my mom, my dad, my teacher, or another adult who helped me.
- I thanked a friend who helped me.
- I cleaned up a mess I made.

Now ask the children how they felt as they remembered the acts of goodness they have done. They may have several answers. One will probably be that it felt "good." You may wish to say something like:

As we act with goodness, our jar will become full, just like our hearts.

Remind the children that there are many, many ways to act from goodness, and you have by no means mentioned all of them today. Invite them to look for acts of goodness that they do (and if you choose, that others around them do) between now and the next Moral Tales meeting.

Distribute copies of the Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents. Tell the children that the letter asks their parents to help them write down their acts of goodness in their notebooks and bring their notebooks every time they come to Moral Tales.

### **Including All Participants**

Adapt this activity so that the jar is passed, if some children cannot move freely to it.

## ACTIVITY 9: CLEAN-UP (2 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials.
- Waste basket lined with a bag.
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers.

### Preparation for Activity

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.

### Description of Activity

In this activity the children are asked to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it and to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### Including All Participants

All children should assist as able.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the words of "As We Leave This Friendly Place," Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Look at the song in advance. If it is unfamiliar to you and you do not read music, consider asking your music director to teach it to you. Or, invite a musical volunteer to join the group for the Closing and lead the song with you.

### Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community. Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas today. Tell them something that you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Lead the children in singing "As We Leave This Friendly Place," Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Remind the children to collect their Gems of Goodness notebooks, and make sure they each have a Gems of Goodness Project Letter to Parents (Leader Resource). Distribute the Taking It Home story you have prepared.

You may say:

Pay attention to your inner voice until we meet next time. See if your conscience helps you make choices to be kind and fair to other people and to other living beings. Remember, next time you will have a chance to add more gems to the "Gems of Goodness" jar, for each act of goodness or justice you did or saw.

Thank and dismiss the children.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Why look for truth in distant lands? Seek it in the depths of your own heart. — Buddhist saying, adapted*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We heard a Buddhist story about conscience, or inner voice, in which a child recognizes that no matter what he does, or who else is watching, he always sees his own actions. We did a drama activity in which we stepped into the shoes of the characters to better understand the ideas in the story.

We introduced a visual aid, the "Moral Compass" poster. In each session of Moral Tales, children explore a different direction one can go, or a virtue one can tap, to act with goodness and justice. Today, the children talked about using one's conscience or inner voice to find direction. They also talked about remembering the interdependence of every living being on Earth as

another virtue that can lead us to decide and act with goodness and justice.

We also introduced the "Gem of Goodness" project today. Please read the handout (Letter to Parents) describing this activity. A Gems of Goodness activity will happen each time the children meet. Your participation will ensure your child is ready to participate each time and gain maximum benefit from this project.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.

A book about developing social conscience in children is *Raising Resilient Children* by Robert Coles and Sam Goldstein (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2001). Coles and Goldstein offer some principles for parents to help children develop responsibility, compassion and social conscience. The first principle is, "Serve as a role model of responsibility." The second is, "Provide opportunities for children to feel that they are helping others, which includes acknowledging the helpful things they do each day."

Tell your child some examples of times when you have noticed them using their conscience, as well as times when you have used yours.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

Start a list this week of times each day when a family member has used their conscience to make a decision. You might pick certain areas to focus on, such as dealing kindly or fairly with others at school or work, sibling interactions, awareness of taking care of the Earth, or clean-up at home.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

Start a family ritual in which the Moral Tales story is retold at a meal, soon after the session. Then invite family members to share a question or a feeling about the story and tell a personal story about a time when something like that happened to them.

The stories used in Moral Tales are part of the Tapestry of Faith religious education program published online by the Unitarian Universalist Association. You can find "The Wise Teacher's Tale," the Buddhist story your child heard today, along with the full [Moral Tales curriculum](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/tales/index.shtm) (at <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/tales/index.shtm>) and all the session's central stories.

You are your child's best teachers and the personal stories you share of how you have learned and grown from experience will stay with them for guidance and comfort.

### FAMILY DISCOVERY

The quotation above comes from [Kindness: A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children and Parents](#) by Sarah Conover (Boston: Skinner House, 2010), a collection of Buddhist stories for children.

More books to introduce children to Buddhism are:

*Zen Shorts* by Jon Muth (N.Y. Scholastic Press, 2006)

*One Hand Clapping: Zen Stories for All Ages*, by Rafe Martin (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995)

A book to help children understand Buddhism is *What Makes Me A Buddhist* by Charles George (Farmington Hills, MI: Kidhaven Press, 2004).

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### **Description of Activity**

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

If the session has time for it, use this activity as part of the Opening. Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### **Including All Participants**

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: HAVE YOU EVER... ? (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of Leader Resource 3, [Have You Ever...? Questions](#) (included in this document)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Print out a copy of Leader Resource 3, Have You Ever... ? Questions
- Decide whether you will do this activity with children seated at work tables or in a circle, where they can raise their hands, call out, or stand up to respond to the questions, or whether you prefer a more active activity, in which children move to different sides of the meeting room to indicate "yes" or "no."

### **Description of Activity**

Invite the children to stand up, raise a hand, or call out, "That's me!" when you ask a question that they can answer "Yes." Or, if you want to give children an opportunity to move about, designate one side of the room as the place to go if they want to answer "Yes," and the other side of the room as the place to go to answer "No."

One at a time, read aloud the questions on the Leader Resource. After each question is answered, encourage the children to look around to see how many others have had the experience that you have asked about.

If you like, stop and ask some volunteers to share their stories in more depth. Or, keep the questions going for a more rapid-pace activity, and ask for volunteers to share stories as you wind down the activity.

In this exercise, children see that their own experiences are important and that they share at least some of these experiences in common with some of their peers. If you have time and the children want to keep going, invite them to come up with more "Have you ever... ?" questions.



## Including All Participants

These questions are geared specifically for this Moral Tales session. Some children may hear questions that make them think about something they have done wrong. It is a good idea to start with lighter, fun questions that any child will be able to answer without self-consciousness.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: BARNYARD, A COOPERATIVE LISTENING AND MOVING GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Blank paper and marker
- Paper-cutter or scissors
- Blindfolds for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- This activity is best done in a large room with a large, empty floor space. Push chairs or tables toward the walls to make as much space as possible for the children to move. Make sure that there are no sharp or breakable objects in the area.
- Collect scarves, clean rags, or other items to use as blindfolds, enough for all participants
- Using a paper-cutter or scissors, cut blank paper into three slips. Make enough slips to give each child one. Write "Cow" on one third of the slips. Write, "Rooster" on one third of them. Write "Pig" on the last third. You can use different animals if you wish, as long as the sound that animal makes is well known and can be easily repeated by all the children.
- Optional: If you are not sure all the children are readers, instead of writing the words you may wish to find and photocopy simple pictures of the three animals, or combine the pictures and words.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, children with blindfolds on (or eyes closed) walk around a room making the sounds of different animals and trying to find the other children making the same animal sound as they are. During this activity the children will practice listening, being respectful and careful with their bodies, and working together. This activity can provide a needed physical activity that is contained, and fun. Using blindfolds also encourages children to interact with and work together

with all of the others in the group, rather than just chosen peers.

Gather the children in the center of the space and give each child a piece of paper with one of the three animals written or drawn on it. Tell them not to tell anyone which animal they got. Or, you can simply ask them to close their eyes and whisper in each one's ear whether they are a cow, pig or rooster.

If you wish, have the children try the game with their eyes open the first time. Point out that it is important to move slowly and listen carefully to avoid bumping into others and to hear the sounds you are listening for.

Distribute blindfolds. Some children may not wish to wear a blindfold; allow them to close their eyes instead.

Now ask the children to spread apart so they are not touching anyone else. Say, in your own words:

When I say 'Barnyard,' start to make the sound of your animal. Don't forget to pause occasionally, to simply listen. You will need to move around the room and listen for other children who are making the same sound. When you find someone who is making the same sound, hold onto that person. Then you can both stand still and make your sound together, or move slowly together, making your sound, until all of the other children making the same sound have found them.

Tell the children that, as their group grows large, they should stand still and let the individual children who belong in the group move toward them. Large groups moving around could knock over an individual or a small group.

Sometimes several pairs will form and have to find one another. Instruct pairs and small groups to choose a leader and move together, holding hands, toward the other group.

Tell the children:

When you think you have found all the animals in your group, all of you raise your hands.

Now say:

Barnyard!

Once a group is complete, acknowledge them ("I see all the roosters are together"). Ask the group to wait until all three groups have found their friends. Then, the game is over.

If you have time, start over by redistributing the slips with animal names or pictures, or invite the children to make up new animals for you to assign, and replay.

## Including All Participants

One challenge of this game is to ensure children's safety. Two people who are not playing the game should watch from opposite sides of the room to prevent children from going out a door or into a dangerous area. Usually the children stay close together as they are following the noise.

Being blindfolded may be traumatic for some children. Offer them the alternative of simply closing their eyes. Children who are not mobile can become the base for the other children to find. This activity can even be done with eyes open, as in the run-through suggested above, as long as the only sound the children make is the animal sound.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: DRAWING "I SEE MYSELF... " (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Blank paper
- Crayons and/or color markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Provide paper and drawing implements at work tables.

### Description of Activity

This activity gives children a chance to remember or anticipate situations that did or could, activate their inner voice or conscience. A hands-on art medium can help convey the experience of conscience. If you think the group may have trouble focusing on role play and discussion to process the story, "The Wise Teacher's Test," you may like to use this activity immediately after Activity 5, Story – The Wise Teacher's Test, in place of Activity 6, Dramatic Exercise – What Happened Next? and Activity 7, Story Sharing.

Invite children to sit at work tables. Invite them to close their eyes, if they wish, and use their imaginations to see themselves. In your own words, remind them about the Buddhist student in the story who did not steal. You may say:

That student said there was nowhere on earth where he would not be seen, because he would always see himself.

You can also prompt children by reminding them that they see themselves when they look in a mirror. Thinking about how they look in a mirror may help some children begin visualizing a situation they have been in.

Now ask the children to quietly think about a time or a situation in their own lives in which they used their

conscience. Tell them this situation will probably be one in which they had to make a choice about how they would behave, or what they would do. Tell them the situation can be a real one, that really happened, or something that might happen. Give some examples, such as:

- "I see myself playing with a toy that my sibling wants to use."
- "I see myself in the cafeteria, where there is a new child who nobody is talking to or sitting with."
- "I see myself finishing a juice box at the playground and thinking about where to throw the empty box."

You may wish to ask the children to raise their hands, or lay their heads on the work table, once they have thought of a situation. If needed, visit an individual child who has not thought of something. Help them quickly or say you will help them think of something in a moment, and come back once the others have started drawing.

Now ask the children to open their eyes, take a piece of paper and crayons or markers, and draw themselves in the situation they imagined.

Remind them that their conscience is part of the story. Say:

See if you can find a way to draw yourself, the situation where you needed or used your conscience, and your conscience itself. You can't really see a conscience or an inner voice, but it can be fun to imagine what it might look like.

If you like, ask some volunteers to share their drawings with the group. Be careful not to praise some children more than others for their art work, or for the ways in which they use their consciences. One way to avoid this is to always, say, "Thank You," after each child shares.

If children do not want to share their drawings, invite them to tell the group about the situations they have drawn. One objective of this activity is for children to hear multiple examples of ways that they do, or can, use their consciences on a daily basis.

### Including All Participants

Children who cannot manipulate the art materials can communicate their ideas about a personal situation of conscience to another child or a teacher. If the child wishes, another child or a teacher can draw a picture of the situation the child describes.

Some children may have trouble thinking of ideas for their drawings. While others begin drawing, brainstorm

with individuals to help them think of scenarios in which their consciences might tell them it would be good to share, to help someone, or to be honest.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: GEMS OF GOODNESS COOPERATIVE TREASURE HUNT (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Mosaic gemstones, enough for each child to find at least five or six
- Small sandwich bags for all participants

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Hide the gemstones around the meeting space before the children arrive, in places that will be easy to find.

### **Description of Activity**

If you have time before Activity 8: Introduction to the "Gems of Goodness" Project, this cooperative treasure hunt gives children a chance to stretch and move while hunting for and gathering the "gems of goodness" they will use in the following activity.

This treasure hunt is cooperative in that each child will be allowed to find three gemstones. Gather the children and give each a small sandwich bag. Show them some of the mosaic gemstones and tell them:

These are "gems of goodness," and they are hidden all around this room. When I say "Go!" you can start looking. After you have found three gems of goodness, you may sit down and watch. Or, you may ask other children if they would like some help finding theirs. We'll come back together in a circle once everyone has three gems of goodness

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 2: STORY 1: THE WISE TEACHER'S TEST

Adapted from a Jataka tale (Buddhist).

Once upon a time on the outskirts of a big city in Japan there stood an old temple. From a young age boys who wanted to study Buddhism would come to live in the temple and to learn from the master teacher, a Buddhist monk.

One day the Buddhist monk who ran this small temple decided to teach his young students a lesson. He gathered them around him, and spoke, "My dear students, as you can see, I am growing old, and slow. I can no longer provide for the needs of the temple as I once did. I know I have not yet taught you to work for money, and so I can only think of one thing that can keep our school from closing." The students drew close with eyes wide.

"Our nearby city is full of wealthy people with more money in their purses than they could ever need. I want you to go into the city and follow those rich people as they walk through the crowded streets, or when they walk down the deserted alleyways. When no one is looking, and only when no one is looking, you must steal their purses from them. That way we will have enough money to keep our school alive."

"But Master," the boys chorused in disbelief, "you have taught us that it is wrong to take anything that does not belong to us."

"Yes, indeed I have," the old monk replied. "It would be wrong to steal if it were not absolutely necessary. And remember, you must not be seen! If anyone can see you, you must steal! Do you understand?"

The boys looked nervously from one to the other. Had their beloved teacher gone mad? His eyes shone with intensity such as they had never seen before. "Yes, Master," they said quietly.

"Good," he said. "Now go, and remember, you must not be seen!"

The boys got up and quietly began to file out of the temple building. The old monk rose slowly and watched them go.

When he turned back inside, he saw that one student was still standing quietly in the corner of the room. "Why did you not go with the others?" he asked the boy. "Do you not want to help save our temple?"

"I do, Master," said the boy quietly. "But you said that we had to steal without being seen. I know that there is no place on Earth that I would not be seen, for I would always see myself."

"Excellent!" exclaimed the teacher. "That is just the lesson that I hoped my students would learn, but you were the only one to see it. Run and tell your friends to return to the temple before they get us into trouble."

The boy ran and got his friends who were nervously gathered just out of sight of the temple, trying to decide what to do. When they returned, the Master told them the words the boy had spoken and they all understood the lesson.

(Optional last line: "No matter what we do, we always have a part of ourselves that is quietly watching, and that knows right from wrong and can guide us if we listen." This last line may be added if you feel the children need it. Or, allow the clarification to come as you do the follow-up activities.)

# MORAL TALES: SESSION 2: LEADER RESOURCE 1: MORAL COMPASS POSTER

## How to Make the Moral Compass Poster

The Moral Compass poster is introduced in Session 2 with instructions for displaying and using it during each session of Moral Tales. The Moral Compass poster helps children visualize the concept of directions we can choose to go that lead us to acting for goodness and justice. As you progress through Moral Tales, you will add a word or phrase during each session that indicates a direction on the Moral Compass.

Each session gives you guidance for adding the key word or phrase to the Moral Compass poster. Usually this occurs during the Closing. You can add a word or phrase by writing it directly on the Moral Compass poster or by posting an index card or a pre-printed slip of paper with the word or phrase on it. You need not position the words or phrases in any particular place on the compass or in any particular order.

You can make your Moral Compass poster as elaborate or simple as you like. Make it large enough to accommodate all the key words and phrases you plan to add. Modify these basic instructions as you wish.

### Materials

Large sheet of poster board

Another piece of poster board

A brass fastener

Scissors

Marker

Optional: Push pin and string

On a large sheet of poster board, draw a large circle. To trace the circle shape, tie a piece of string to a push pin, push the push pin through the center of the poster board, and tie a marker to the other end of the string. Tape the push pin to the back of the poster board or hold it with one hand securely while you move the marker around with the other hand. Pull the string gently taut, as you go, to draw a neat circle. Make the circle large enough to accommodate all the written words and phrases you will eventually add as directions on the Moral Compass.

You may wish to make index cards or slips of paper with the key words and phrases in advance. Store them in a place where you can easily find the one you need for each session, along with the tape to post them. You can handwrite the words and phrases on index cards or pre-cut paper as you go, or plan to write them directly on the Moral Compass poster during each session. You may wish to download the list of sessions and phrases (below). Cut and paste each word or phrase into a word processing document. Then, choose a large, bold font and print them out.

From another sheet of poster board, cut an arrow. It should be about three quarters the length of your circle's radius and wide enough for you to write the words "Goodness and Justice" on it. If you wish, you can type "Goodness & Justice" in a large, bold font and print the words out. Then cut them to fit onto the arrow.

Place the arrow's blunt end across the center of the circle and secure the arrow to the larger piece of poster board with a brass paper-fastener.

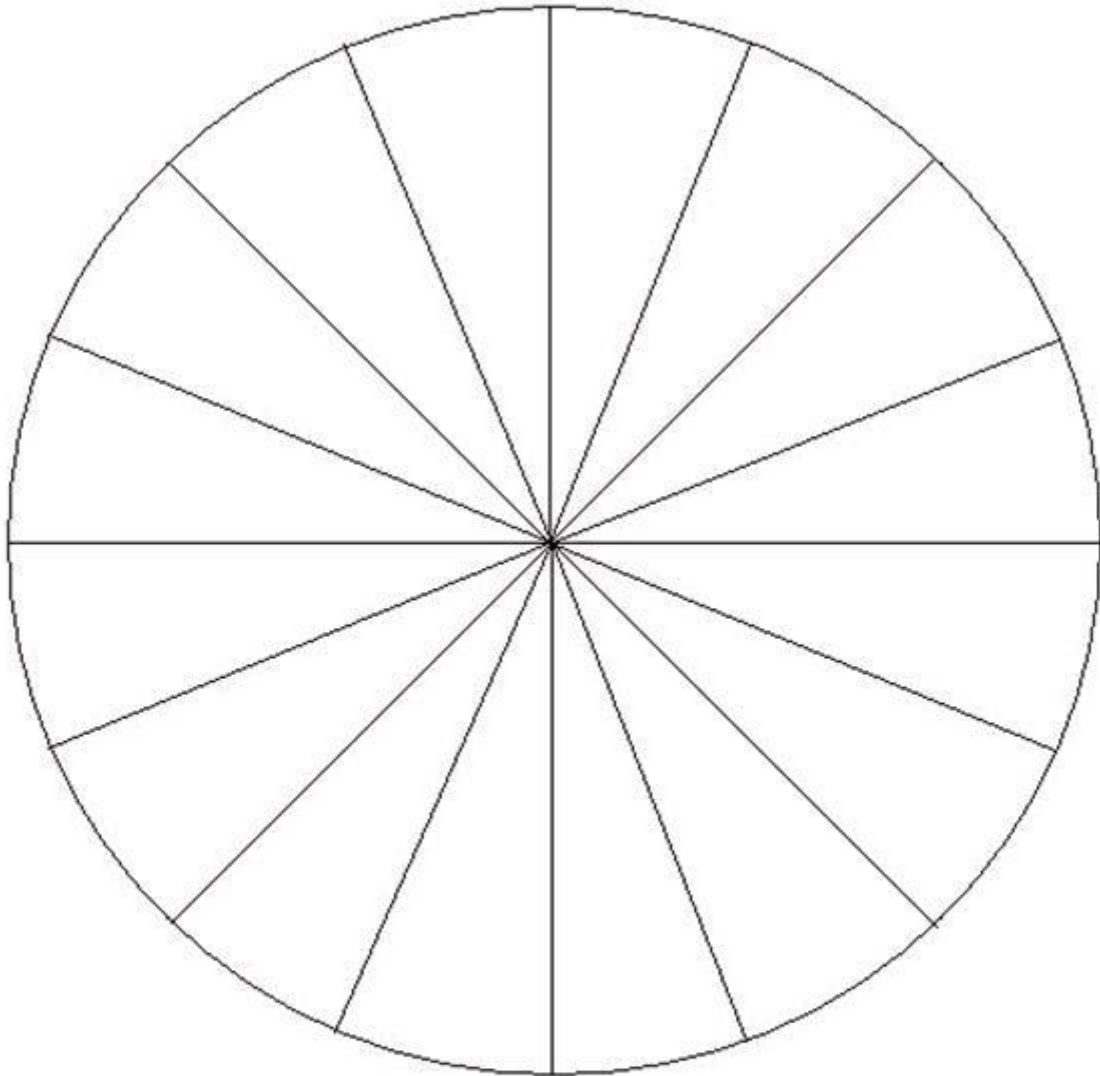
You will want the arrow and poster secured together tightly enough for you to position the arrow (the compass needle) where you want, while leading the group.

Note: Alternate Activity 2 in Session 16 involves spinning the Moral Compass. If you plan to do this activity, you may wish to experiment with the brass paper-fastener.

### Key Words and Phrases for Moral Tales Sessions

<u>Session</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Concept as Noted on Moral Compass Poster</u>
1	We Are All One	Interdependence
2	Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice	Inner voice

3	Faith, Hope and Prayer	Faith
4	In Another's Shoes	Empathy
5	Forgiveness	Forgiveness
6	Welcome One and All	Welcoming
7	Seeing Others with Awe	Respect
8	Do Unto Others	Golden Rule
9	Generosity: Give and Ye Shall Receive	Generosity
10	Footprints: Treading Softly on Earth	Balance
11	Do No Harm	Non-violence
12	Making a Difference	Responsibility
13	Justice for All	Fairness
14	Acting When Conscience Calls	Courage
15	Courage and Perseverance	Perseverance
16	Working Together	Cooperation



## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 2: LEADER RESOURCE 2: GEMS OF GOODNESS LETTER TO PARENTS**

Dear Parents,

Please be a tattletale!

For the next few months, while we teach the Tapestry of Faith Moral Tales curriculum, your children will be encouraged to keep track of and name their own acts of justice and goodness.

Each time the group meets, the children will have the opportunity to share about accomplishments. For each act of justice or goodness, the children will place a colorful gem into a collection container. When they collectively reach certain goal marks or fill the container, we will have a special celebration.

We are sending home a log book for each child to record their acts of goodness and justice. It is our hope that you will pay extra attention to your child's acts of goodness or justice, and note them in the log book. Simply write the date and a brief description of the action you are affirming. Before you bring your child to a Moral Tales meeting, please review the acts of goodness and justice with your child so their accomplishments are fresh in their minds.

Please think of justice and goodness broadly. Include acts of courage, generosity, kindness, determination, patience, thoughtfulness, respect, creativity, honesty, forgiveness, conflict resolution, and fairness. Include acts that involve care of the self, care of others, or care of the earth. You can increase the learning in the exercise by helping your child give the action a specific name. Instead of simply using the label "good," talk about courage or kindness, persistence or helpfulness.

Noticing and naming their own expression of these virtues will serve the children in multiple ways:

- \* The children will be empowered as agents of justice and goodness.
- \* They will learn to recognize goodness and justice in many different forms.
- \* They will gain practice in identifying and articulating the benefits of actively pursuing goodness and justice.
- \* They will learn to encourage and affirm others in their accomplishments.

So, in sum, please be a tattletale! When your child has done something particularly noteworthy, consider joining us when we gather our gem collection circle. Be a witness to your child sharing his/her accomplishment of goodness or justice.

Yours in Faith,

(Co-leaders)



## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 2: LEADER RESOURCE 3: HAVE YOU EVER... ? QUESTIONS**

*Note: If any participants would be unable to easily "stand up," invite the entire group to "raise your hand" instead of "stand up."*

Stand up if you have ever...

Had a birthday

Eaten too much

Had a haircut

Had a haircut you didn't like

Had a bug fly up your nose

Had a pet

Held a frog

Blown bubbles

Gotten gum stuck in your hair

Made a face

Made a friend

Helped bake a cake

Broken something that belonged to someone else, and found the courage to tell them.

Broken something that belonged to someone else and been afraid to tell them.

Stood up for someone who was being treated unkindly.

Found something that belonged to someone else and had to decide whether to turn it in or keep it.

Told the truth when it would have been easier to say something untrue.

Had a friend who wanted you to do something that you thought was wrong.

Said "no," to a friend who wanted you to do something that was wrong

Picked up some litter in your neighborhood

Kept a secret that someone asked you to keep.

Felt sorry later, after you passed on mean gossip about someone.

Refused to pass on mean gossip.

Felt sad about something that you did that hurt someone else's feelings.

Not eaten the last cookie when your sibling didn't get one yet.

Helped someone who was elderly or sick.

Helped a younger child at your school or neighborhood.

Worked really hard at a project.

Been patient with a younger sibling or friend.

## FIND OUT MORE

### Fidget Objects

The idea of having a basket of "fidget objects" available during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, koosh balls, and other quiet, manipulatable objects.

When you introduce the fidget object basket to the group, begin by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may wish to use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children that the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the basket available for the duration of the session, or bring the basket out only during

activities, such as hearing a story told, that require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

Buddhist approaches to moral dilemmas are well represented in Buddhist story collections for children, including:

[Kindness: A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children and Parents](#) by Sarah Conover (Boston: Skinner House, 2010)

*Zen Shorts* by Jon Muth (New York: Scholastic Press, 2006). A short collection of stories adapted for young listeners

*The Three Questions* by Jon Muth (New York: Scholastic Press, 2002). This story for younger children is particularly appropriate for younger children learning about what it means to act for goodness and justice.

*One Hand Clapping: Zen Stories for All Ages* by Rafe Martin (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. 1995).

Robert Coles and Sam Goldstein's book, *Raising Resilient Children* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2001) gives guidance on developing social conscience in children.

# SESSION 3: FAITH, HOPE AND PRAYER

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Who cared if there was really any Being to pray to? What mattered was the sense of giving thanks and praise, the feeling of a humble and grateful heart. — Oliver Sacks

This session introduces faith, hope and prayer as tools that can help us discern the path of goodness and justice. Participants will hear a story in which a shah decides to test a poor Jewish man's faith and creates challenges for him to face. Through prayer, the Jew expresses his trust in God and finds answers to each dilemma created by the shah. Ultimately, the poor man teaches the shah the value of a faithful life.

Participants will learn about prayer as a spiritual practice that is shared by people of all major world religions. They will create prayer bead necklaces with each bead representing a different type of prayer: gratitude, petition (asking for something), confession (admitting shortcomings and seeking forgiveness), and intercession (prayer on someone else's behalf). Connected with the necklace-making is an activity that guides participants to give voice their own prayers.

As the quote from Oliver Sacks (*A Leg to Stand On* (New York: Summit Books, 1984) suggests, to whom or to what one prays matters less than the content or the context of one's prayer experience. Prayer is an expression of faith, but the specific theology that may be part of any one person's faith are not part of this session.

It is important to state that although prayer is often associated with theism, the activities and discussions in this session do not assume any particular beliefs in God, Goddess, or gods and goddesses. In this session, prayer is understood simply as the two-fold action of naming what is in your heart and engaging in deep listening. This session is based on an assumption that whether or not one believes in God, there is value in bringing attention to one's heart and naming what it holds, including questions, and then listening for answers.

Finally, participants will consider prayer as a tool in discernment. When we face moral dilemmas, the path that leads to justice and goodness is not always clear. At these times it can be helpful to engage in the deep listening that is part of prayer: listening for the wisdom of the universe, listening to one's own inner light or conscience, or listening for God/dess.

It is especially important for the leaders of this session to model respect for a variety of practices and beliefs. This group of Unitarian Universalist children may include some who have never been introduced to the idea or practice of prayer. The group may include some whose parents participate in another faith tradition outside your Unitarian Universalist congregation or bring a specific, personal theology to their worship and community experiences. This session aims to make prayer accessible to all participants, in the context of wide theological diversity.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce prayer as a powerful, optional spiritual practice
- Establish the importance of — and demonstrate how to give and receive — respect for all expressions of personal faith, regardless of personal beliefs or religious practices
- Engage participants in experiencing different types of prayer
- Explore the idea that actions can bring our prayers and wishes closer to reality
- Introduce and explicate a prayer bead necklace
- Highlight the third Unitarian Universalist Principle, acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn about the role of faith, hope and prayer in cultivating justice and goodness
- Gain knowledge about different types of prayer through personal experience
- Experience gratitude by articulating something for which they are grateful
- Give voice to a wish or hope and hear the wishes of others
- Experience accepting responsibility by naming something they are sorry for
- Consider the needs of others and the Earth and experiencing using prayer to articulate hopes

- Make a commitment to a specific act of goodness or justice to advance one of their own prayers

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story – The Sword of Wood	10
Activity 4: Discussion of Prayer and Faith in the story	5
Activity 5: All My Friends and Neighbors	10
Activity 6 Prayer Bead Necklaces	18
Activity 7: Clean-up	2
Faith in Action: Enacting Prayer in the World – Short-term	10
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Story Hot Seat	20
Alternate Activity 3: What is Faith?	20

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Thinking through your own feelings about and experiences of prayer will help you lead this session. You may wish to ponder the following questions:

- What experience of prayer, if any, have you had?
- Do you believe in the power of prayer?
- Have you found prayer to be useful in your life?
- What do you believe about God in relationship to prayer?
- What do you believe it is most important to teach children about prayer?

After you have had a chance to think about your answers to the above questions, read through the description of the prayer bead exercise. Take some time to think about what your own prayer beads might represent. What is in your heart? What do you yearn for? What is your deepest wish for the Earth? What are you sorry for? What makes your heart sing with gratitude?

Once you have experienced your own thoughts and prayers, put them aside. Prepare to be with children whose experiences of prayer will range from frequent to infrequent, and whose thoughts and beliefs may vary tremendously. Your role as teacher is to meet the children where they are and introduce them respectfully to one of many spiritual tools.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle

- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first session of Moral Tales, establish a ritual Opening to use each time the group meets. Choose a reading or song for the Opening. You may use the adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition* provided under "Description of Activity;" explore the alternatives in Leader Resource 1, Alternate Openings; or choose a reading or song you prefer. It is recommended that you use the same words or song to open every Moral Tales session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

With children gathered in a circle, light the chalice.

Show the children where you have posted the opening words. Teach them by saying or singing each line slowly for the children to repeat, then inviting them to join you in saying or singing the line together. If your opening words are a song, you might say the words first, and then add the tune.

You may wish to use this adaptation of Reading 418, *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

When the children seem ready to say or sing the opening words with you, recite or sing them together.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately 2"x3," for any newcomers

- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster
- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

### Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of ten minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2: Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2: Introducing the Moral Compass) and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.

- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "The Sword of Wood," such as a leather shoe, a wooden or toy sword, or a pottery jar
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the storytelling basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story Basket this week."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the storytelling basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate Afghanistan and tell the children that this is the country where the story takes place. You may also tell them that the story is a Jewish folk tale.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY – THE SWORD OF WOOD (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Sword of Wood](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try adopting different

voices for the shah or the Jewish man. You may find it helpful to close your eyes and to picture the place where the story happens, and to observe the action and characters in the story as if you were watching a movie.

- Think about how you might use items from the story basket as props. If any of these items are on the altar, sit near them or place them where you can reach them as you tell the story.

### **Description of Activity**

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Read or tell the story.

Ring the chime (or use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over.

### **Including All Participants**

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

## **ACTIVITY 4: DISCUSSION OF PRAYER AND FAITH IN THE STORY (5 MINUTES)**

### **Preparation for Activity**

- If you are leading this session on your own, you may want to arrange for another adult to co-lead this activity with you. Another adult voice can facilitate this discussion and help you model that Unitarian Universalism embraces diverse interpretations and expressions of faith and prayer.

### **Description of Activity**

Pose these questions and allow children to explore:

- Why was the Jewish man so happy, even when the shah kept making unfair laws? (Possible answers: He had faith that everything would be OK, he knew that God would help him.)
- What is faith? (Possible answer: Believing something even if you can't prove it's true.)
- How did the Jew figure out what to do when the shah made those laws? (Possible answers: He prayed, when he prayed that helped him come



up with his own solutions, God gave him answers.)

- How did praying help the man? (Possible answers: God answered his prayers, it helped him feel better, it helped him focus and think of clever plans.)

A second adult volunteer or co-leader can offer possible answers to the questions if the children find them difficult. A second adult can also join the discussion to ensure that both theistic and atheistic interpretations of what happened in the story are represented and respected. If children's answers reflect only one perspective, an adult leader can say something like, "Some people believe that and some people believe ... " or "That's what the man believed in the story, but some people might think ... "

### Including All Participants

This session requires a fair bit of sitting in a circle or at the table. For children who learn better when moving, consider bringing out a basket of "fidget objects." For more information, see Leader Resources.

## ACTIVITY 5: ALL MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A chair for each participant
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, [All My Friends and Neighbors](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Identify a space large enough for the children to form a circle of chairs.

### Description of Activity

This activity builds community while generating ideas and interest to bring to the next activity, Activity 6: Prayer Bead Necklaces. As an active game that involves movement, it is placed strategically in the session to provide a break from sedentary activities.

Invite the children to bring chairs into a circle. Remove one chair so there is one fewer than there are participants. Model the game by standing in the middle of the circle (with one child by your side). Tell the group:

(Name of the child standing by you) and I are going to look for some of our friends and neighbors. I will say which ones we are looking for. If what I say includes you, stand up and change to a different seat. Meanwhile, (name the child by your side) will rush to a seat that becomes free. That will leave a new person in the middle to look for their friends and relations.

Use the list of phrases that begin "I am looking for all of my friends and neighbors who \_\_\_\_" in Leader Resource, All My Friends and Neighbors. The categories mirror the types of prayer the children will learn about in Activity 6: gratitude, being sorry, wishes for self, and loving wishes for the world, others, and other living beings. Use a few "... are grateful for..." phrases first. Then move through the other categories, rather than skipping around. This will prepare the children to identify these four types of prayer.

Before you begin, offer these rules:

- If you are one of the friends and neighbors, you must come into the middle before finding a new seat. You may not sit down in the same seat you left.
- (Optional, depending on size of the group) You may not sit back down in a chair next to where you were just sitting.

Now say:

I am looking for all of my friends and relations who...

... are grateful for being together in Moral Tales today.

Encourage the child standing with you to find a seat as other children get up. Bring the child who is left without a seat into the middle of the circle. Help them think of a phrase to add to "I am looking for all my friends and relations who are grateful for..." using the Leader Resource as needed.

Try to move through all the categories of gratitude, being sorry, wishing for oneself, and loving wishes on behalf of others.

### Including All Participants

If someone is in a wheelchair, that person can wheel the chair in front of another chair, thus claiming it as occupied. As is the case for all participants, if there is no chair available, the person stays in the center and names the category. A danger with this game is that children will run and even sometimes push others out of the way to occupy a chair. If someone moves more slowly or is in a wheelchair, they may not be able to get to a free chair as quickly as others. The group might be able to agree on rules to accommodate this situation.

## ACTIVITY 6: PRAYER BEAD NECKLACES (15-20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Four distinct types or colors of large beads, one of each type for all participants, including adults

- Stretchy cord, yarn, string or other necklace material
- Four bowls
- Optional: Prayer beads used in practices of other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Catholicism

### Preparation for Activity

- Make a prayer bead necklace in advance, including one of each type of bead, to show the group.
- Optional: Use the links and books suggested in Leader Resources to learn more about the use of prayer beads in different faiths.
- Sort the beads by type and/or color and place them in bowls.
- Place all materials near your storytelling area.

### Description of Activity

Gather the group in the storytelling area, in a circle. Tell the children that prayer is a part of all of the major religions in the world. Ask if any of the children pray at home or have ever seen anyone praying. After a brief response time for the question, you may say:

People can pray in lots of different ways. Someone sitting quietly alone with their eyes closed might be praying. Some people pray by thinking thoughts in their head. Other people pray by saying words or singing a song together with other people. Some people don't pray at all.

In some religions, like Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity, some people use a necklace or a bracelet of beads to pray.

If you have examples of prayer beads from another religion, show them to the group and identify each one. Then show them the prayer bead necklace you made in advance.

Say:

Today we are going to make our own Unitarian Universalist prayer bead necklaces.

Give everyone a necklace cord. Co-leaders and adult volunteers should participate in this exercise as part of creating a community of lifelong learners, as well as to help model possible prayers.

Pass around a bowl with one type or color of large beads in it. Ask each participant to take one bead and roll it around in his or her hands. When everyone has a bead, invite everyone to close their eyes. Say:

This will be your gratitude bead. One way that people pray is they say "thank you" for things that they are grateful for. Right now, while you are holding your bead, think about what you are grateful for.

Pause for a few moments and then invite everyone to open their eyes and briefly share what they are grateful for. A co-leader or adult volunteer can get the sharing started.

When all who wish to have shared their prayers, have the children put the bead on their cord. Help children knot their cord around the first bead, leaving a tail of cord to secure the necklace with later.

Pass around a second bowl with a second type or color of beads. Ask each participant to choose a bead and roll it around in his or her hands. When everyone has a bead, say:

This is an "I'm sorry" bead. Sometimes when people feel really sorry about something they've done, they pray about it. Close your eyes while you hold your bead. Do you have something you've done that you are sorry for?

Pause for a few moments. Then invite everyone to open their eyes and briefly share the things they are sorry about. When all who wish to have shared their prayers, have the participants put the second bead on their cord.

Repeat the process with a third bowl containing a third type or color of beads. This time, say:

This is a wishing bead. Sometimes when people pray they say things that they really hope for. Close your eyes, and hold your wishing bead. Is there something you really wish?

Pause for a few moments and then invite everyone to open their eyes and briefly name their wishes.

Have the children put the third bead on their cord and then pass along the final bowl of beads. While their eyes are closed, say something like:

This is a loving wishes bead. Sometimes when people pray they think about all the things they wish for the world, or they think about someone they love and make a wish for that person. Do you have anything you wish for the planet Earth, for any animals, for other people, or for anyone you love?

Pause for a few moments and then invite everyone to open their eyes and briefly name their loving wishes.

Now invite and help the children to secure the ends of their cords to make a necklace.

As they work, you may like to challenge the children to think of things they, themselves, can do to help their wishes happen. Use examples from your own prayer statements, rather than theirs. For example, you might say, "I do feel sorry I did not buy the snack my daughter wanted for lunch last week. Next week, I will try to buy the snack she asked for." Or, "I was wishing for my friend who is sick to get better. If I send her a get well card, at least maybe she will feel a little better." Or, "I was wishing for the playground down the street to have no litter. On my way home today I am going to stop and pick up some of the trash there and throw it away."

You may continue this discussion during Activity 7: Clean-up. The short-term Faith in Action activity (Enacting Prayer in the World), which fits nicely before this session's Closing, engages children in pursuing ways to help realize the prayers they may have for others.

### Including All Participants

This exercise expects a certain solemnity and stillness that may be difficult for more active learners. The beads themselves serve as "fidget objects," building at least a small amount of movement into the activity. However, if you suspect this will be difficult for some children, consider adapting the exercise slightly to add more movement or to shorten the time it will take. To add more movement, lead the children in a quick stretch after stringing each bead. You may like to engage movement-oriented learners as helpers in passing out the beads or cords.

To decrease the time required, if the group is large, invite children to tell their prayers to a partner after thinking about what each bead represents.

You may opt to simply do the prayer bead necklaces as a project without ritualistically naming prayers. As children work, remind them of the gratitude, being sorry, wish, and sharing wishes phrases they used in their game during Activity 5, All My Friends and Neighbors.

## ACTIVITY 7: CLEAN UP (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials.
- Waste basket lined with a bag.
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers.

### Preparation for Activity

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.

### Description of Activity

In this activity the children are asked to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it and to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### Including All Participants

All children should assist as able.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find some suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. It is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.

- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it during the Closing.
- Write the word "Faith" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Faith" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions. Today we heard a story about a man who used faith and prayer to solve problems. We're going to add "faith" as a direction on our Moral Compass.

Write or post the word "Faith" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to try using faith and prayer as they look for ways to act for goodness or justice.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;

May the kindness which we learn

Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these.

Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: SHORT-TERM -- ENACTING PRAYER IN THE WORLD (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Bowl
- Beads, stones or marbles

### Preparation for Activity

- Place beads, stones or marbles in the bowl

### Description of Activity

If you have time, add this activity just before your Closing. Gather the children in your Closing circle. Place the bowl or tray filled with beads, stones or marbles in the center. Say, in your own words:

When you pray, the things you pray for don't always happen. No one really knows for sure about how prayer works or if prayer works to change things. But we can work to make our prayers happen, just like the man in the story used quick thinking to save himself when the shah ordered him to use his sword to kill the criminal.

A few minutes ago we named some loving wishes for the world. Now we're going to think about what we can do to help the Earth, the animals, other living beings, and the people we love.

When you have an idea of something you can do, come take one of these beads (or stones, or marbles), sit back down in the circle, and tell us your idea. For example, if your grandmother is sick and you are wishing for her to feel better, you can make her a card or bring her some soup. If you are wishing for the Earth to be clean and unpolluted, you can pick up litter and clean a park.

If your congregation is theistic, you can adapt the message to reflect the role of God, as appropriate. You might say, "We help God make our prayers come true

when we do things to help other people, to help animals, or to help the Earth."

As with the prayer beads, adults should participate in this activity, modeling brief, appropriate answers.

When everyone who wishes to share has done so, say in your own words:

You can keep the bead (or stone, or marble). When you go home, it can remind you of your idea so you can do something to help make a prayer come true.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?

- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Who cared if there was really any Being to pray to? What mattered was the sense of giving thanks and praise, the feeling of a humble and grateful heart. — Oliver Sacks*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children heard the story, "A Sword of Wood," about a Jewish man whose faith is tested by a shah. The Jew holds fast to his faith and relies on prayer as he meets various challenges. We talked about prayer as an important practice in many world religions. For the purposes of this session, prayer was presented as a two-step practice: first, naming what is in your heart, and second, engaging in deep listening. We made Unitarian Universalist prayer bead necklaces with each bead representing a common type of prayer: praise (gratitude bead), confession ("I'm sorry" bead), petition (wish bead), and intercession (loving wishes on behalf of others bead). We encouraged the children to think about actions we can take that help make our gratitude be felt by others, our apologies be heard by others, our wishes and hopes to become real, and our loving (healing) wishes to be felt by others. Actions that help care for the Earth, caretaking of animals, and thoughtful expressions of caring toward other people were some examples.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

Ask your child to show you the prayer beads the children made in Moral Tales and to tell you what the beads represent. Share your own views or practices related to prayer with your child. Talk about what it means, to you, to have faith. Give some examples of your own experiences and thoughts related to faith.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

Consider using the prayer bead necklace as part of your child's bedtime ritual. As energy winds down, bedtime can be an ideal time to think about one's day, as well as one's hopes. The prayer beads can become a tool for naming the important things in one's heart. Have your child hold each bead in turn and name something they are grateful for, sorry about, wishes for, and hopes for the world or for someone else. Encourage your child to take a moment to name the things that they have done during the day to make things they wishes for really happen and what they could do in the future.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

If you do not already do so, develop a practice of eating dinner together as a family. Begin the meal with a grace,

a brief song, a poem or a reading that expresses gratitude. Then have each person in the family name something for which he/she is grateful.

Find ideas to help you start a gratitude ritual in these books:

*A Grateful Heart: Daily Blessings for the Evening Meal from Buddha to the Beatles* edited by M.J. Ryan (Conari Press, 1994)

*Earth Prayers From Around the World: 365 Prayers, Poems and Invocations for Honoring the Earth* edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991)

## FAMILY DISCOVERY

If your family is interested in experiencing spiritual practices together other than prayer there are many resources available for this purpose. There are many ways in which people can seek spiritual deepening, name what is in their hearts, and engage in deep listening.

Consider enrolling in a family yoga class. If classes are not an option, there are many good videos that introduce simple yoga poses, some specifically for children and a deck of cards with yoga poses, "Kids Yoga Deck" by Annie Buckley.

You may wish to combine an exploration of yoga with an investigation of Hinduism and the role that different forms of yoga play in the Hindu religious practice.

Look for books or tapes with guided meditations and experience a peaceful journey of imagination and relaxation. Guided meditations can be especially effective at bedtime and can be a useful tool for getting children ready to sleep. A good audio CD is *Guided Meditations for Children: Journey Into the Elements* by Chitra Sukhu (New Age Kids, Inc.: 2002)

You may be near a spiritual or Christian retreat center that has a labyrinth open to visitors. The labyrinth invites walking meditation, sometimes a more appealing form of spiritual practice for an active person.

Read about pagan practices honoring the cycles of nature. There are many great rituals that are child-friendly and help to nurture a relationship to the Earth. A recommended reading is *Circle Round: Raising Children in Goddess Traditions* by Starhawk (Bantam: 2000).

Learn about Unitarian Universalist rituals. Adopt some in your household. Light a chalice, sing hymns from [Singing the Living Tradition](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Singing-the-Living-Tradition-Hymnal-P16918.aspx) (https://www.uuabookstore.org/Singing-the-Living-Tradition-Hymnal-P16918.aspx) or [Evensong for Families](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Evensong-for-Families) (at https://www.uuabookstore.org/Evensong-

for-Families-P16650.aspx) by Barbara Hamilton-Holway (Skinner House, 2006).

The online bookstore of the Unitarian Universalist Association offers a number of books about faith in a Unitarian Universalist context:

[Rejoice Together: Prayers, Meditations and Other Readings for Family, Individual, and Small-Group Workshop](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Rejoice-Together-P16817.aspx) (https://www.uuabookstore.org/Rejoice-Together-P16817.aspx), second edition, paperback, collected by Helen R. Pickett (Boston: Skinner House, 2005)

[Our Seven Principles in Story and Verse](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Our-Seven-Principles-in-Story-and-Verse-P16819.aspx) (at https://www.uuabookstore.org/Our-Seven-Principles-in-Story-and-Verse-P16819.aspx) by Kenneth W. Collier (Boston: Skinner House, 1997)

[Simply Pray: A Modern Spiritual Practice to Deepen Your Life](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Simply-Pray-P16795.aspx) (at https://www.uuabookstore.org/Simply-Pray-P16795.aspx) by Erik Walker Wikstrom (Boston: Skinner House, 2005)

[The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children](https://www.uuabookstore.org/The-Gift-of-Faith-P16795.aspx) by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar (Boston: Skinner House, second edition, 2003)

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they

understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

If the session has time for it, use this activity as part of the Opening. Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### **Including All Participants**

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: STORY HOT SEAT (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Sword of Wood](#)" (included in this document)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Move the chairs into a half circle with one chair set apart as if on a stage.
- Review the story. Try to imagine what the voice of the shah or the Jew would be like, and how they would move.

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity the children have a chance to step into the shoes of the characters in "The Sword of Wood" after the story has happened. Settle children in the chairs you have placed in a semi-circle. Tell them:

The chair set apart is the "hot seat." The person in the hot seat will pretend to be one of the characters in the story. The rest of us can ask the person in the hot seat questions. The person in the hot seat answers as character.

Be the first one in the hot seat. You may wish to tell the children that you are going to leave the room and come back as one of the characters. Leave, come back, and introduce yourself. You may say:

Hello, children. I am the shah. Do you have any questions for me?

Tell the children they may raise their hands and ask the character questions about the story. Answer a question or two, then ask if someone else would like to take a turn in the hot seat. Let this child leave the room and come back as the same or a new character. After a short while, suggest that another child take the hot seat. If the children are all eager to be in the hot seat, then limit one or two questions per turn in the hot seat.

As needed, guide the activity by sharing with the group these rules:

- There is no right or wrong answer. The point is to try to imagine what the characters might say.
- The person in the hot seat must take questions from all of the children, not just close peers.
- They must stick to the story. If they get silly or inappropriate they will have to give up the hot seat.
- Encourage the children to listen to the questions that have already been asked so that they might ask different questions.

The goal of this activity is to help the children develop a deeper understanding of the story, to explore the feelings and the perspectives of the characters in more depth, and to have a personal experience of empathy.

In the story of "The Sword of Wood," possible characters to enact in the story include Shah Abbas, the poor Jew, and the convicted criminal. If the children are having difficulty generating questions, model asking questions such as:

- Why did you keep changing the laws? (Shah Abbas)
- Do you pray? (Shah Abbas)
- What made you so interested in the Jewish man? (Shah Abbas)
- How do you stay so happy? (Jew)
- Does praying help you think of good ideas? (Jew)
- Do you think the shah should have kept changing the laws? (Jew)
- Why do you always pray? (Jew)
- Were you really guilty or innocent? (criminal)
- How did you feel when the Jewish man pulled out a wooden sword? (criminal)

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: WHAT IS FAITH? (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [Faith Statements](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the word "Faith" on newsprint. Post the newsprint where children can see it while sitting in the storytelling area and you can comfortably write on it.
- Print out a copy of Leader Resource, Faith Statements. Add your own ideas for statements that you think will work well with the group.

### Description of Activity

Gather children in the storytelling area. Indicate the word "Faith" posted on newsprint.

Say, in your own words:

The shah invited the Jewish man to come live in the palace because he showed unwavering faith. Unwavering means it didn't change – he always stayed faithful.

What ideas do you have about what the word "faith" means?

Write answers in simple words or phrases on the newsprint. Allow a few moments for the children to offer answers. Children this age may not have enough prior experience with the word to have ideas about what "faith" means; they will develop understanding during this session. End the brainstorming before children become frustrated or bored. If children's contributions have not produced a working definition of faith, you may offer:

Faith means you believe in something, even if you can't prove it.

Invite the children to stand up and form a line, shoulder to shoulder, facing you. Designate one end of the line as "agree" and the other end as "disagree." Say, in your own words:

We're going to play a quick game about faith. I'm going to make a statement and we're all going to show whether we agree with it or not by where we stand in the line.

Point out the "agree" and "disagree" ends of the line. Tell the group:

If you really, really agree you can stand all the way at the end, or if you really, really disagree you can go to the other end. You can also stand in the middle or anywhere on the line to show how much you agree or disagree. There is no right or wrong answer, and we will probably each feel differently about every statement. This is just to show what you believe and what you have faith in.

Read the statements on Leader Resource, Faith Statements, giving children time to find a place in the agree/disagree line after each one. After the participants have placed themselves on the line, you can note patterns such as total agreement, widely shared belief, or a situation where few children are sure and most want to stand in the middle. At times, you may ask volunteers to briefly explain why they chose a particular location.

### Including All Participants

Allow enough physical space and enough time between statements for any children with limited mobility to fully participate; make sure all children can find a place in the agree/disagree line without feeling rushed.

Some children may become upset if others "disagree" with statements they firmly believe are true. Embrace the teachable moment and remind children that something can be "true for you," even if someone else does not believe it. Becoming aware that they believe strongly in one of the statements made in this activity, and that others do not, can help children learn what "faith" means.



## MORAL TALES: SESSION 3: STORY 1: THE SWORD OF WOOD

A Jewish tale from Afghanistan.

Once, on a summer night in the country Afghanistan, the ruler Shah Abbis changed out of his fancy robes and left his palace dressed as a peasant to enjoy the evening air and to wander through the streets unnoticed. He walked and walked until he reached the poorest section at the edge of the town. He soon heard joyful singing coming from a dimly lit cottage. As he peered in the window he saw a man sitting at a table. He was eating and singing and giving thanks to God. The shah was astonished to see such a poor man in such good spirits and so he asked if he might come in as a guest.

After accepting food and drink the shah asked the man how he earned his living. "I am a poor Jew," he said. "I wander the streets and fix shoes, and in this way I earn enough money to buy all the food I need for one day."

"But what will happen to you when you are too old to work?" asked the shah.

"Oh, I do not have to worry about that," the man said happily. "God blesses me day by day, and I know that somehow there will always be enough."

The shah returned to his palace and took off his peasant disguise. He was determined to test the faith of this man. The next day he proclaimed: "No one is allowed to fix shoes for pay!"

When the Jew went to work, he was astonished to learn of the new law. "What is he going to do if he can't fix shoes and earn money?" (Leader: Take a few brief suggestions.)

Here's what he did. He lifted his eyes to heaven (Leader: Raise your arms in the air and look up) and he prayed, "God, the Shah has made it against the law for me to fix shoes. But I know you will help me to find a new job." He looked around and saw some people carrying water. He decided that he too would become a water carrier.

The Jew carried water to and from the town well and sold it to people, for the rest of the day. And in that way he earned just enough money to buy food ... for one day. (Leader: You may wish to start the children at this point repeating the refrain, "to buy food for one day," each time you say, "he earned just enough money ... ")

The shah again disguised himself and returned to the man's house. He was very surprised to find the man again singing joyfully and eating. "How are you?" he

asked upon entering. "I heard of the law and had to see how you had survived the day."

"God did not abandon me today," the Jew answered happily. "The shah closed one door, but God opened another to take its place. I am now a water carrier."

The shah took his leave again. (Leader: "And what do you think he did?" After brief answers, continue the story.) He issued another proclamation: no one was to carry water for pay. Again the Jew wondered how he could earn money if it was against the law to carry water. But again he prayed and this time he saw that men were going into the forest to cut trees to sell for firewood. So he decided to cut trees and sell firewood also, and that's just what he did. And in that way he earned just enough money... " (Leader: Prompt the children to finish your sentence.) "... to buy food for one day."

Again the shah came in disguise and learned of the man's continued faith and good fortune. The next day, he issued a command that his soldiers stop all the woodcutters coming from the forests and bring them to the palace to work. He dressed them all as guards and gave them swords. He told them that they would not be paid until the end of the month.

(Leader: "What will happen if the Jew is not paid until the end of the month? What do you suppose he should do?" After some answers, continue the story.)

The Jew was perplexed indeed, for he had no money for dinner that evening, and it would certainly be difficult to wait a whole month for his pay. But he trusted God. So he prayed and he prayed for an answer to his problem. How would he be able to buy food tomorrow, if he wouldn't be paid for a full month?

On the way home from the palace, while examining his sword and sheath, the Jew had a clever idea. He would make a sword out of wood, the same size as the shah's metal sword that would look just like it. Then he could sell the shah's sword. So he made a wooden sword and sold the real one and he had just enough money for food for a month!

The shah, in his peasant disguise again, was much surprised to find the Jew singing and eating that night. When he heard the Jew's story about the sword, he asked him, "What will you do if the shah finds out what you have done?"

"Oh, I do not worry about such things," the Jew replied. "Every day my life is filled with blessings from God. I know that somehow everything will come out all right."

The next day the shah ordered all the guards to report to the center of the city where there was to be an execution of a man who had stolen from the royal palace. All the guards came, including the ones who used to be woodcutters, and including the Jew. All the townspeople came to see.

The shah ordered his officer to call the Jew to come forth to cut off the man's head. "Do not ask this of me," the Jew cried. "I have never even killed a fly." The officer said that it was the order of the shah and he must obey or risk his own life.

The Jew asked for a few minutes to pray to God. Then he stood up (Leader: Stand up and speak dramatically) in front of all of the townspeople and said out loud, "God, you know that I have never killed anyone in my whole life. Please, God, if this man is guilty, let my sword be so sharp as to kill him in a single blow. But if he is not guilty, let my sword turn to wood, as a sign of his innocence." (Leader: Look at the children and ask

them to predict what will happen. When they clearly understand what is going to happen with the sword and why, resume telling the story.)

With all eyes on him, the Jew reached for his sword. (Leader: Acts this out) He pulled it out of its sheath, and held it high. The crowd gasped, then clapped and cheered when they saw the wooden sword, for they thought a miracle had taken place.

The shah was delighted when he saw the wisdom of the Jew. He called him near. He told him that he had been the visitor those four preceding nights. "And now," he said, "I hope that you will come and stay with me in my palace and be my advisor, for I see that you are a man of wisdom and unwavering faith, and I have much to learn from you."

So the Jew went to live in the palace with the shah. If you went by there in the evenings, you would hear them singing.

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 3: LEADER RESOURCE 1: ALL MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS**

I am looking for all of my friends and neighbors who...

### Gratitude

- ... are grateful for our parents.
- ... are grateful for our school.
- ... are grateful for the color red.
- ... are grateful for soccer games.
- ... are grateful for pizza.
- ... are grateful for chocolate.
- ... are grateful for summer.

### Being Sorry

- ... are sorry for fighting with brothers or sisters.
- ... are sorry for telling a lie.
- ... are sorry for forgetting to brush our teeth.
- ... are sorry for forgetting about our homework.
- ... are sorry for taking something that wasn't ours.
- ... are sorry for breaking something that belonged to someone else.

### Wishing for Oneself

- ... wish for new clothes.
- ... wish for candy.
- ... wish for a baby sister or brother.
- ... wish for a dog.
- ... wish for (a popular toy).

### Loving Wishes on Behalf of Others

- ... wish for somebody who is sick to get better.
- ... wish for no war.
- ... wish for a friend to get a pet.
- ... wish for no litter and a clean Earth.
- ... wish for homes for every stray animal.
- ... wish for food children who don't have enough food.

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 3: LEADER RESOURCE 2: FAITH STATEMENTS**

I have faith that there is life somewhere else, on another planet besides Earth.

I have faith that rules are for a good reason.

I have faith that my friends will share with me.

I have faith that there is a God.

I have faith that the sun will give Earth light for billions of years.

I have faith that good things will happen tomorrow.

I have faith that my teachers at school will take care of me.

I have faith that someday everyone in the world will have enough food.

I have faith that someday there will be peace in the world.

I have faith in myself to do good things.

I have faith that people in our congregation will help me if I need help.

I have faith in myself to stand up to a bully.

I have faith that someday people and animals will be able to talk to each other.

I have faith in scientists who say that the Earth started with a big bang.

I have faith that people who die go to heaven.

I have faith that people who die get born again as a new creature.

I have faith that God is listening if I pray.

## FIND OUT MORE

In the online bookstore of the Unitarian Universalist Association, you will find a number of books about faith in a Unitarian Universalist context:

[Rejoice Together: Prayers, Meditations and Other Readings for Family, Individual, and Small-Group Worship](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Rejoice-Together-P16817.aspx) (at <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Rejoice-Together-P16817.aspx>), second edition, paperback, collected by Helen R. Pickett (Boston: Skinner House, 2005)

[Our Seven Principles in Story and Verse](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Our-Seven-Principles-in-Story-and-Verse-P16819.aspx) (at <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Our-Seven-Principles-in-Story-and-Verse-P16819.aspx>) by Kenneth W. Collier (Boston: Skinner House, 1997)

[Simply Pray: A Modern Spiritual Practice to Deepen Your Life](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Simply-Pray-P16795.aspx) (at <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Simply-Pray-P16795.aspx>) by Erik Walker Wikstrom (Boston: Skinner House, 2005)

[The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children](https://www.uuabookstore.org/The-Gift-of-Faith-P16732.aspx) (at <https://www.uuabookstore.org/The-Gift-of-Faith-P16732.aspx>) by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar (Boston: Skinner House, second edition, 2003)

[Singing the Living Tradition](https://www.uuabookstore.org/Singing-the-Living-Tradition-Hymnal-P16918.aspx) (at <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Singing-the-Living-Tradition-Hymnal-P16918.aspx>) by the Unitarian Universalist Association (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1993).

## Prayer Beads

*A String and a Prayer* by Eleanor Wiley and Maggie Oman Shannon (Red Wheel/Weiser, 2002) talks about the use of prayer beads in different faith traditions.

## Fidget Objects

The idea of having a basket of "fidget objects" available during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, koosh balls, and other soft, quiet, manipulatable objects.

When you introduce the fidget object basket to the group, begin by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may wish to use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children that the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the basket available for the duration of the session, or bring the basket out only during activities, such as hearing a story told, that require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

# SESSION 4: IN ANOTHER'S SHOES

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The first duty of love is to listen. — Paul Tillich

To explore the experience of empathy is to understand more deeply the first Unitarian Universalist principle: the inherent worth and dignity of all people (and all beings.) The Merriam-Webster online dictionary's definition of "[empathy](http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/empathy)" (at [www.m-w.com/dictionary/empathy](http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/empathy)) includes "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another." Empathy is the necessary action behind love, forgiveness, compassion and caring, and the driving forces of most good works in our world. Cures for disease, laws protecting the vulnerable, charitable contributions and even wars fought to end brutality, are examples of the results of empathy.

This session introduces empathy as a tool for discerning good and just action. It also guides children to recognize and respect multiple perspectives, and to understand that any given scenario can have multiple truths.

In this session the children will hear a Scottish folk tale about a seal hunter who wounds a seal and then is given a chance to experience this wounding from the seal's perspective. Following the story the children will have further opportunities to look at situations from multiple perspectives. They will also participate in an exercise of empathetic listening with their peers to learn one of the basic skills of empathy that can be practiced on a daily basis. As Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin wrote in *Building Character in Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), "Such experiences (as gaining empathy through hearing the stories of others) encourage students to resolve in the quiet of their hearts to stand up for the threatened and the vulnerable."

The Faith in Action component of this session offers an activity for practicing empathy, justice, and goodness by card- or letter-writing to protect seals that are being hunted now. A longer-term Faith in Action project brings an awareness and/or fundraising project to the larger congregational community. In this session, the children add "Empathy" to the Moral Compass poster.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Give participants an opportunity to share acts of goodness that they have done (or witnessed)

- Provide a story and active experiences that demonstrate the meaning of the word "Empathy" and how empathy feels
- Teach that an important part of acting out of goodness is to look at things from other perspectives besides one's own
- Help participants learn to identify, respect and value the perspectives and experiences of others which differ from their own
- Strengthen participants' connection to and sense of responsibility to their faith community

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Take pride in sharing acts of goodness and justice they have done (or witnessed) in the "Gems of Goodness" project
- Hear and act out a story about how someone learns to see things from another perspective.
- Learn to listen and speak empathetically
- Participate in clean-up together
- Optional: Practice using empathy as they write cards or letters to advocate protection of seals from hunting

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story — The Wounded Seal	5
Activity 4: Processing the Story	5
Activity 5: Cooperative Musical Hoops	10
Activity 6: In Your Shoes: Real Life from Multiple Perspectives	15
Activity 7: Clean-up	2
Faith in Action: Short-term – Protecting Seals,	15

Advocacy	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Story Hot Seat	20
Alternate Activity 3: My Partner's Shoes	3
Alternate Activity 4: Empathetic Listening	10

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

To prepare yourself spiritually for this session you may find it helpful to take a few moments to experience empathy in an adaptation of a Tibetan Buddhist meditation called Tonglin. The essence of Tonglin, [in the words of meditation teacher Andrew Weiss](#) (at [innerself.com/meditation](http://innerself.com/meditation)), is "to breathe in the suffering of another person and to breathe out loving-kindness, compassion, and healing."

Find a place where you can sit quietly and comfortably and where you will not be disturbed. Take a few moments to breathe deeply, relaxing your face, shoulders and back, and wherever else you notice tension. Tune in to the rhythm of your breath as it flows in and out for several minutes. Identify an emotion that you are feeling, or a state of mind or body that you have been in today, or a problem that is concerning you. From a centered and kind place, breathe with that experience. Send yourself a wish for peace, or healing, or whatever you feel you need: "May I be healthy and at peace."

Then try to expand your awareness. Imagine how many of the six billion plus people on the planet might be feeling or experiencing exactly what you are, right now.

Imagine who they are, all over the world in all kinds of circumstances. Join with them. Breathe in their feelings, and breathe out healing and compassion.

You may wish to say, "May all of these beings be safe and at peace." If you like you may end the meditation here, or you may continue to imagine people in circumstances that you are not experiencing, such as sickness, or poverty, or war, and join with them, breathing in the suffering that they are experiencing and breathing out healing and compassion for them.

You may wish to end the meditation by sending a prayer for peace and healing for all beings, and joining with them by saying, "May all beings be healthy and at peace." The Tonglin meditation can help us to experience how connected we are to others and that in our suffering and in our compassion we are joined.

You may also wish to read through the story, "The Wounded Seal," several times. Imagine that you are the Seal Hunter, rowing in his boat, eating his dinner. Try to feel compassion for this man who is doing what his ancestors having been doing for many generations. Then you may wish to step into the shoes of the large grey seal that is stabbed, and his family members that huddle around him, worried for his life. You may wish to ponder that the seals chose to teach the Seal Hunter rather than seek revenge against him.

Finally, you may wish to think about ways in which you practice empathy, and times it has helped you feel more respectful of others and to be more mindful of their perspectives, even if you don't agree with them. Think of the charitable works that you have done as a result of empathy. You may also wish to acknowledge the people who have shown empathy toward you, such as friends, counselors and loved ones.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle

- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately 2"x 3", for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

#### Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness  
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Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.

- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2: Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2: Introducing the Moral Compass) and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource 1, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts in goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!"

or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- A stuffed animal seal or pictures of seals in the wild
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.

- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it as they sit in the storytelling area.
- Write the word "Empathy" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Empathy" directly on the poster.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them. The story, "The Wounded Seal," is more interactive than some stories. Children who are usually drawn to the fidget objects may not need them in this session.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket this week."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the story basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass the stuffed seal or picture of seals around.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate Scotland. Tell the children that this is the country where this folk tale comes from. Point out Scotland's northern coastline, and say that cold ocean waters are where seals live.

Tell the children, in your own words:

In some parts of the world, including Scotland, where this folk tale is from, seals have been hunted for their skins, and also for their meat. People have used seal skins to make fur coats and other clothing. Seal-hunting and seal products are not allowed in some countries anymore, but the country of Canada still lets hunters kill seals. Every year, hundreds of thousands of seals are killed, and most of them are just a few months old.

You may wish to show Canada on the globe or world map, if you have one.

Write or post the word "Empathy" on the Moral Compass poster and ask if anyone can read the word. After someone has identified the word, ask if anyone knows what that word means. Describe the word:

Empathy is the ability to step into someone else's shoes, to imagine what they feel, with respect and caring. When you use empathy, you see things and feel things the way another person might see or feel them — someone who is not you.

Offer an example that children this age can relate to. You can ask:

- Have you ever felt sad because someone else was sad?
- Have you ever thought about how someone else would feel if they weren't invited to your party, and decided to invite them, even if you didn't really want to?

Tell the group:

The story you are going to hear is about someone who learns how the seals feel when they are hunted and hurt. Learning how the seals feel wakes up the character's empathy.

When everyone has had a chance to look at the object, have the last person put it back in the story basket or on the altar, if you are using one.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell/remind the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will use this sound instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed. When a picture is being passed, describe it to a child with blindness or limited eyesight while they are holding it.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources. Note, "The Wounded Seal" is more interactive than some of the other stories in Moral Tales; children who ordinarily use fidget objects may not need them.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE WOUNDED SEAL (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Wounded Seal](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story, "The Wounded Seal." Take note of the various places where you are guided to stop telling the story and ask the children to demonstrate a type of movement. Decide what level of movement activity you want to lead and which opportunities for participation will allow the children to be engaged with the story and not distracted from its message. You do not need to use all of the suggestions for participation. Read the story aloud a few times, practicing the suggested interactive approach. Picture the story sequence in your mind, with the movements, to help yourself commit it to memory. Taking the time to picture the story in your imagination will help you create the mood for the story and provide a sense of place for the listeners.
- Optional: An alternate way to tell this story requires two adults. One co-leader reads or tells the story, while the other leads the children in

acting out the movements and uses the sound instrument to signal for the action to start and stop.

- Optional: If you do not think the interactive telling will work with the group, plan to tell the story in a straightforward manner. Review Alternate Activity 2, Story Hot Seat; this may be a good way for the group to process the story after they hear it.

### Description of Activity

The goal of the participatory style of storytelling is to fully engage the children in the story. As the children move as the story characters would, they have a chance to "walk in the shoes of" the characters, increasing their own experience of empathy.

Wherever you use the children's participation suggestions, use the chime, rain stick, or other instrument to signal when the movement has gone on long enough and the children are to be still and listen again. While most children will probably understand this signal without explanation; you may like to explain it the first time you use it.

The degree of participation will vary from group to group. Younger children are more likely to fully participate. If some decide it is not "cool," then others are likely to hold back, too. It is worthwhile to try the activity, though, as it takes some children a while to warm up to physical participation and most children this age enjoy it greatly.

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Then, tell the story.

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over.

### Including All Participants

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

## ACTIVITY 4: PROCESSING THE STORY (5 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- This activity is meant to follow the story, "The Wounded Seal," if you have told in a participatory manner. If "The Wounded Seal" is

told as a listening story, then you may prefer to use Alternative Activity 2, Story Hot Seat as a follow-up activity.

### Description of Activity

Since the children have been active, they should be able to sit for a short time to discuss the story. Ask these questions:

- What do you think would have happened if the seals had come to the Seal Hunter and simply asked him to stop hunting them? Do you think he would have stopped? Why or why not?
- Why do you think he stopped hunting the seals after having that experience?
- Why do you think he didn't mind hunting the seals before he had that experience?
- Why do you think the seal that came to the Seal Hunter disguised as the Companion didn't just take revenge and try to hurt him?
- Do you think the seals showed empathy for the Seal Hunter? How? (If this question is too difficult for them, you may suggest to the children that the seals were able to step into his shoes and to look at his work from his perspective. He was doing what his family had done for generations because he didn't know any better.)

### Including All Participants

If some children seem unable to sit, listen and contribute to a discussion at this point, you may wish to cut the questions short and/or bring out the fidget objects basket (see Leader Resources).

## ACTIVITY 5: COOPERATIVE MUSICAL HOOPS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Three to five hula hoops
- Optional: If hula hoops are unavailable, you can adapt this game by using carpet squares or mats, or by drawing a circle in chalk on the floor. Be creative, just look for materials that will not slip under the children.
- A CD player with a "pause" button
- Music that is lively and will be fun for the children to move around to
- A bell or other sound instrument

## Preparation for Activity

- Move tables and chairs to create as much space as possible for moving around, or plan to bring the group to a larger, open space for this activity.
- Place the three to five hula hoops at least three feet apart from one another.

## Description of Activity

Tell the children that when you start the music, they may move or dance or skip around the room wherever they wish. As soon as you stop the music, they must quickly get inside nearest the hula hoop.

Play the music, then stop it. Once the children are all inside hula hoops, start the music again. While children are moving and dancing, take one of the hula hoops away. Stop the music. Tell the children that now they must all get inside the remaining hula hoops as quickly and carefully as possible.

Continue until you have only two hula hoops left in the center of the room. Before you start the music again, tell the children:

Next time the music stops, you must carefully and cooperatively all fit inside the one hula hoop that will be left. You will have to fit so everyone's feet are inside the hula hoop. It may be difficult to do. While you are working on it, listen for this sound (demonstrate the bell or other instrument). When you hear it, freeze.

Play the music one last time, then stop it. Watch as the children try to fit inside the remaining hula hoop. At any time, you may use the bell or other sound instrument to freeze the action and ask the children to look at where they are. Guide them to talk from a still position about how to accomplish their goal. If there are too many children to accomplish this, you may tell them that as long as at least one of each child's feet is inside, they will have succeeded. If there are only a few children, you can make it more challenging by asking them to pick up the hula hoop and move around in it, together.

The goal of this activity is to give the children a chance to work cooperatively and creatively at a task in which they all must be included. It is also to give them an opportunity to move their whole bodies, and to have fun.

## Including All Participants

If any children cannot move freely, the group can find a way to include those persons in the final circle. If a child does not feel comfortable participating in the movement, give them the job of starting and stopping the music or invite the child to give suggestions as how to everyone could join the circle.

Some children may dislike being in the center of a group where children are all pushing, moving and talking at once. Before you start the third go-round, suggest that anyone who is not comfortable in the middle of a crowded situation could stay to the outside of the hoop, and that if anyone feels uncomfortable at anytime they can yell "stop" and everyone will freeze so that they can get out.

## ACTIVITY 6: IN YOUR SHOES: REAL LIFE FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copy of Leader Resource 1, [Empathy Scenarios](#) (included in this document)
- Five pairs of paper shoes
- A bell, chime, or other sound instrument
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Use Leader Resource 2, Shoe Template or trace your own shoes to make a template to draw and cut out five pairs of paper shoes.
- Download and print out Leader Resource, Empathy Scenarios. Add your own ideas for scenarios that can form the basis for a role play to help the children explore empathy. See a list of children's stories that may inspire additional scenarios, in the Leader Resources section.
- Take time to think about the ways the children in the group may respond to these scenarios. Some may have experienced these situations as a victim or target, which could bring up sensitive feelings. Others may have been in a bullying or bystander role. This activity must be voluntary. Make sure the children should know that if they start to feel uncomfortable in any of the roles they can ask to sit down.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show them the pairs of paper shoes. Place pairs of shoes as you want them for the first scenario you plan to do. Say:

This game is about the expression, "If you could stand in my shoes." What do you think that means?

Some children may know the expression. Affirm correct answers. Then tell the group:

The expression doesn't really mean we need to try on other people's shoes to find out how it

feels to be them. It does mean that if you can imagine how it feels to be someone else in a particular situation, you can understand the situation better. In this game, we are going to stand in the shoes of some other people, and see if it helps us imagine how those people might feel.

I am going to describe a pretend situation now. I will need some volunteers to stand in the shoes of the characters in the story.

Invite the correct number of volunteers to stand in the center with you. Some of the scenarios include directions for staging with chairs or the paper shoes; have volunteers help you move items, as needed. Assign roles, and read a scenario from Leader Resource, Empathy Scenarios, or one you have added. When you have finished, invite some or all of the volunteers to describe what they think the character they are standing in for would feel, need or want.

You might ask two of the children to "switch shoes" and consider the situation from another character's perspective. Then invite new volunteers to stand in the shoes and express what they feel and think.

After the children have had a chance to share their thoughts and feelings, invite them to sit again. Ask the group:

- If you were observing this scene at school or in your neighborhood, how could you show caring and goodness? How could you help?
- What would have to happen so that you felt safe enough to do what you wanted to do?

If there are two or more adults in the room, one of you can write on the newsprint the feelings that the children are expressing. To close the activity, you might go over this list of feelings to reinforce the experience.

The goal of this activity is to help the children to see how any situation can have multiple perspectives, and that our feelings toward someone and his/her situation can change when we take the time to step into their shoes. Another goal is for the children to experience that when they take the time to know what another person might be feeling and needing, they are more likely and better able to care about their needs and feelings, to treat them with greater respect, and to act on their behalf.

### **Including All Participants**

This activity requires sensitivity and close monitoring. There may be children in the group who have been in the shoes of the target, or have been treated unfairly. Others may recognize that they have been in other roles portrayed in the scenarios. Stepping into the shoes of

any character must be voluntary. If a child becomes uncomfortable, allow them to step out.

If children cannot take the exercise seriously or participate respectfully, ask them to sit away from the activity until it is finished.

A child in a wheelchair can position themselves at the spot marked by a pair of paper shoes.

## **ACTIVITY 7: CLEAN-UP (2 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials.
- Waste basket lined with a bag.
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers.

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity the children are asked to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it and to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### **Including All Participants**

All children should assist as able.

## **CLOSING (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- Moral Compass poster
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find some suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. It is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it during the Closing.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions. Today we heard a story about empathy and we had some experiences about trying on one another's shoes. Standing in someone else's shoes can be silly, but it is an expression that can help us remember to try to imagine what it is like to be

someone else and feel the way they do. Let's keep empathy in mind. Understanding how others feel is a very powerful way of finding acts of goodness you can do.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to try using empathy and the other virtues you have posted on the Moral Compass poster as they look for ways to act for goodness or justice.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
 Love give light to every face;  
 May the kindness which we learn  
 Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these.

Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: SHORT-TERM – PROTECTING SEALS, ADVOCACY (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Card stock or other paper for the children to make cards
- Envelopes sized appropriately for cards or letters
- Crayons, markers, pens and pencils
- Contact information for Canadian officials
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Magazines with pictures of seals
- Optional: Computer with internet access

### Preparation for Activity

- Explore the links in Leader Resources (Protecting Seals) in the Resources section for current information about the effort to end seal-

hunting in Canada and actions the children can take.

- Decide what form this short-term project will take. You might have the children write letters or make cards expressing their feelings about seal hunting and why it should be stopped. These could be sent to officials in the Canadian government or of countries that are considering outlawing seal products. They could make "thank you" cards to U.S. or Canadian officials or advocates who are working to end seal hunting in Canada, or to officials of countries that have outlawed trade in products made from seals. The children could write letters or make cards from the seals, expressing their feelings in first person.
- Find out the names and addresses of Canadian government officials children can write to. Write their names and addresses on newsprint and post it, so the children can copy them onto letters, cards, and/or envelopes. An alternative would be to determine which countries were currently trying to ban the sale of seal products and write letters to their officials. Children could also write "thank you" letters to officials of countries that have agreed to ban seal product sales.
- Place card-making/letter-writing materials and envelopes on work tables.
- Optional: Have pictures and simple information available about seal hunting. You may be able to download a video onto a laptop, or access the internet during the session. **IMPORTANT:** Pictures and videos related to seal protection can be gruesome, showing animals being clubbed to death, skinned, or left as bloodied or skinned carcasses. Preview everything you plan to show the group.

### **Description of Activity**

This project engages the children in acting from the empathy that they have experienced for the seals and the Seal Hunter. They will be given the opportunity to help protect seals from seal hunting in Canada by making cards or writing letters. If you are looking for a project that can involve the larger congregational community, read *Faith in Action: Protecting Seals* — Long-term, which provides guidance for engaging the children in an awareness and/or fundraising campaign.

Gather the children around the tables where they will work. Remind them that as Unitarian Universalists we try to put our faith into action. Suggest that after learning

about empathy and caring we want to use our new feelings to help make the world a better place. Suggest that if children want to help to protect seals that are still being hunted, they can write letters to people in Canada who have the power to make a law against seal hunting. Or, if you prefer, suggest the children write to thank officials or advocates who are working to end seal hunting and trade in products made from seals.

You may wish to tell the children that seal hunting still goes on and that the largest seal hunt happens each spring in Canada, just after new seals are born. Give them as much information as you think will be helpful but not overwhelming or unnecessarily upsetting. Tell the children that many organizations and individuals are working hard to convince the Canadian government to outlaw seal hunting and to convince other countries to stop buying products made of seal parts.

### **Including All Participants**

At this age, children in a group may have a wide range of abilities in terms of writing. Offer children the option of illustrating a card and dictating the words they want to say to an adult or an older child. Children who do not wish to make or write a card can be invited to draw a scene from the story or one of the role play scenarios.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?



- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*The first duty of love is to listen. — Paul Tillich*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today the children learned about empathy as a tool for treating others with caring, compassion and respect, and for making moral decisions about how to act in the world. They heard a folk tale from Scotland about a seal hunter who wounds a seal and then is given a chance by the seals to "step into their shoes" and experience how it feels, from their perspective, to be hunted.

We extended our exploration of empathy by acting out various scenarios where we stepped into other people's shoes to see things from their point of view. For our Faith in Action project, we began making cards and letters to send to government officials in Canada to help protect the seals from brutal hunting practices.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.

Invite your child(ren) to retell you the story, "The Wounded Seal," and what they learned by acting out different parts of the story. Ask them about the role plays in which they had an opportunity to step into other people's shoes. Talk with them about ways in which you practice empathy as a family, showing care for relatives and neighbors, helping those who are in need, or forgiving others who hurt us.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER

Notice opportunities to try to look at an experience through someone else's eyes and to step into other people's shoes. Point these out to your child(ren). If your child has a conflict with a sibling or friend ask them to imagine how the other person might feel.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

Make a habit of sharing stories from Moral Tales during a meal time together, soon after each session. You can

find all the stories used in Moral Tales sessions online; they are included in the [Tapestry of Faith curricula](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/) (at [www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/)) for children. You can invite your child to tell a story, print out the story and tell it yourself, or tell it together.

See if your child will tell you some of the activities the group did, related to the story. Share a story from your own experience that relates to the story theme. Examples in this case could be experiences in which you learned to appreciate someone else's point of view or began to feel more kindly toward someone after learning more about them. Relate experiences that showed you what it might feel like to be hungry, scared, homeless, ill, oppressed, bullied, or in another situation that is hard to imagine if you are not in it.

### A FAMILY GAME

Take a story that your family is familiar with and take turns telling it from the perspective of the different characters. For example, tell the story of the Three Little Pigs from the perspective of the Wolf.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### **Including All Participants**

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and/or stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: STORY HOT SEAT (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Wounded Seal](#)" (included in this document)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Move the chairs into a half circle with one chair set apart as if on a stage.
- Review the story. Try to imagine how you would feel, if you were the fisherman. What would it feel like to be in his body? What would his voice sound like? Do you imagine him to be kind, gruff, shy, and witty? How might he be different after everything that occurs in the story?

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity the children have a chance to step into the shoes of the characters in "The Wounded Seal" after the story has happened. Settle children in the chairs you have placed in a semi-circle. Tell them:

The chair set apart is the "hot seat." The person in the hot seat will pretend to be one of the characters in the story. The rest of us can ask the person in the hot seat questions. The person in the hot seat answers as character.

Be the first one in the hot seat. Tell the children that you are going to leave the room and come back as one of the characters. Leave, come back, and introduce yourself. You may say:

Hello, children. I am the Seal Hunter. Do you have any questions for me?

Tell the children they may raise their hands and ask the character questions about the story. Answer a question or two, then ask if someone else would like to take a turn in the hot seat. Let this child leave the room and come back as the same or a new character. After a short while, suggest that another child take the hot seat. If the children are all eager to be in the hot seat, then limit one or two questions per turn in the hot seat.

As needed, guide the activity by sharing with the group these rules:

- There is no right or wrong answer. The point is to try to imagine what the characters might say.
- The person in the hot seat must take questions from all of the children, not just close peers.
- They must stick to the story. If they get silly or inappropriate they will have to give up the hot seat.
- Encourage the children to listen to the questions that have already been asked so that they might ask different questions.

The goal of this activity is to help the children develop a deeper understanding of the story, to explore the feelings and the perspectives of the characters in more depth, and to have a personal experience of empathy.

If the children are having difficulty generating questions, model asking questions such as:

- Are you ever going to hunt seals again? (Seal Hunter)
- Why did you used to hunt seals? (Seal Hunter)
- What are you going to do now, to earn money, instead of hunting seals?
- Why did you bring the Seal Hunter to see the wounded seal? Why weren't you afraid he might hurt the seals more? (Companion)
- Were you scared or mad when you saw the Seal Hunter who hurt you was coming back? (Wounded Seal)

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: MY PARTNER'S SHOES (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A box or bag large enough to hold one shoe from half of the participants

### **Description of Activity**

When you use this method of forming pairs of children, you increase the chance of each child to work with someone that they do not know well. It also strengthens

the metaphor that we are using in this lesson of building empathy by walking in another's shoes.

Show the group the bag or box. Ask one half of the children to remove one of their shoes, put it in the bag or box, and return to their seats.

Then, invite the other children to reach into the box or bag of shoes and pull one out without looking. When each child has a shoe, invite them to find the child who is wearing the matching shoe. That child will be their partner for the Alternate Activity 4: Empathetic Listening.

### Including All Participants

Some children may not yet know how to tie their own shoes. Offer help to children who seem reluctant to take their shoes off or have difficulty putting them back on again.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: EMPATHETIC LISTENING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A bell or other noise maker
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A piece of paper with these three questions written on it:

### Preparation for Activity

- Decide how to form pairs. Alternate Activity 3: My Partner's Shoes offers a method that reinforces this session's theme and is likely to pair children with others whom they do not know well.
- If you pair children using Alternate Activity 3, the child who lost their shoe will be the first one to tell a story and the child who found the shoe will listen first. If you form pairs another way, decide how you will select the first story-teller in the pairs.
- Prepare to have the pairs of children spread out in the meeting space so partners can hear one another with minimal distraction.
- On newsprint, write "Good Listening" and under that, the short versions of these four tips for empathetic listening: Eye contact (Look in the eyes of the person who is talking to you.) / Nod (Nod as if to say, "Tell me more," or "That's interesting." / Do not interrupt (Do not interrupt or tell your story until the other person is done) / Ask questions (Ask the person some questions that relate to something they have told you.)

- On another sheet of newsprint, write "Questions to Ask" and under that, write: How old were you? What happened? How did you feel?
- Post the sheets of newsprint where children can see them during this activity.

### Description of Activity

Arrange the group so each child is seated, facing their partner. Tell them you will give the group a question for one partner to answer by telling a short story to the other partner. Say, in your own words:

The partner who listens to the story also has a lot to do. When you listen to your partner, try to listen with empathy. That means you will listen in a way that shows your partner you can imagine being them in the situation they are describing. Listen in a way that shows you understand how they might have felt.

Now indicate the newsprint you have posted. You can say:

I am sure you already know how to listen carefully to another person. Here are some things you can do to make really sure the other person knows how carefully and caringly you are listening to their story.

Tell children the tips for empathetic listening. Indicate the short reminder phrases that you have posted. Tell the group you will sound the bell (or other noise maker) to signal when it is time to switch partners, and when it is time to return to the circle.

With your co-leader or a child volunteer, demonstrate the difference between eye contact and looking away, listening carefully and interrupting, nodding in response and yawning or looking blank as if bored.

Now invite partners to look at one another. Make sure each pair knows who will tell a story first. Remind the listeners to listen carefully and empathetically, and not to interrupt to talk about their own experiences.

Use one of these questions, or one of your own:

- Can you tell me about something that once happened to you with an animal or insect?
- Can you tell me about a time when you got into trouble at home or at school?
- Can you tell me about a favorite present that you got or wish you had gotten?
- Can you tell me about a time when you hurt yourself?
- Can you tell me about a time when you made a new friend?

- Can you tell me about a time when you were really scared? (... surprised?) (... happy?)

Roam the room and listen in on some pairs to help children follow the instructions. After a minute or so, sound the bell. Once all pairs have stopped, invite the listeners to tell the story back to their partners, including any details such as how old the person was, what happened, and how they felt. The story-teller can correct them if necessary.

Sound the bell again and ask the partners to switch roles. Restate some of the tips for empathetic listening or the rules of the activity if you feel it is necessary. Choose another question, and repeat the activity.

The goal of this activity is to teach the children how to listen empathetically to someone else and to get to know their peers by learning more about them and showing caring and respect. If there is time at the end of this exercise, ask for volunteer pairs to each retell their partners' story to the group. Remind the whole group to demonstrate the same empathetic listening skills.

### **Including All Participants**

If the number of children is uneven, have one group of three. If there is a child who is non-verbal or for whom this exercise would be too difficult, include them in a threesome as a listener.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 4: STORY 1: THE WOUNDED SEAL – A FOLK TALE FROM SCOTLAND

Adapted from a Scottish folktale in *The Fairy Mythology* by Thomas Keightley (George Bell & Sons, 1882).

Long ago in Scotland there was a small fishing village that stood at the edge of the sea. Now in this village was a man who had made his living from the killing of seals and selling their skins in the market. His father and grandfather before him had done it and it was the only way that he knew how to make a living.

One day the Seal Hunter got into his small boat and rowed out from the rocky shores. (Leader — "Can you show me what a rowing movement would look like? Let's all try it. When you hear this sound (rain stick or bell) it will be time to stop the movements and the story will continue when everyone is quiet.")

He rowed, and rowed until he came to the place where the seals were gathered. He put in his oars and let the boat drift. He watched as the seals swam, and played together.

(Leader — "Can you show pretend to be the seals swimming and playing together?" This can be done sitting or standing and can be done in place or moving around the room.)

Soon a large grey seal came up beside the boat. Quickly he stabbed his knife into the seal, and reached for his net. But before he could throw the net over the seal it swam away, with the Seal Hunter's knife still in its side. (Leader — "What movement can we make for the seal swimming away? What sound do you think it was making? What were the other seals doing? Can one person be the wounded seal and everyone else be the other seals? What do you think the wounded seal was feeling?")

The Seal Hunter fished for small fish that day, and then rowed home.

That night as he was eating his dinner there came a knock on the door. (Leader — Mimic a knocking movement and sound for children to join in.)

There stood a woman who had come to his door on horseback. She was handsomely dressed, but her eyes were sad. "There is a rich man who would like to buy many seal skins from you," she said. "I will take you to him."

She beckoned for the Seal Hunter to jump up behind her on her horse and they rode like the wind. (Leader —

"Can you show me from your seats what it would look like to ride like the wind on horseback?")

Soon they came to the edge of the cliffs and they dismounted. The Seal Hunter looked around but he could not see anyone else there. He was about to ask where the rich man was, when the handsome woman took him by the hand and pulled him over the edge of the cliff. Down, down they fell through the air and then into the cold sea below. (Leader — "Can you show what this would look like and feel like?")

They swam deeper and deeper and soon the Seal Hunter realized that he could breathe under water. In fact he saw that his body and that of his companion had become seal bodies.

They swam deeper and deeper under the water until they came to a cave opening in the side of the rock face. They swam into the cave.

(Leader — "Can you show me what it would be like to swim like a seal under the cave?")

As they swam deeper and deeper in to the cave, the Seal Hunter realized that they were in a great seal compound, a place with halls and rooms where many seals lived. The halls were dimly lit, but he could see many seals watching them as they swam by. All of the seals looked very sad, and there was a gloomy feeling all around them.

(Leader — "How do you think the Seal Hunter felt, at this point?")

Suddenly his companion stopped and showed the Seal Hunter a large fishing knife. "Is this yours?" she asked.

"Yes," said the Seal Hunter honestly. "I lost it today when I speared large seal that swam away with it."

"That seal is my father," said the companion. "He now lies dying, and only you can save him."

They came at that point into a darkened room. In the center of the room on a flat rock was a large seal with a deep wound in his hindquarters. All around, seals stood, looking on sadly.

"Lay your hands upon the wound," instructed the companion.

The Seal Hunter felt afraid, but he swam forward and placed his hand over the wound of the seal. All the seals swam closer to watch him.

(Leader — "Do we want to act out this scene?" Ask for volunteers to be the seal, the Seal Hunter and the other seals watching.)

The Seal Hunter was surprised to feel a great surge of feelings coming from the seal when he placed his hand

upon the wound.

(Leader — "What do you think he might have felt?" All answers are accepted, and can be included in the story line.)

They were feelings that he had never felt so strongly before. There was great pain, and sadness, and hopelessness, as if the world would never be right again.

But gradually the wound began to heal, and as it did the Seal Hunter began to feel peace spread through him, and then hope, and then the greatest joy.

Suddenly the large seal rose up as if he had never been injured. There was great rejoicing in the compound.  
(Leader — "How would you act this out?")

The Seal Hunter's companion took him by the arm and said to him, "I will take you home now, but first you must promise that you will never hunt seal again."

The man did not know how he would ever make a living, but he also knew that he could not hurt the seals again.

The two swam up out of the cave, and up, up through the cold green water to the surface, and then flew up, up through the air until they stood on the cliffs again.

(Leader — What would that look like to fly through the air?)

They jumped on the horse's back and rode like the wind back to the man's home. (Leader — Mime riding horseback from a sitting position again.)

There he jumped down from the horse. As his companion turned to go, she thanked the Seal Hunter. He saw that her eyes were no longer sad. The man kept his word and he never hunted the seals again.

(Leader — Use the sound instrument to signal that the story is over.)

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 4: LEADER RESOURCE 1: EMPATHY SCENARIOS**

### **Scenario #1: Bullying on the playground**

A bully and two of the bully's friends are surrounding a child alone on the playground and making fun of child's haircut. Another couple of children are watching from a short distance away but they aren't sticking up for the child.

Invite one child at a time to come and stand in the target's shoes while others stand silently in the shoes of those in the scene.

Invite the child in the shoes to say what the target feels, and what the target wants. It may help if they all start by saying, "This is what I feel..." "This is what I need or want..."

Allow a few more volunteers to stand in the target's shoes.

If you like, ask the bystanders to say what they feel and what they want as well. If the situation feels safe and you believe the children will be serious and respectful you can ask the children in the bully roles to say what they think those characters are feeling.

### **Scenario #2 — Picked last**

Children are picking teams for a softball game. The last two children are left. Set out shoes for a few children on each team and two children left.

Invite children to come and stand in their shoes and say what they feel, and what they want. When everyone is done you can ask them to reflect on how they might act differently after feeling empathy.

### **Scenario #3 — New child in class**

A new child comes to school from a foreign country. Their English is not very good yet and they have a strong accent. When the teacher introduces them to the students and they says hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ a few of the other children laugh quietly.

Set up chairs as in a classroom and put the shoes of the new child under one of the chairs in the back. Put a few other pairs of shoes around for the children who laughed and a few for those who didn't.

Again invite volunteers to stand in their shoes and to answer the questions: "What do I feel?" "What do I want or need?"

When everyone is done, ask them to reflect on how they might feel or act differently after feeling empathy.

### **Scenario #4 — Looking different**

There is a child who comes to school who has to wear a brace, thick glasses or has something about their appearance that is different. No one sits next to the child in the cafeteria at lunchtime.

Ask the children to help set up the chairs or tables and the shoes to create this scene and ask for volunteers to step into the shoes. Try to get as many children as possible to try on the shoes of this child.

### **Scenario #5 — Little sibling**

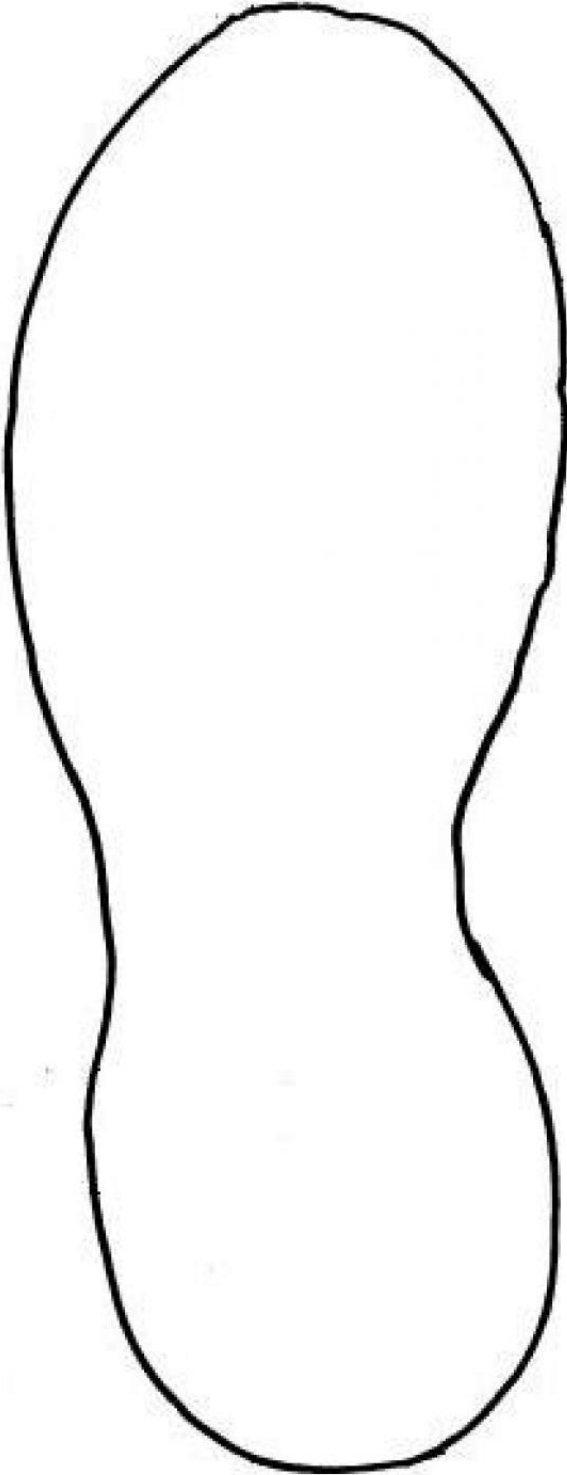
A child wants to play alone with their friend but a younger sibling wants to tag along. The little sibling is on one side of a door crying. The older sibling and friend are on the other side.

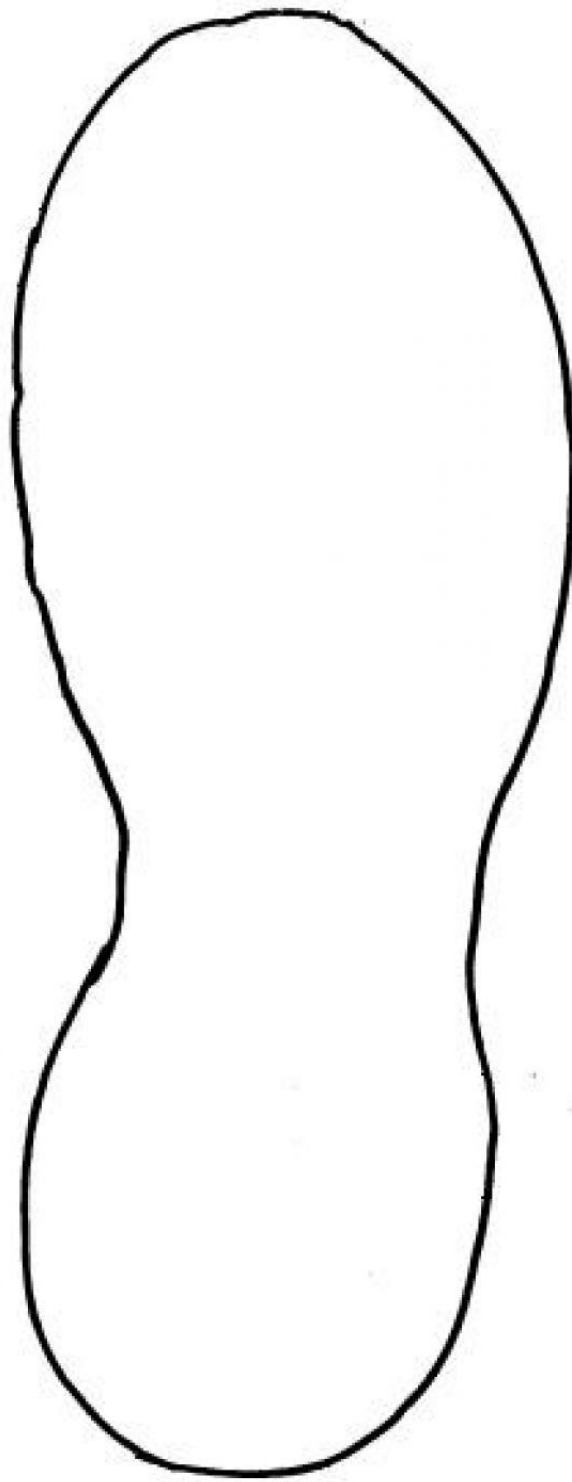
Set up the shoes and let people try on the roles. When everyone is done you can ask them to reflect on how they might feel or act differently after feeling empathy.

Create your own scenarios that feel age-appropriate for the group.



**MORAL TALES: SESSION 4:  
LEADER RESOURCE 2: SHOE TEMPLATE**





## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 4: LEADER RESOURCE 3: FAITH IN ACTION LETTERS TO PARENTS**

Here are two sample letters to engage parents' help in (1) the children's retelling of "The Wounded Seal" or (2) a fundraising bake sale to help an organization working to protect seals from hunting. Customize as you wish for the long-term Faith in Action project you plan to do.

Dear Parents,

The children in Moral Tales have been learning about Empathy. They heard a story about a seal that was wounded during a seal hunt. As part of our Faith in Action projects where we put our new learning into practice, we have decided to have a bake sale to raise money for an organization that is working to stop seal hunting in Canada. The seal-hunting industry in Canada does very little to promote economic well-being for the fisherman, yet causes the often cruel deaths of over 250,000 baby seals each year.

We hope that you will help your child bake something for the bake sale which we will hold on (day, date, time) during coffee hour at our congregation. If you are able to contribute baked goods, please bring them to the coffee hour room before dropping off your child for religious education.

Thanks for your participation,  
Co-leader name(s) / contact information

###

Dear Parents,

The children in Moral Tales have been learning about empathy. They heard a story about a seal that was wounded during a seal hunt. As part of our Faith in Action projects where we put new learning into practice, we have decided to retell the story in the children's message time during worship on (day, date) in order to share our learning with others.

Please bring your child 30 minutes early on (day, date). If your child is role-playing a seal, you may like to dress them in gray or brown. We will meet in the sanctuary before worship so the children can practice their presentation.

Thank you for your help!  
Co-leader name(s) / contact information

## FIND OUT MORE

### Tonglin Meditation

Learn more about the Buddhist practice of Tonglin meditation. *Radical Self-Acceptance: A Buddhist Guide to Freeing Yourself from Shame* by Tara Brach (Sounds True, 2000) is a three-CD set that includes a short guided Tonglin meditation. You may also want to explore writings and audio tapes by Pema Chodron.

### Cooperative Games

Find more non-competitive games in two books by Terry Orlick:

*The Cooperative Sports and Games Book: Challenge without Competition* by Terry Orlick (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978)

*The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book* by Terry Orlick (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982)

### Empathy in Conflict Resolution

Practice in empathetic listening is one of the tools suggested by Sarah Pirtle in her book, *Discovery Time for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution* (Creative Response to Conflict, Inc., 1998).

### An Empathy Tale for All Ages

Read "Two Brothers" by Elisa Pearmain in *Once Upon a Time: Storytelling to Teach Character and Prevent Bullying* (Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group, 2006). In this ancient Jewish story, two brothers each think of the needs of the other and secretly fill one another's grain stores in the night, only to discover each other in the middle of a field, a place that King Solomon later declared sacred.

### More Empathy Scenarios

In these books, find stories that may help you devise additional scenarios for Activity 5, In Your Shoes: Real Life from Multiple Perspectives:

*Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes (Harper Trophy, 1996). Children tease a little girl about her name.

*The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes (Harcourt Paperbacks, 2004). A little girl is teased about her shabby clothes.

*Hey, Little Ant* by Phillip Hoose (Tricycle Press, 1998). Readers see both sides of the story when an ant tries to convince a boy to spare his life.

*Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki (Lee & Low Books, 1995). A Japanese American boy is teased about his size and ethnicity.

*I'm Not Invited?* by Diana Blumenthal (Athenaeum/Richard Jackson Books, 2003). A little girl is sad, confused and disappointed when she thinks she has been left out of her friend's party.

### Protecting Seals

While many nations today ban seal hunting and seal products, Canada still allows a seal hunt in which 250,000 to 300,000 seals are killed every year. Most of the seals that are killed are only a few months old.

Many international organizations work to [protect seals](#) from clubbing and hunting. One is the [International Fund for Animal Welfare](#), an organization with U.S. headquarters in Yarmouth Port, MA, 800.932.4329.

Find out about the [Protect Seals Network](#) and how to assist one of the dozens of organizations working together to oppose Canadian seal-hunting, on the website of [Humane Society International](#).

### Fidget Objects

The idea of having a basket of "fidget objects" available during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, koosh balls, and other soft, quiet, manipulatable objects.

When you introduce the fidget object basket to the group, begin by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may wish to use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children that the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the basket available for the duration of the session, or bring the basket out only during activities, such as hearing a story told, that require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

# SESSION 5: FORGIVENESS

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find in each person's life, sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility. — Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

This session introduces the concept of forgiveness. In our quest to discover what is morally good and just, forgiveness gives us an invaluable tool for strengthening our relationships and choosing compassion. It helps us identify the actions that we take that will lead to connection with others and those that may foster to bitterness. It reminds us of our similarities with one another and empowers us to keep our covenant with one another in our faith communities. It speaks to the third Unitarian Universalist principle of: acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth.

This session includes a story about two friends who quarrel. One friend chooses forgiveness, focusing on what is best about his friend, rather than on a hurt his friend caused him. This story introduces a metaphor: If we write our memories of the hurts another has caused us in sand, they will quickly be erased. If we carve the memory of a kindness another has shown us in stone, it will endure.

Art and storytelling activities help participants explore forgiveness of self and others in this session. Forgiveness will be added to the Moral Compass. This session also describes a variety of potential next steps in the long-term Faith in Action project, Protecting Seals, begun in Session 4, Empathy.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Foster participants' pride in sharing acts of goodness and justice that they have done (or witnessed)
- Create a forum for children to share with one another about acts of goodness and justice
- Introduce the concept of forgiveness
- Guide participants to share their own experiences of anger, hurt, love and forgiveness
- Lead participants to experience forgiveness of self or another person.

- Help participants reflect on an act of kindness another person has done for them
- Strengthen participants' connection to and sense of responsibility to their Moral Tales group.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Participate in the Gems of Goodness exercise
- Hear a story illustrating the act of forgiveness
- Explore the feelings and actions of the characters in the story by retelling key parts of the story
- Make personal connections to the feelings and actions of the characters in the story by using a story theater
- Experience letting go of a held resentment through an exercise with sand
- Share a personal story of an act of kindness done to them through an exercise with clay.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story – Mussa and Nagib	8
Activity 4: Processing the Story	10
Activity 5: Writing in Sand	12
Activity 6: Etching in Stone	13
Activity 7: Clean-up	3
Faith in Action: Protecting Seals, Awareness/Fundraising – Long Term	15
Closing	2

Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Quick Stretch	3
Alternate Activity 3: Making Story Theaters to Take Home	15
Alternate Activity 4: Retelling the Story in Pairs	10

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Forgiveness is one of the most challenging and yet rewarding spiritual tasks we will encounter in our lifetimes. We all hold grudges in our hearts at one time or another that ultimately hurt our wellbeing, and disconnect us from others.

To prepare for this session you may wish to do a short meditation to center yourself before contemplating the questions below. Sit quietly and take several slow deep breaths. Ground yourself in your body by acknowledging your face, shoulders, hands, seat on the chair, and your feet. Return your focus to your breathing, following its flow as it goes in and out. Ask yourself if you have anything on your mind that you need to forgive yourself for. Remind yourself that forgiving is not forgetting. Forgiving does not imply that you do not learn from your mistakes. It implies that you are human, and humans make mistakes. Think of what you would say to your closest friend if they had made this supposed transgression. Think of all the people in the world who have made this mistake. Summon all the compassion you can muster, and write this act on sand in your

imagination, and let the winds of forgiveness blow it away.

Then ask yourself if you are holding grudges against others. Grudges and resentments come in all sizes, and it is best to start with the small ones. Maybe a friend forgot to call on your birthday, or someone at work has done something to upset you. See the person whom you are angry with or hurt by as human, and ask yourself if you have ever made a mistake such as this, or ever felt in a position where you could have made a mistake such as this. By joining with this person, you cultivate empathy, the first ingredient in forgiveness. Send this person compassion for their humanity. Imagine this "grudge" as a dark spot in your heart blocking light and love. Write that grudge in the sand in your imagination and let the winds of forgiveness blow it away.

Finally, think of an act of forgiveness that someone has given to you and write it in stone in your imagination. Then think of an act of forgiveness that you have given to someone else, and write it in stone also. Resolve to keep these in your heart. Take some time to sit with these images and feelings before returning your focus to your body, breathing and then opening your eyes.

It can also be helpful to walk through the Mussa and Nagib story in your imagination. Take time to picture the place where the story happens. Imagine that you are someone wandering by the stone at the river's edge years later. How does it feel to read what has been carved there? Let these experiences guide you in working with the children in this session.

# SESSION PLAN

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

## OPENING (2 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

## ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately 2"x3", for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of ten minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2: Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2: Introducing The "Moral Compass.")
- Instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource 1, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you

might want to tell them to add a gem for up to three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.



- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### Including All Participants

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A large basket
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Story theater, made using Leader Resource 1, [Story Theater](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map
- Optional: A plastic bag containing sand for the story theater

### Preparation for Activity

- Make the story theater, as guided in Leader Resource, Story Theater.
- If you usually set up an altar as a focal point for objects in the story basket, see if the story theater will fit on the box or table you use for an altar and can be seen well by all the children when they are sitting in the storytelling area. If not, set the story theater on the floor or a better-suited table in the storytelling area. Make sure all children will be able to see it.

- Place the altar cloth if you have one, the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument, and the plastic bag of sand if you have one in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you do not have a plastic bag of sand for the story basket, add sand to the story theater once you have placed it on the floor or a table. You will need enough sand to form the banks of the river so that it is thick enough to write "Nagib" in and have the letters show.
- Write the word "FORGIVING" on newsprint.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### Description of Activity

In this activity you will introduce the children to the concept of forgiveness, and to the story, "Mussa and Nagib." Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket and the story theater. Tell them:

This is our story theater. It won't fit in the story basket but it is our item of focus for today's story.

Make sure all the children can see the story theater from where they are sitting. If you like, invite some or all the children to come closer and inspect the story theater.

Hold up the plastic bag of sand, if you have one. Empty the sand into the story theater.

Ask the children to identify what they see in the story theatre. Prompt for sand, clay rocks, paper water, and two figures of people. Tell them that today's story is an old one, set in the Middle East in a country called Persia which is now called Iran. You can show them where Iran is located on a globe or map, if you have one.

Tell the group:

The story that we are going to hear is about two friends who have a fight, and the choices they make about what to do with their feelings. The second man chooses to forgive his friend for hurting him.

The act of forgiveness is one of the most important choices we can make. Forgiveness can help us keep our relationships with others. It

can help us have hearts full of love rather than bitterness.

Post the newsprint where you have written the word, "FORGIVING." Ask the children if they can find two words in that one big word. The answer is "for" and "giving."

Suggest that keeping these two small words in mind can help the children remember what "forgiving" means. Tell them that forgiveness means giving kindness, empathy, and love to another person, even if they have hurt us. When we are angry at ourselves and forgive ourselves, we are giving kindness, empathy, and love to ourselves.

Now remind the children that you will begin the story by playing the sound instrument. Remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Invite the children to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY – MUSSA AND NAGIB (8 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[Mussa and Nagib](#)" (included in this document)
- Story theater, made using Leader Resource 1, [Story Theater](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try adopting different voices for Mussa and Nagib.
- If you have not yet added the sand to the story theater, do it now. You will need enough sand to form the banks of the river so that it is thick enough to write "Nagib" in and have the letters show.

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity, you will tell the story, "Mussa and Nagib," with the help of the story theater. Stand or sit above the story theater in a way that makes it easy to move the characters around. Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person.

Start telling the story with the figures representing Mussa and Nagib in your hand. As you tell the story, move the figures around to show the action. This way of storytelling can engage listeners in a very tangible way with the story and its message.

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over.

Note: This story can also be told in a straightforward manner, without the story theater.

### **Including All Participants**

Storytelling with props usually engages even children with attention deficits and learning disabilities. Invite children with sight limitations to come and explore the story theater by touch, to get a sensual impression of the scene.

## **ACTIVITY 4: PROCESSING THE STORY (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Story theater
- Optional: A copy of Leader Resource 2, [Quick Stretch Exercises](#) (included in this document)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- The children will remain seated in the storytelling area for this discussion. If the session has enough time, you may wish to lead Alternate Activity 2, Quick Stretch before you begin this activity. Review the activity and download and print out Leader Resource, Quick Stretch Exercises.

## Description of Activity

This activity makes a bridge from the story to the children's personal experiences of interpersonal conflict and forgiveness. You are also introducing (or reinforcing their understanding of) the third Unitarian Universalist Principle, Acceptance of One Another and Encouragement of Spiritual Growth.

Tell the children that you are going to replay certain parts of the story so that they can ask questions and share experiences they have had that were similar to those in the story. Introduce each part you want to revisit by saying:

Let's go back to the place in the story where...

Start with:

Let's go back to the place in the story where... Nagib slapped his friend Mussa.

Guide a discussion using these questions:

- Have you ever had something like that happen to you? How did you feel? (Some will say they felt like hitting back, or felt sad, or mad.)
- What do you think would have happened if Mussa had slapped Nagib back?
- How do you think Nagib felt after he slapped Mussa?
- Have you ever hurt someone because you were angry? How did you feel afterward?

Stop here and tell the children that it is not wrong to feel anger. When someone hurts us or someone we love, anger is a natural reaction. Talk to them about how sometimes anger causes us to act in ways that we regret. But sometimes, if we are careful like Mussa, we can choose a way of responding that will make us feel good in the long run. Remind them that Mussa made a choice to forgive.

Then say:

Let's go back to the place in the story... where Mussa wrote in the sand.

Lead a discussion with these questions:

- Why did Mussa write in the sand instead of slapping Nagib?
- I'm wondering what Mussa did that helped him not to slap Nagib back?
- Have you ever felt like fighting back when someone hurt you, but you did something else instead? How did that feel? What did you have to do in order not to fight back?

Then say:

Let's go back to the place in the story... where Nagib saved Mussa from drowning.

Lead a discussion with these questions:

- How do you think Mussa felt when he was saved by Nagib?
- How do you think Nagib felt? Why did he help Mussa?
- Have you ever had a friend help you? How did it feel?
- Have you ever helped a friend? How did it feel?

Then say:

Let's go back to the place in the story... where Mussa wrote in stone.

Lead a discussion with these questions:

- Why did Mussa write in stone this time?
- How do you think Nagib felt when Mussa wrote his good deed in stone?
- What if Mussa had written about the fight in stone?
- What does writing in sand have to do with forgiveness?
- What does writing in stone have to do with forgiveness?

Remind the children:

It feels good when we keep track of things others do to help us. And, although it can be hard to do, it also feels good when we let go of things others did that hurt us.

It is important to say that forgiving does not necessarily mean that we forget how someone else has hurt us. Sometimes if there is a person who is unkind to us we need to remember what they can be like so that we don't get hurt again. You might ask the children if they have any examples of this. If you need to prompt, say:

- Is there someone who has taken things that are yours and not given them back?
- Is there someone who has talked about you behind your back more than once?
- Do you know anyone who often plays too rough, even if you don't like it and say "Please stop?"

Tell the children:

We can still treat people kindly if they have hurt us before. But we don't have to lend them things or trust them with our secrets.

If it sounds as if any children have been bullied, do not single out a child who has mentioned this. Remind the group that there are times when you just need to stay away from someone, but it can help you to practice forgiveness rather than holding hate in your heart. If a child mentions a situation that you think represents a safety issue for any children, shared your concern in confidence with your director of religious education.

You may also wish to tell children about Unitarian Universalism's third principle, "Acceptance of One Another and Encouragement of Spiritual Growth." The story demonstrates how forgiveness means accepting that others are not perfect, just as we are not perfect, yet are still worthy of our love. In your own words, say:

In the act of forgiving others we are keeping our hearts open, practicing compassion, and keeping a relationship with others which is an important part of spiritual growth and being in a community.

### **Including All Participants**

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 5: WRITING IN SAND (12 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Play sand
- Paper plates and paint brushes for all participants
- A large roasting pan or an open box with low sides

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Obtain play sand or art sand. The Leader Resources section suggests some sources.
- Place paint brushes on work tables.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite children to sit at work tables. Give each child a paper plate and pour enough sand on each plate to cover the bottom. Ask the children to take a paint brush and experiment with writing in the sand by writing their names. Suggest they try first the brush end and then the wooden end of the paint brush.

As they are experimenting, tell them:

You are going to have a chance now to write about a memory that bothers you. Think of a time when someone was not nice or not fair to you. Or it could be a time when you were not nice, or not fair, and then felt bad about what happened.

You can write or draw something about it in the sand, and then we'll erase those memories together. This will be like what Mussa did in the story, after Nagib slapped him.

As children work, encourage them to share about the memories they are drawing or writing. Invite them, as they finish writing/drawing, to carefully carry their paper plate to the roasting pan or box and blow the sand off.

If you like, have the rest of the group say "For forgiveness" as each child blows their sand away.

### **Including All Participants**

At this age, children vary widely in writing ability and confidence. Offer to write what a child wants to say on a piece of paper, and encourage the child to copy it so they have the experience of writing in the sand.

If a child has limited mobility, you may bring the roasting pan or box to the child, or ask them to choose another child to carry the plate of sand and blow the sand away.

## **ACTIVITY 6: ETCHING IN STONE (13 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Air-drying modeling clay
- Pencils or toothpicks for all participants
- Paper plates and plastic sandwich bags for all participants

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Purchase modeling clay that will air-dry (see Leader Resources).
- Make sure pencils have soft tips. Sharp points may break off.
- Think of a time when someone showed you kindness that you can use as an example. Prepare a short phrase that tells the story and would fit if scratched into a small, clay rock. You may wish to inscribe a clay rock ahead of time, to show the group.

### **Description of Activity**

This activity will focus the children on a kindness someone else has shown them and give them the

experiences of reliving, documenting, and sharing the story of how that felt.

Gather children at work tables and distribute a paper plate with a fist-sized lump of clay on it, a pencil or several toothpicks, and a plastic sandwich bag. Tell them they will now have a chance to make a lasting image of a positive memory, just as Mussa did in the story. Say, in your own words:

Shape your clay into the shape of a rock. Push into the clay with your pencil to write or draw about something that someone else did for you, out of kindness.

Help individuals who need it to think of something to write about or draw. Help children choose a very few words to represent their story, so their writing will not be too laborious and the words will fit on the clay rock. As they work, invite children to share their stories and images with the other, telling briefly about the particular experience that they wish to remember.

Invite the children to take home their clay rocks. Tell them the clay will harden quickly once it is removed from the sandwich bag. Suggest that when it dries, they share it with their family members. Remind them that by etching in clay that will harden, they are keeping the memory of kindness forever, as Mussa did.

#### **Including All Participants**

Offer to etch words in the clay for any reluctant writers or any child physically incapable of etching. Etch a short phrase or simply the name of the person who was kind to the child, and encourage the child to etch a picture to illustrate the happy memory.

### **ACTIVITY 7: CLEAN-UP (3 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials
- Waste basket lined with a bag
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers
- Optional: Industrial broom or vacuum cleaner

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.
- If you have used play sand in this session, obtain a vacuum cleaner or industrial broom to remove sand from floors and rugs.

#### **Description of Activity**

Invite the children to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it. Ask them to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

If you have used play sand, pack loose sand in secure containers and sweep or vacuum floors.

#### **Including All Participants**

All children should assist as able.

### **CLOSING (2 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano, or other instrument

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find some suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. It is

recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.

- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Write the word "Forgiveness" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Forgiveness" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions. Today we heard a story about a person who practiced forgiveness. We're going to add "Forgiveness" as a direction on our compass.

Post or write the word "Forgiveness" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. Encourage them to write down the acts of goodness and justice they do (or witness). If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to try using forgiveness and the other virtues you have posted on the Moral Compass poster.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these.

Thank the children. Tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – PROTECTING SEALS, AWARENESS/FUNDRAISING (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Multiple sheets of poster board or large, blank sheets of paper
- Optional: Magazines with pictures of baby seals, scissors (including left-handed scissors) and tape or glue
- Color markers
- A copy of the story, "[The Wounded Seal](#) (included in this document)" (Session 4, In Another's Shoes, Stories)
- Leader Resource 3, [Faith in Action Letters to Parents](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- With your director of religious education, religious education co-leaders, and congregational leadership, shape and schedule the components of a Faith in Action project in which the children will engage the whole congregation in seal protection awareness and/or fundraising.
- If you have not done so, customize Leader Resource, Faith in Action Letter to Parents to describe your project. Prepare a handout and/or email for parents to distribute after the children meet today.
- The Description of Activity includes guidance for leading children to move forward on three different activities: (1) retelling "The Wounded Seal" during a future congregational worship, (2)

leading a congregation-wide letter-writing campaign during a future coffee hour, and (3) raising money for a seal protection advocacy organization with a bake sale at a future coffee hour. You may be doing more than one of these. If the group's Faith in Action project will involve a combination of these activities, today you might involve one or two co-leaders to work with the children in smaller groups on different aspects of the overall project.

- If you have not settled on which activities to do for a long-term Faith in Action: Protecting Seals project, today you may opt to lead the group in a brainstorming discussion to choose activities together. Use the activity descriptions here to feed your contributions to the brainstorming.
- If you will do a Faith in Action: Protecting Seals long-term project that is quite different from those presented here, do read these activity descriptions. Some of the guidance offered may apply to your project.

### **Description of Activity**

This Faith in Action activity is the second step in the long-term project your group began in Session 4, In Another's Shoes which featured the story, "The Wounded Seal," and explored empathy.

This Faith in Action project offers three possible activities that can be done individually or all together. If the group did the short-term, letter-writing or card-making Faith in Action activity in Session 4, you may be able to activate their enthusiasm for involving the whole congregation in letter-writing. If the children enjoyed the participatory telling of the story, "The Wounded Seal," they may be excited to retell the story to the whole congregation. The goals for these activities are to engage the children in sharing their concern for seal protection with others in the congregation, to give them a chance to see adults in the congregation demonstrating empathy and caring by taking action to help other living beings who are suffering.

### **Retelling "The Wounded Seal" during worship**

Today, engage the children in practicing how they will tell and act out the story for the whole congregation. Remind the group that their goal will be to help people learn, as they learned from the story, to empathize with the seals' perspective on seal hunting. If you will also invite the wider congregation to take action by letter-writing or supporting a bake sale, tell the children that the story will build empathy for the seals, and thus make people want to help.

Your group can present the story to the congregation in several ways. You might read or tell the story, with the children staying in their seats. Or, you might tell or read the story while the children act out the parts as they did during the original storytelling. If a second adult can help the group present the story, one can tell the story and the other can guide the children's movements, as you may have done when you told the story in Session 4. Or, you might assign children character parts to act out while you tell the story. There are really only three major parts (Seal Hunter, Companion, and Wounded Seal) with many seals and a horse!

Gather the children and ask which of these options they would most like to do. Try to keep this simple by telling the children that they will be doing just what they did the first time you told the story as they acted out the movements, but they will do it in a slightly more coordinated fashion now that they know the story better and know what movements to make.

Retell the story, using the copy of "The Wounded Seal" with participatory instructions that you have printed out. Stop as needed to remind the children, and to let them remind each other, of the movements they found in the original telling.

This rehearsal opportunity will keep the story fresh in children's minds and deepen the empathy and concern for the seals they can share with others in this Faith in Action project. If you have not done so, customize Leader Resource, Faith in Action Letter to Parents to describe your project. The sample letter requests that parents bring their children 30 minutes early to the designated worship service and dress children who will be seals in gray or brown.

### **Leading a congregation-wide letter-writing campaign**

If the group will involve the whole congregation in protecting seals through a letter-writing campaign during a future coffee hour, talk with the children today about how you can make this successful. Suggest they make posters to announce the letter-writing campaign if they do not think of this, themselves.

Provide materials at work tables and invite children to make posters in small groups or on their own. Some of the children may have limited writing skills. You may wish to form teams that include one child who wants to write and one or two who prefer to decorate a poster.

As they begin, help them create text for their posters by leading a discussion. Ask them what they want other people in the congregation to know about seal hunting and seal protection. As they generate phrases for the

posters, write these on newsprint. Post the newsprint so the children can copy the words onto their posters.

You can talk with them about how they will staff a letter-writing table, what needs to be on the table, how they can help younger children write letters, and how they might talk about seal protection with adults in the congregation. Lead a discussion about where the posters should go. Ask for volunteers to help you distribute posters now or after this meeting.

Make sure to send home information for parents about the letter-writing campaign, especially if you need to convene the children at a time and place outside the regular Moral Tales sessions. You can adapt the bake sale letter in Leader Resource, Faith in Action Letters to Parents.

### **Raising money for seal protection advocacy with a bake sale.**

If the group will involve the whole congregation in protecting seals through a fundraising bake sale during a future coffee hour, talk with the children about how to make this successful. Ask them what kinds of foods they know how to bake and which they would enjoy baking with their parents. Suggest they make posters if they do not think of this, themselves.

Write the words "Bake Sale" and "Help Protect Seals" on newsprint and post it so the children can copy these words onto posters. Distribute the poster-making materials and invite children to work in small groups. Help them divide tasks so some children write and others decorate.

While the children are making posters, initiate a discussion about what they want other people in the congregation to know about seal hunting and seal protection. Talk with them about how they can help on the day of the bake sale both at the bake table and by giving out information and talking to members of the congregation about seals. Lead a discussion about where the posters should go. Ask for volunteers to help you distribute posters now or after this meeting.

Customize and photocopy Leader Resource, Faith in Action Letters to Parents to solicit baked goods and alert families about the bake sale date. This is especially important if you need to convene the children at a time and place outside the regular Moral Tales sessions.

### **Including All Participants**

There may be members of the congregation who do not wish to take part in this activity. Some may want more information to help them make a decision about participating; you may wish to download information from one of the seal protection advocacy organizations

mentioned in Session 4, Leader Resources to have on hand when the children actively engage with adults. Tell children that giving adults more information can help awaken their empathy, just as meeting the Wounded Seal awakened the Seal Hunter's empathy.

Let the children know that Unitarian Universalists respect one another's choices in matters such as this, and that some people may not agree to help, including possibly some of their parents.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?



## TAKING IT HOME

*If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find in each person's life, sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility. — Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children heard a story about two friends who journey across the desert. During an argument one of the friends slaps the other in anger. The friend who had been slapped writes in the sand, "Today my best friend slapped me." The wind quickly blows the words away. Later the friend who had slapped the other saves him from drowning. This time the man carves in stone, "Today my best friend saved me." We shared this story to teach about forgiveness, and the value in letting go of past hurts and focusing on the kindnesses others have done us. After the story, the children had a chance to write their own hurts and kindnesses in sand and stone.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.

In order to forgive ourselves or others, we need to remember that we all make mistakes and that we needn't be perfect to be deserving of love. Your child will bring home a lump of clay on which they have written about an act of kindness that they want to remember. Ask them to share about it. Explore as a family ways in which you forgive each other for small things every day, and how that experience of choosing love over holding grudges allows people to be in relationship.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

Notice opportunities to practice forgiveness. Discuss together with your child what is needed to let go of anger and grudges toward another.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

Using construction paper or clay, ask everyone in the family to identify someone outside of the family that they hold a grudge against. Choose situations that you will feel safe tackling with your family. Have each person make a "grudge." Imagine what they might look like, small ugly trolls, or amorphous blobs, or hot coals. Share them with one another, stating what they are for. Acknowledge that forgiving is not the same as forgetting. Forgiving frees the heart of the one who has been hurt not to have to carry the bad feelings anymore. It does not mean that that person has to be your best friend. Make a ritualized saying, such as: This grudge is for \_\_\_ who did such and such. I will try to remember that they are only human. I may have hurt someone in this way too. I chose forgiveness and I no longer wish to carry this grudge.

Then have a ritualistic burning, throwing away or shredding of the grudges, followed by some kind of celebrating that makes everyone feel good. This might include having everyone share about something nice that someone did for them this week either on paper, on clay or through story sharing. You can also skip the "grudges" and focus only on the kind deeds. Or, focus on experiences of being forgiven.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

## Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: QUICK STRETCH (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Quick Stretch Exercises](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review Leader Resource, Quick Stretch Exercises and prepare to demonstrate and lead the stretch exercises.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to stand in a circle at least two feet from their chairs or tables. In this quick "get the wiggles out" activity you will lead short stretching and breathing exercises described in Leader Resource, Quick Stretch Exercises.

Read the sequence of quick stretches. When you have finished, if the group needs to wind down, repeat the first exercise once or twice.

## Including All Participants

All of the stretches suggested in this activity can be done sitting in a chair. If a child cannot stand, demonstrate the stretches from a seated position as well as standing.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: MAKING SHOE BOX THEATERS TO TAKE HOME (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Shoe boxes for all participants
- Masking tape
- Play sand, modeling clay, blue paper, glue, toothpicks, and color markers for participants
- A copy of Leader Resource 4, [Take-Home Story Theater](#) (included in this document)
- Sealable, plastic sandwich bags, two for each participant
- Optional: Copies of story, "[Mussa and Nagib](#)," (included in this document) for all participants to take home

## Preparation for Activity

- Collect empty shoe boxes in advance. You may wish to ask parents by email or via a story to provide an empty shoe box for their children. Make your request to parents at least a week before this session.
- Use Leader Resource, Take-Home Story Theater, to assemble the materials the children will need.
- Consider whether you might like to photocopy the story, "Mussa and Nagib," for children to take home. A summary of the story is included in the Taking It Home section; if you plan to distribute the Taking It Home handout to families, you probably do not need to also provide the entire story.

## Description of Activity

Invite the children to assemble their own story theaters to take home and share the story, "Mussa and Nagib," with their families.

Settle children at work tables. Make sure every child has a shoe box. Help children cut along the side folds of their shoe boxes, fold the sides down, and tape them to the work tables. This way, children can fold the shoe box back up and put the lid on it to take it home.

Distribute sealed sandwich bags of play sand and modeling clay to participants. Explain that they can use some clay now for the figures of Mussa and Nagib, but should save enough to make the rock at home. Tell them to keep the sandwich bag of play sand sealed until they need it to tell the story at home.

Invite the children to decorate their story theaters as they wish. Children can glue a blue strip of paper down to make the river. They can shape the two clay characters.

Allow them to go inspect the story theater you used to tell the story, if it helps them get ideas. As you visit individual children at work, revisit parts of the story with them as you see how they have decorated their story theater.

Children can do as much or as little of the work on their story theaters as they like, in this session. Just make sure they can conveniently take home all the pieces they will need to complete their story theaters at home.

If there is time in the session, allow the children to pair up and begin telling the story to one another, using their own story theaters.

### **Including All Participants**

Some children will want to spend a great deal of time decorating their theater while others will engage more with the characters or retelling the story. If a child is physically unable to assemble a story theater, they may be able to help other children by making rocks of clay for them. A child who finishes quickly may be engaged to help a mobility-limited child make a story theater.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: RETELLING THE STORY IN PAIRS (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- The story theater

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Set the story theater on a low table, away from where the large group is working.
- Set two child-sized chairs in front of the theater.
- Make sure that the sand is spread smoothly again and that the clay "rock" has been smoothed over so that the writing is not visible.

### **Description of Activity**

While the group works on an arts and crafts project, such as Alternate Activity 3, Making Story Theaters to Take Home, invite children, two at a time, to use the story theater to reenact the story.

Invite each child to manipulate one of the clay figures as they become one of the two characters. Guide, but leave the children to retell the story in their own words, cementing the sequence of events and making a deeper personal connection to the story. In this relaxed form of retelling, children are likely to improvise, further exploring the story and the feelings and choices involved. Although you may hear children make significant changes to the story as they re-enact it, by doing this activity they will retain more of the story and its messages.

### **Including All Participants**

Some children may require modifications to allow them to manipulate the materials in the story theater.

Make sure the large group activity will engage most of the children for enough time so that every individual can have a turn at using the story theater with a partner.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 5: STORY 1: MUSSA AND NAGIB

Adapted from a story by Malba Tahan (pen name for Julio Cesar de Mello e Souza, 1895-1975), a mathematician from Brazil who also wrote *The Man Who Counted* (Editoria Record, 2001), which was first published in Brazil in 1949.

Once, two friends named Mussa and Nagib made a journey through the mountains of Persia on camel back. (Leader — If you have made clay camels, you can start with the characters on camel back outside of the theater.)

They came after a time to a place where a stream flowed by a sandy bank and trees gave shade. (Leader — Walk the characters down to the river's edge.)

There they had a discussion, which turned into an argument. Nagib grew angry, and for the first time ever, he slapped Mussa across the face. (Leader — You may wish to act this out with the characters explicitly or less so.)

Mussa was stunned. He felt angry. He wanted to slap Nagib back. But then he thought, "I cannot be too mad at my friend because I could have done the same thing. We are alike, and I care about him, and I don't want to fight with him anymore." So he walked over to the trees instead and picked up a stick. (Leader — Show this with the character.) With the stick he wrote in the sand, "Today my best friend slapped me." (Leader — Use the toothpick to write this in the sand for all to see.)

Then he and his friend stood in silence and watched as the desert wind blew the words in the sand away. (Leader — Blow the sand gently, until the writing disappears.)

By the time the writing had disappeared Nagib had said that he was sorry. The friends got back on their camels and rode to their destination in a distant city. On their trip back through the mountain pass they stopped again at

the same river. (Leader — You can show this with the characters leaving the stage and then returning.)

This time the two friends decided to take a swim. Since their first visit, the rains had made the current stronger and river much deeper. Mussa, the friend who had been slapped, stepped into the water first. Right away, he slipped on a rock, was dragged under by the current, and began to drown. Nagib jumped in without a second thought and pulled his friend to safety. (Leader — Show these actions with the clay figures.)

The two friends again sat in silence for some time until Mussa had regained his breath. Then he rose and went to his saddlebags. There he found a carving knife. This time he went to a rock near the river. (Leader — Show the character moving off and back.)

Into the rock he carved these words, "Today my best friend saved me." (Leader — Use the toothpick or other sharper object to write the words in the clay.)

Again the two friends sat in silence. Finally Nagib spoke, "My friend, after I hurt you, you wrote the words in sand. Now after I saved you, you wrote the words in stone, why?" (Leader — Demonstrate this dialogue, using the characters.)

Mussa replied, "When someone hurts us, we should write it down in sand where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away. This way our hearts are free from bitterness, and we can renew our friendships. But, when someone does something kind for us, we must engrave it in stone and in our hearts so that we will never forget."

"Thank you my friend" said Nagib. "I am very grateful for our friendship. I don't ever want to hurt you again."

The two friends embraced and continued on their journey together. (Leader — Have the two characters embrace. You can have them continue their journey, if you made camels, or just say, "The End.")

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 5: LEADER RESOURCE 1: STORY THEATER**

Before you make your story theater, read the story, "Mussa and Nagib," to get a sense of the action in the story, and to figure out how big a story theater you need. Remember, you will need enough room to write certain words in sand and in clay.

- A large shoe box with the top and one long side removed, or a piece of flat cardboard (approximately 12" by 18").
- Approximately 1/2 cup of play sand or regular sand if not available.
- A lump of firm clay (approximately the size of an orange) shaped to look like a boulder. Hardening or non-hardening clay both work but you don't want it to harden too fast.
- A piece of blue paper or cloth cut to look like a river running across the width of the theater (box or cardboard). Approximately three or four inches thick.  
A few toothpicks (to be the sticks in the story).
- Two other small lumps of clay to be fashioned into the rough shapes of two men. To add to the scenery you can stick small bits of greenery into a bit of clay and stick them near the river on the opposite side from the rock to look like trees.
- Optional: Plastic camels, or camels you can fashion out of clay

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 5: LEADER RESOURCE 2: QUICK STRETCH EXERCISES**

In this quick "get the wiggles out" activity, you will lead the children in a short series of stretching and breathing exercises.

Begin standing with arms at your sides. Ask the children to breath in as they bring their arms slowly out to the sides and then up overhead. Then as they exhale let the arms slowly float down.

Repeat the exercise but stop when arms are overhead. Tell the children to breathe out. Then tell them that over their heads high above in the sky are stars. Show them how to reach their hands over-head one at a time and to pick the stars from the sky until they are holding a star in each hand. Then show them how to throw the stars across their bodies so that they cross the sky like shooting stars one at a time.

Have them shake out one foot and then the other, and then both hands.

Have them start in a crouching or squatting position. Show them how to take a deep breath and as they do to fill up like a balloon until they are as tall and full as possible. Then show them how to let all of the air out until they are crouched down on the floor like a shriveled balloon.

If they need calming down you can repeat the first exercise once or twice.

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 5: LEADER RESOURCE 3: FAITH IN ACTION LETTERS TO PARENTS**

Here are two sample letters to engage parents' help in (1) the children's retelling of "The Wounded Seal" or (2) a fundraising bake sale to help an organization working to protect seals from hunting. Customize as you wish for the long-term Faith in Action project you plan to do.

Dear Parents,

The children in Moral Tales have been learning about Empathy. They heard a story about a seal that was wounded during a seal hunt. As part of our Faith in Action projects where we put our new learning into practice, we have decided to have a bake sale to raise money for an organization that is working to stop seal hunting in Canada. The seal-hunting industry in Canada does very little to promote economic well-being for the fisherman, yet causes the often cruel deaths of over 250,000 baby seals each year.

We hope that you will help your child bake something for the bake sale which we will hold on (day, date, time) during coffee hour at our congregation. If you are able to contribute baked goods, please bring them to the coffee hour room before dropping off your child for religious education.

Thanks for your participation,  
Co-leader name(s) / contact information

###

Dear Parents,

The children in Moral Tales have been learning about empathy. They heard a story about a seal that was wounded during a seal hunt. As part of our Faith in Action projects where we put new learning into practice, we have decided to retell the story during worship on (day, date) in order to share our learning with others.

Please bring your child 30 minutes early on (day, date). If your child is role-playing a seal, you may like to dress them in gray or brown. We will meet in the sanctuary before worship so the children can practice their presentation.

Thank you for your help!  
Co-leader name(s) / contact information

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 5: LEADER RESOURCE 4: TAKE-HOME STORY THEATER**

You will need:

Shoe boxes or large, flat pieces of cardboard for all participants

Play sand

Modeling clay

Blue paper, and scissors

Glue

Toothpicks, three or four for each participant

Color markers

Sealable, plastic sandwich bags, two for each participant

Cut the sides down from one side of each box and fold it under and tape it. (This way the children can fold it back up, put the lid on and take it home as a box).

Cut blue paper into wavy strips for children to use as the river.

Prepare a sandwich bag filled with sand and a sandwich bag filled with modeling clay for each participant. Seal the sandwich bags tightly.

If you wish, print out a copy of the story, "Mussa and Nagib," for all participants to take home.

Invite the children to assemble their own story theaters to take home and share with their families. You can do as much or as little of the work in this session, as long as children can conveniently take home all the pieces to complete their story theaters.

The goal of this activity is to strengthen a child's connection to the story and its messages. They will also take the story theater home and retell the story to their families. If possible, during the session the children will install their blue paper rivers and make the two clay characters. They will have the lump of clay for the rock and a baggie full of sand to pour out at the last minute. They can also add the trees and any other decorations they wish to add at home, or in class if there is time. If there is time, children can begin to tell the story to one another in their own story theaters.

Some children will want to spend a great deal of time decorating their theater while others will be more engaged in the characters or retelling the story. If a child is physically unable to assemble a story theater, you may like to give them clay to form the rocks from the story. They may be able to help other children by making rocks of clay for them.



## FIND OUT MORE

A quotation from Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, a 19th-century preacher, journalist, and French politician, may help you think further about forgiveness:

Do you want to be happy for a moment? Then seek revenge.

Do you want to be happy forever? Then grant forgiveness.

### Children's Stories about Forgiveness

*Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Hawkes (Greenwillow Books, 1996). Lilly the mouse gets mad at her teacher and does a revengeful act. The teacher responds by lovingly demonstrating forgiveness.

*Mr. Lincoln's Way* by Patricia Polacco (Philomel Books, 2001). In this true story, a school principal named Mr. Lincoln helps a school bully who puts down other students and even the principal because of their race to appreciate that people of all races can live together by drawing on the boy's love for and knowledge of birds. A beautiful example of forgiveness and compassion.

*My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother* by Patricia Polacco (Aladdin, 1998). A little girl tries to be better than her big brother out of jealousy and he ends up helping her out of kindness.

"What if Nobody Forgave? The Story of Grudgeville" by Barbara Marshman in *What if Nobody Forgave and Other Stories of Principle* by Colleen M. McDonald (Boston : Skinner House Books, 2003).

*Under the Lemon Moon* by Edith Hope Fine (Lee & Low Books, Inc., 2002). Set in the Mexican countryside with Spanish words sprinkled throughout, this tale tells of a girl whose lemons are all stolen by a poor man who then sells them in the market. Using her resourcefulness and help from La Anciana, the girl heals her tree and the wounds of the crime with generosity and forgiveness.

*Star Boy* by Paul Goble (Aladdin, 1991). In this adapted Blackfoot Indian legend a boy bears a scar on his face given to him after his mother disobeyed the Sun and fell to earth. The boy travels to the Sun to seek forgiveness and healing and brings to his people the ceremony of the Sun Dance to give thanks for the Creator's Blessings.

### Non-fiction Books about Forgiveness, for Children

*Forgiveness* by Lucia Raatma (Bridgestone Books, 2002). This book, part of a character education series written for children, describes many aspects of forgiveness including; asking for forgiveness, forgiving

others including friends, family and strangers, expressing hurt feelings, and forgiving oneself.

*Kids' Random Acts of Kindness* by Conari Press (RedWheel/Weiser, 1994). This book of stories, by and for kids, that demonstrate acts of caring and kindness includes writing by Dawna Markova and Rosalynn Carter.

*Caring* by Robin Doak (Raintree, 2002). This book written for children has examples of types of caring including a short chapter on forgiveness. For each type of caring the author provides real life examples of things that people have done, including forgiveness.

Non-fiction Books about Forgiveness, for Adults

*The Forgiveness Formula* by Kathleen Griffin (Marlowe & Co., 2004)

*Radical Forgiveness: A Bold Choice for a Peaceful Heart* by Robin Casarjian (Bantam Books, 1992)

*The Sacred Art of Forgiveness* by Marcia Ford (Sky Light Paths Publishing, 2006). Adult.

*Teachings on Love* by Thich Nhat Han (Parallax Press, 1997)

### Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance

The [Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance](http://www.forgivenessday.org/) (at [www.forgivenessday.org/](http://www.forgivenessday.org/)) is a non-denominational, international group that promotes forgiveness as a way to greater world peace. The site includes information about World Wide Forgiveness Day activities and awards famous and little known heroes of forgiveness. It tells the story of Kai Lee Harriot, a three-year-old girl who was paralyzed from the waist down by a bullet. When she was six years old, Kai Lee faced the shooter in court and told him that, "What you done to me was wrong, but I still forgive him." The site includes many other examples of forgiveness, and they call for submissions annually. The group also sponsors actions such as writing letters of forgiveness and student essay contests.

### Sand

Art sand is available at most craft stores and from many online sources. A typical price may be \$7 for a five-pound box of [art sand](#) (at [www.MisterArt.com](http://www.MisterArt.com)).

Play sand is available at hardware stores and sporting goods stores.

### Air-drying Modeling Clay

Available in small quantities at most arts and craft stores. You can order a [25-pound box online](#) (at [www.amaco.com](http://www.amaco.com)) for \$24.

### **Fidget Objects**

The idea of having a basket of "fidget objects" available during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, koosh balls, and other soft, quiet, manipulatable objects.

When you introduce the fidget object basket to the group, begin by saying that some people learn best

when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may wish to use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children that the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the basket available for the duration of the session, or bring the basket out only during activities, such as hearing a story told, that require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

# SESSION 6: WELCOME ONE AND ALL

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Benedict tells us to offer an open heart, a stance of availability, and to look for God lurking in every single person who comes through the door. — Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. — Christian scripture, Matthew 25:35

This session is based on the notion that justice and goodness require an attitude of radical hospitality towards all others, regardless of race, class, or creed. In their book, *Radical Hospitality* (Paraclete Press, 2002), Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt amplify this notion, which is also a natural extension of our first Unitarian Universalist principle, which affirms the worth and dignity of all people.

Participants will hear a Middle Eastern folk tale about Mullah Nasruddin, who arrives at a dinner party in farming clothes only to be ignored. After changing into fancy clothes, he is greeted warmly and welcomed wholeheartedly. Nasruddin proceeds to feed his coat, proclaiming it is the garments that have been welcomed, not the person wearing them. "Welcome" is added to the Moral Compass poster.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Present welcome without prejudgment as a corollary to the first Unitarian Universalist principle: the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Focus participants' attention on the congregation as a place where everyone is welcome
- Highlight situations of exclusion and help participants develop empathy for those who are excluded
- Make a connection between justice and the inclusion of all people
- Foster welcoming of all people regardless of apparent differences
- Help participants recognize the injustice inherent in prejudgment
- Build a safe and welcoming Moral Tales community.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Hear a story about a man who is welcome at a feast only when he is wearing fancy clothing
- Name and act out welcoming and unwelcoming behaviors through participation in a game
- Build awareness of differences and similarities among people
- Practice welcoming behaviors through extending welcome to classmates
- Learn how to be welcoming of others
- Be introduced to a few facts about the Muslim holy month of Ramadan
- Learn to sing the hymn, "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table."

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Welcome Game – Fishing for Friends	5
Activity 3: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 4: Story – Mullah Nasruddin Feeds His Coat	10
Activity 5: Welcome and Unwelcome Game	10
Activity 6: The Welcome Table Feast	15
Activity 7: Clean-Up	5
Faith in Action: Congregational Hunger Awareness – Short-term and Long-term	20
Faith in Action: Protecting Seals, Awareness/Fundraising – Long-term	30
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10

Alternate Activity 2: Hosting Coffee Hour	90
Alternate Activity 3: Don't Judge a Book By Its Cover	15
Alternate Activity 4: Story Hot Seat	20

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Take a few minutes to remember a time when you felt unwelcome or excluded. Where were you? Who was there? How did the person or people make you feel

unwelcome? How did you feel? Now take a few minutes to remember a time when you felt welcome. Where were you? Who was there? How did the person or people make you feel welcome? How did you feel?

Now visualize yourself extending a true and warm welcome to every child in the group. If there is a child you find it difficult to welcome wholeheartedly, take a few moments and seek to feel empathy for this child. Hold each child in your heart as a unique gift to you and to the group.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the "Gems of Goodness" Project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately 2"x 3", for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2: Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2: Introducing the "Moral Compass") and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to

three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: WELCOME GAME — FISHING FOR FRIENDS (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Poster board or card stock fish, made from template in Leader Resource 1, [Fishing for Friends](#) (included in this document)
- Small, stick-on magnets for all participants
- Pencils for all participants
- Large envelope to store fish to use again
- Stick or dowel, approximately 1/2-inch in diameter and 18 inches long
- Length of string or yarn, approximately 36 inches
- One mid-sized magnet

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Download and print out Leader Resource 1, Fishing for Friends. Cut out the fish template and trace it onto blank poster board, card stock or construction paper to make enough fish shapes for everyone in the group, including co-leaders and adult or teen volunteers. Fish should all be the same color and size.
- Make a magnetic fishing rod by tying one end of a string around a dowel and the other end around a medium-size magnet.

- Purchase all items at an arts and crafts store or a hardware store. You may find a good mid-size magnet for the fishing rod in a child's toy kit such as a magnetic building set.

### **Description of Activity**

With children seated at work tables, distribute poster board fish and pencils to everyone (including co-leaders and volunteers). Ask everyone to write their name on a fish. Bring small, stick-on magnets around and affix one to the opposite side of each person's fish — the side without the name.

Collect all the fish, shuffle them, and place them on the floor in a single layer, with magnets up and names facing down. Invite each person, one at a time, to use the magnetic fishing line. You may say:

It is your turn to go fishing for a friend.

Once a fish is attached to the fishing line, ask the person to identify which friend is caught, find that person, and greet them by saying, "Good morning (or afternoon), (name of person whose fish was caught). Welcome to Moral Tales."

Then invite the friend who has been welcomed to fish for a friend. Repeat until everyone has been welcomed. Gather the fish at the end and keep for another time.

This exercise leads each person to extend and receive welcome. The random element of fishing adds suspense and prevents children from choosing who they will welcome and greeting only their particular friends in the group.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "Mullah Nasruddin Feeds His Coat" such as a ragged, worn item of clothing; a fancy shawl or robe; or fake food
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the

filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.

- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the storytelling basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket this week."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the storytelling basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate the Middle East. Tell the children that the story they will hear is an Islamic folk tale.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### Including All Participants

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## ACTIVITY 4: STORY – MULLAH NASRUDDIN FEEDS HIS COAT (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Mullah Nasruddin Feeds His Coat](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try a different voice for Mullah Nasruddin. You may find it helpful to picture the rich man's dining room, where most of the story takes place, and observe the



characters and action of the story as if you were watching a movie.

- Think about how you might use items from the story basket as props. You may want to begin the story by putting on a ragged and/or dirty item of clothing and change to a fancy coat when Nasruddin changes his clothes.

### Description of Activity

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person.

Tell the children that this story takes place during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is a holy time for Muslims during which they don't eat any food or drink any water from sun-up to sun-down. Every day for a month, they break the fast with a large meal at the end of the day, often shared with friends and family. One reason for this fasting is to develop empathy for people who are hungry because they have no food. Giving charity is an important part of Islam (one of its five pillars) and is an important part of Ramadan. The main character in this story is Mullah Nasruddin. A Mullah is a Muslim religious teacher or leader.

Read or tell the story.

Ring the chime to indicate that the story is over.

### Including All Participants

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

## ACTIVITY 5: WELCOME AND UNWELCOME GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A ragged, worn garment and a fancy garment, as used in the story

### Description of Activity

Have the children stand in a circle. Lead them in a quick stretch. You may say:

Let's all pretend to be Nasruddin for a moment. We'll reach up high to get some food and then put it in our pockets.

After the stretch, ask the children to raise their hands if they've ever had a time when they felt unwelcome.

Briefly ask the kids to contribute things that people do that can make someone feel unwelcome. Prompt with suggestions such as:

- Insults or name calling
- Hitting someone
- Not sharing
- Making a mean face
- Not letting someone join a game
- Saying "Go away!"
- Looking away from someone / ignoring someone

When it is clear that the children have a pretty good understanding of behaviors that are unwelcoming, put on the ragged, worn garment. Say, in your own words:

When Nasruddin was wearing dirty clothes, the people at the feast did not welcome him. They judged him on his clothes and decided he wasn't good enough. Now we're going to use our bodies, our faces and our words and we're going to pretend to be the guests who did not want to include Nasruddin.

Go around the circle and invite each child to do or say something unwelcoming. You may want to have ground rules that include no physical violence or inappropriate language. Encourage the kids to be dramatic and to act unwelcoming with their whole bodies. If a child uses words without movement, you can ask, "What would your body look like if you were really saying that to someone?" When everyone has had a turn, if it seems like there might be more ways of being unwelcoming that have not yet been enacted, offer a few and ask for volunteers to add any new ideas.

Now say, in your own words:

In our congregation, we say that all people have inherent worth and dignity. Unitarian Universalists think all people are important — no matter what. We think you should not judge people based on things like what clothes they are wearing or what color hair they have.

See if the children can fill in the sentence, "Unitarian Universalists believe all people are important, no matter \_\_\_\_\_."

And/or, ask the children to answer some of these questions, in unison. A co-leader might be helpful in leading the children in answering "Yes" for the first few questions:

- Do we welcome people here if they don't play Pokemon? (Yes!)

- Do we welcome people here, no matter what they look like? (Yes!)
- Do we welcome people here if they arrive in a red car? (Yes!)
- Do we welcome people here if they are vegetarians? (Yes!)
- Do we welcome people here who have any color of skin?
- Do we welcome tall people here?
- Do we welcome short people?
- Do we welcome medium-sized people?
- Do we welcome people who have freckles?
- Do we welcome people here who are boys? (Yes!)
- Do we welcome people here if they are girls? (Yes!)
- Do we welcome people here if they are afraid of dogs? (Yes!)
- Do we welcome people here if they are shy? (Yes!)

Add your own categories of people who are welcome.

Now put on the fancy garment on top of the ragged, worn one. Say:

#### **Including All Participants**

Inclusion and exclusion are very real experiences for children at this age. If there is a child in the group who may be a frequent target of unwelcoming behavior, or who may be a recipient of racist, classist, or any type of prejudice and prejudgment, be careful to support this child. Create a safe space for them to name any unpleasant experiences, but do not put the child on the spot or ask the child to be a spokesperson. Simply include them in the activity, along with the other children.

For example, if the group is mostly able-bodied, white, and American-born, and includes children who are African American, who use a wheelchair, and/or do not speak English well, do not single out these children during this activity. Do not make assumptions regarding what experiences this child may or may not have had. Do not ask the child to speak on behalf of all African Americans (people in wheelchairs, folks who don't speak English, etc.) Finally, do not put this child in a situation where they are treated with exclusive or unwelcoming behavior, even if it's in the form of a role play. Second and third graders cannot always keep imaginary play and reality separated. It is very important that all children

Fancy coat or old rags, at our congregation, all people are welcome, no matter what.

Ask the children to think about a time when they felt welcome. Invite the group to name ways that people can make somebody feel welcome. Prompt as necessary, with ideas such as:

- Sharing
- Smiling at someone
- Giving someone a hug or shaking their hand
- Offering someone food or a drink
- Asking someone what they would like to play or do
- Listening carefully to someone
- Telling someone new your name and asking their name

Walk around the circle again, inviting children this time to show you "welcome" using their words, bodies and faces.

The goal of this activity is to integrate the learning in the story by voicing and embodying the contrasting attitudes of welcome and unwelcome. Naming and enacting ways to be welcoming and ways to be unwelcoming makes learning more concrete.

experience Moral Tales and your congregation as a place of safety and caring.

## **ACTIVITY 6: THE WELCOME TABLE FEAST (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Special foods, and juice or milk
- Serving trays
- Plates, cups, napkins and any necessary utensils
- Clean dish towels or aluminum foil
- Optional: Tablecloths
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano, or other instrument

## Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables and chairs, preferably in a horseshoe or square shape so everyone is eating together. If your meeting space does not have room for you to pre-set the tables and chairs and still do storytelling and circle activities as usual, consider setting up the feast in another room.
- Consider giving the feast a Middle Eastern theme, to extend the mood of the story and reflect its Islamic roots. See Leader Resources for ideas and online resources.
- Purchase paper dishes, cups, napkins and other necessary items for table settings. Online, find [a list of companies](#) that sell disposable dishes that biodegrade by typing in "biodegradable plates" into the Ecology Center's "search" field at the top of the page.
- Prepare food and place on serving trays. Cover with clean dish towels or aluminum foil and leave with beverages, and dishes in a room outside the meeting space, so children do not see them before this activity.
- Look up Hymn 407, "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Write the words on the newsprint and post where children can see it during the feast.
- If the hymn is unfamiliar to you and you do not read music, consider asking your music director to teach it to you.
- If you are uncomfortable teaching or leading the song, invite a musical volunteer to do it for you, or you can ask your music director to record it on a tape, or even record the choir singing it.

## Description of Activity

Say:

In our story today, Nasruddin was judged by the other townspeople for his clothing. He was not welcome at the feast when he was wearing dirty clothes. We are going to have a feast where everybody is welcome without prejudices.

Have the children line up and walk over to the tables, with a co-leader or volunteer at the front of the line. Say, in your own words:

Each person is going to welcome another person to this feast using the welcoming methods we just talked about.

Be the model by welcoming the first person in line to the feast. This person now turns to welcome the next person and then sits down at the table while that person

extends a greeting to the next person in line until all have been greeted and are sitting at the table.

Once children are seated, teach the song, "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Sing the song once through together and then enjoy the feast.

You may wish to sing this song again, as the closing song in this session. The lyrics are:

We're gonna sit at the welcome table.

We're gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days, hallelujah!

We're gonna sit at the welcome table,

Gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days.

All kinds of people around that table,

All kinds of people around that table one of these days, hallelujah,

All kinds of people around that table,

Gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days.

No fancy style at the welcome table ...

This activity builds community in the group while extending the message of the story into a real-life setting as the children practice what it means to be welcoming and to feel welcomed.

## Including All Participants

Before serving food to children, check with parents about food allergies or other food sensitivities. Find out from your director of religious education if a food policy exists, and follow it carefully. If anyone in the group has a severe allergy, be sure to read all ingredients labels including any notes as to whether an item was prepared in a facility that also processes tree nuts. If volunteers will prepare food in their homes in advance, require them to list all ingredients and provide any product labels that provide food allergy-related information.

## ACTIVITY 7: CLEAN UP (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials
- Waste basket lined with a bag
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers
- Damp sponges or paper towels to wipe tables used in group feast

## Preparation for Activity

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.
- This session may generate more than the usual amount of food-related trash. Make sure you know the proper way to dispose of waste and the best place to store extra food or beverages at your congregation.

## Description of Activity

Invite the children to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it. Ask them to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

If you have used play sand, pack loose sand in secure containers and sweep or vacuum floors.

## Including All Participants

All children should assist as able.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano, or other instrument

## Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. To close this session, you may wish to give the children another opportunity to sing "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.
- Find additional suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. However, it is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, invite a musical volunteer to do it for you.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Write the word "Welcome" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Welcome" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

## Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions about how to be fair. Today we heard a story about a man who was judged and treated unfairly because of what he was wearing. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe that being fair means welcoming everybody, so we're going to add "Welcome" as a direction on our Moral Compass.

Post or write the word "Welcome" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to pay special attention to times when they are being welcoming, without prejudice, as well as times when they have a chance to practice any of the other virtues on the Moral Compass poster.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Or, lead the group in once again singing "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these.

Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM – CONGREGATIONAL HUNGER AWARENESS (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- One to four large sheets of poster board
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Color markers for participants to share

### **Preparation for Activity**

Review all four hunger awareness activities that are suggested here: (1) make welcome signs for a food pantry (short-term activity), (2) conduct a congregational food drive, (3) learn about local food needs, and (4) visit and/or volunteer at a food pantry.

- You may choose to do any combination of these activities. Introduce the project today. Plan to

have the children make "Welcome" signs today, while longer-range plans take shape. Find follow-up steps in Session 7: Seeing Others with Awe.

- Call local food pantries to find out what food needs they have.
- Identify a food pantry that will display "Welcome" signs the children will make.
- Find out whether children in this age range would be allowed to volunteer in some capacity at a food pantry. If so, determine which volunteer opportunities would be appropriate for your congregation and set a date for the children to help.
- Make a plan to bring hunger awareness to parents and others in your congregation. Coordinate plans with your minister to involve the entire congregation, including adults other than the children's parents, in the volunteer work. For example, consider collecting food every Sunday for a month in a special offering during the worship service.
- Set up a visit during coffee hour or another arranged time with a worker or trained volunteer from the food pantry to talk with the children and others in the congregation about local food needs. Be sure the speaker understands the audience will include young children. If possible, have the children gather a few minutes before the informational session to brainstorm questions they would like to ask the worker from the food pantry. If children will visit the food pantry, this guest should come before the children's visit there. Or, the guest's presentation could be in lieu of children going to the food pantry.
- Consult your director of religious education to identify a central location for food donation collection and to announce the plan to the congregation through the newsletter, email lists, Sunday announcements or bulletins.
- Write the word "Welcome" on newsprint, and post.
- If a group will be visiting the food pantry, create a sign-up sheet and recruit volunteers. Communicate the expected numbers of volunteers, and their ages, to workers at the food pantry. Be sure to tell volunteers that the activity includes an after-the-fact discussion of the experience, and when and where that discussion will take place.

- Provide directions and arrange transportation to the food pantry.

### Description of Activity

In this session, participants had the opportunity to experience a welcome feast. Many people in the United States are often not "welcome at the table," and do not have enough food to eat. This Faith in Action activity introduces the idea of extending welcome to others by going to volunteer at a food pantry and/or holding a food drive. It concretizes the notion of welcome by guiding children to make "Welcome" signs for the food pantry. In addition to welcome, the spiritual practices of generosity, gratitude, and humility are all implicitly a part of this activity as participants confront the realities of poverty and hunger and take action.

To introduce the food drive and/or volunteer work, say:

In the story you heard, Mullah Nasruddin was not welcome at the table in his dirty clothes. Some people don't have a feast to go to, and some people don't even have a home. Many families don't have enough food to eat.

Tell the class briefly about your planned food drive and/or work at the food pantry. Then continue:

When people go to the food pantry, we don't want them to feel like Nasruddin did. We want everyone to know that they are welcome, no matter what, so we are going to make welcome signs.

Invite them to use the color markers and poster board to decorate one to four large welcome signs which will be posted at the soup kitchen or food pantry. Point out the newsprint where you have written the word "Welcome." You may want to assign small groups of children to work together on a poster. If you help them make "bubble letters," a few children can color them in at a time.

Children in second and third grade are often very compassionate and concerned when they encounter injustice. Participation in a concrete service project provides them with an outlet for their concern and empowers them as agents of justice. Moreover, they will experience what it means to translate into action our Unitarian Universalist principles, which promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person as well as justice, equity and compassion in human relations. By participating in this or similar projects, children will learn that one aspect of a religious life is serving others and being responsive to their human needs.

### Including All Participants

It is important to remember as you plan and lead this activity that some families in your congregation, and

some children in the group, might be homeless or living below the poverty line. Be careful to use language that includes this possibility and that does not assume all of the children come from financially wealthy homes. You can help normalize the experience by saying something like, "Some families in our congregation sometimes go to the food pantry and lots of families need the help of food pantries at some time or other." However, be respectful of the right to personal privacy and do not identify particular individuals without permission.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Hospitality ... is the stance of the heart that is abandoned to Love. —Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We shared a story in which Middle Eastern folk hero, Nasruddin, was unwelcome at a feast when wearing dirty, ragged clothes. When he changed into his finest clothes, he was greeted warmly. Nasruddin proceeded to feed his coat, making the point that it was his clothing which had been welcomed and not himself. We played a game in which participants enacted both unwelcoming and welcoming behaviors. The children learned that Unitarian Universalists believe all people are important, which means everybody is welcome at our congregation, without prejudgments. Finally, we enjoyed a welcome table feast.

We began a long-term Faith in Action project today that involves raising awareness about local hunger. The children made "Welcome" signs for a local food pantry, and we will begin a congregation-wide food drive next time we meet. Please consider taking your child grocery shopping with you, and selecting together some healthy non-perishable items to donate.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

Inclusion and exclusion are very real issues for elementary school children. Talk with your child about times when they have felt excluded. Share some of your own experiences of feeling unwelcome or judged. Talk with your child about how you handled those situations.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

As a family, volunteer to serve as greeters at congregational worship. Talk ahead of time about ways to be especially welcoming to newcomers, such as wearing nametags, providing information about the congregation and Unitarian Universalism, inviting newcomers to coffee hour, or introducing them to the minister, director of religious education, or other members. Invite your child to take on responsibility for helping any visiting children to feel welcome; suggest specific behaviors your child can do, to be welcoming.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

Many families around the world living in poverty are not "welcome at the table." Consider participating in the [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](http://www.uusc.org/) (at [www.uusc.org/](http://www.uusc.org/))'s yearly "Guest at Your Table project." If your congregation does not already participate in this effort, encourage your director of religious education, your minister, or members of your social action committee to learn about it.

Place the Guest at Your Table box on your dinner table. When your family is gathered for dinner, think about the people in the world who do not have enough to eat and put money in the box. Return the box with your collected money to the congregation, at the appropriate time. Consider keeping a box on your table year-round. Periodically empty it and donate the money to a local or international agency that works to end hunger, such as the UUSC or [Oxfam](http://www.oxfam.org/) (at [www.oxfam.org/](http://www.oxfam.org/)).

### FAMILY DISCOVERY

Exclusionary, unwelcoming behaviors are often based on prejudgments stemming from prejudice and stereotypes. Read books to your child that promote diversity appreciation. Many media images and books continue to perpetuate negative (or even positive) stereotypes. When you see such images, name them for your child.

Recommended picture books:

*Don't Laugh at Me* by Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin

*Black is brown is tan* by Arnold Adoff

*All Families are Special* by Norma Simon

*And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson

Publications that promote anti-bias education:

*Once Upon a Time: Storytelling to Teach Character and Prevent Bullying* by Elisa Davy Pearmain; especially the diversity appreciation chapter

*How to Tell the Difference: A Guide to Evaluating Children's Books for Anti-Indian Bias* by Beverly Slapin, Doris Seale and Rosemary Gonzales

[Ten Ways to Teach Tolerance](http://www.teachingtolerance.org/parents/tenways.js) (at [www.teachingtolerance.org/parents/tenways.js](http://www.teachingtolerance.org/parents/tenways.js))

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.

- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: HOSTING COFFEE HOUR (90 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Food and or beverages for participants to prepare and/or serve, and any needed cookware or serving items

### Preparation for Activity

- Choose a date for the group to host coffee hour. If someone has signed up to coordinate coffee hour for that day, coordinate your plans with this person.
- Consult with the appropriate person in your congregation regarding the coffee hour procedures. Familiarize yourself with the coffee hour responsibilities. Decide which of these you will assign to children in the group.

- Plan children's task assignments ahead of time. It may work best to have children work in pairs.
- Contact parents in advance to secure permission for their children to participate.
- If the Moral Tales meeting time is before the coffee hour the group will host, the children could prepare food for coffee hour during their session. Find a recipe, purchase the ingredients, and make sure you will have all the cookware and serving items the group will need. If you wish to hold a Middle Eastern feast, as per the story, look [online for recipes](http://allrecipes.com/recipes/world-cuisine/middle-east/) (at <http://allrecipes.com/recipes/world-cuisine/middle-east/>).

### Description of Activity

If you have time and would like to provide an opportunity for children to interact with the broader congregational community, this activity could take the place of the Activity 7, The Welcome Table Feast. Participants can prepare some food for coffee hour during the session and/or help serve pre-made food.

Consider having a Middle Eastern feast, such as that in the story, and serve foods such as hummus and baba ghanouj (eggplant dip) with pita bread, baklava, and halvah.

Have the children work in pairs to maximize their safety and comfort. Children can serve as greeters, standing by the doors or the food tables and welcoming everyone to coffee hour. Assign some children to be in charge of nametags. They can make sure everyone is wearing a nametag and make nametags for anyone who needs one. If members of the congregation often forget or object to nametags, talk with your director of religious education or minister about using this Moral Tales activity as an opportunity to jump-start a congregational practice of wearing nametags as a measure of hospitality.

Children this age often very much enjoy serving as helpers. Assign simple jobs such as putting hummus into a bowl and bringing it to the table, clearing empty plates and cups to the kitchen, or possibly washing or rinsing dishes. It is unrealistic to think that children at this age will sustain the necessary focus to help substantially with clean up. Expect adult volunteers to finish the job.

### Including All Participants

Before serving food to children, check with parents about food allergies or other food sensitivities. Find out from your director of religious education if a food policy exists, and follow it carefully. If anyone in the group has



a severe allergy, be sure to read all ingredients labels including any notes as to whether an item was prepared in a facility that also processes tree nuts. If volunteers will prepare food in their homes in advance, require them to list all ingredients and provide any product labels that provide food allergy-related information.

### **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER (15 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- A dozen or so books, including some that may appeal to the children and others you do not expect will be appealing
- Gift wrap paper, book jackets, newspaper, construction paper in a variety of colors and designs, some appealing, some plain or ugly
- Tape
- Optional: Ribbons, bows and stickers

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Using the gift wrap paper, book jackets, newspaper and construction paper, wrap the various books in book covers and book jackets that do not match the books. If you wish, use ribbons, bows and stickers to further decorate some of the book covers. Be sure to wrap some books that are appealing to children in less appealing book covers and vice versa.

#### **Description of Activity**

Gather the group in a circle. Place the books randomly on the floor. Go around the circle and allow each child to point to one book they would like to read based on the cover of the book alone. More than one child can point to the same book. When all have selected a book, go around again and ask each child to point to one book they would not like to read based on the cover of the book alone.

Now say:

Remember in our story, Mullah Nasruddin was judged by the other townspeople for his clothing. They decided whether they wanted to talk to him or not based on what he was wearing. There is an expression that says, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Do any of you have ideas about what that means?

Allow the children to offer some answers to the question and then say, in your own words:

"Don't judge a book by its cover" means you can't tell what is inside a book from what is on the outside. And you can't tell what is inside a person from what you see on the outside either. Let's see what's inside these books.

Allow the children to take turns choosing a book and looking to see what sort of book it is. With each book, ask the children to raise their hands if they wanted to read the book based on its cover. Next, ask them to raise their hands if they didn't want to read the book based on its cover. Finally, ask them to raise their hands if their opinion changed once they saw what was inside the book.

Conclude by saying, in your own words:

In our Unitarian Universalist congregation, all people are welcome, no matter what they look like on the outside. Just like these books, you have to look under the cover of a person to find out what they are really like on the inside.

If time allows, choose a story of reasonable length and read it to the group.

### **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: STORY HOT SEAT (20 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[Mulla Nasruddin Feeds His Coat](#)" (included in this document)

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Move the chairs into a half circle with one chair set apart as if on a stage.
- Try to imagine what the voice of Mullah Nasruddin or the host would be like, and how they would move.

#### **Description of Activity**

In this activity the children will have a chance to step into the shoes of the characters after the story has happened. Settle children in the chairs you have placed in a semi-circle. Tell them:

The chair set apart is the "hot seat." The person in the hot seat will pretend to be one of the characters from the story. The rest of us can ask the person in the hot seat questions. The person in the hot seat answers as the character.

Be the first one in the hot seat. Tell the children that you are going to leave the room and come back as one of the characters. Leave, come back, and introduce yourself. You may say:

Hello, children. I am the Mullah Nasruddin. Do you have any questions for me?

Tell the children they may raise their hands and ask the character questions about the story. Answer a question or two, then ask if someone else would like to take a turn in the hot seat. Let this child leave the room and come back as the same or a new character. After a short while, suggest that another child take the hot seat. If the children are all eager to be in the hot seat, then limit one or two questions per turn in the hot seat.

As needed, guide the activity by sharing with the group these rules:

- There is no right or wrong answer. The point is to try to imagine what the characters might say.
- The person in the hot seat must take questions from all of the children, not just close peers.
- They must stick to the story. If they get silly or inappropriate they will have to give up the hot seat.
- Encourage the children to listen to the questions that have already been asked so that they might ask different questions.

The goal of this activity is to help the children develop a deeper understanding of the story, to explore the feelings and the perspectives of the characters in more depth, and to have a personal experience of empathy.

In the story, "Mullah Nasruddin Feeds His Coat," characters to role play include Nasruddin, the wealthy host, and the other guests. If the children have difficulty

coming up with questions, model asking questions with these:

- Why didn't you welcome Nasruddin when he was wearing his ragged clothes? (wealthy host or guest)
- Why did you behave differently to Nasruddin when he was in rags than when he was in fancy clothes? (wealthy host or guest)
- What did you think when Nasruddin began to feed his coat? (wealthy host or guest)
- How did you feel when Nasruddin explained why he was feeding his coat? (wealthy host or guest)
- Will you do things differently another time? (wealthy host or guest)
- How did you feel when you weren't welcome? (Nasruddin)
- How did you feel when everyone was friendly to you once you changed your clothes? (Nasruddin)
- Why did you feed your coat? (Nasruddin)
- Do you think they'll treat you differently next time? (Nasruddin)
- Why didn't you wear fancy clothes to the feast in the first place? (Nasruddin)

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 6: STORY 1: MULLAH NASRUDDIN FEEDS HIS COAT

Adapted from a Middle Eastern Islamic folk tale which is attributed to different countries, including Turkey and Syria.

Mullah Nasruddin had been working in the fields all day long. He was tired and sweaty and his clothes and shoes were covered with mud and stains. Because he had been fasting all day long, for Ramadan, he was also quite hungry. But finally, it was almost sundown and Nasruddin knew that he would soon be able to eat.

The wealthiest man in town had invited everyone to come break their fasts in his home that evening with a huge feast. Nasruddin knew that he would be late if he went home to change his clothes before heading into town. He decided it was better to arrive in dirty clothes than to be late. Oh, what a party it would be! What a feast! As he walked to the wealthy man's home, Nasruddin imagined the delicious foods that he would soon be eating: dates, lentils and chickpeas, olives and bread, hummus, falafel, chicken and beef — and best of all — the desserts — halvah, date rolls, figs and baklava!

When Nasruddin arrived, the wealthy man opened the door and looked Nasruddin up and down scornfully, from his worn, ragged clothes down to his muddy shoes. Without a word of welcome, he gestured for Nasruddin to come in and walked abruptly away.

(Leader — Say, "I wonder what the wealthy man was thinking or feeling," and briefly take a few answers. Return to the story by saying, "Let's hear what happens next.")

Nasruddin joined the throngs of people, who were all dressed in their finest clothing. The tables were laden with all sorts of delicious foods: dates, lentils and chickpeas, olives and bread, hummus, falafel, chicken and beef — and best of all — the desserts — halvah, date rolls, figs and baklava!

Despite his efforts to hurry, the seats were all taken and nobody tried to move over or make a space for Nasruddin. In fact, nobody offered him food. He had to reach over and around people to get any food for his plate. Nobody spoke to him. It was as if he wasn't even there.

(Leader — Pause and say, "I wonder how Nasruddin was feeling about this." Briefly take a few answers.)

The other guests ignored him so completely that Nasruddin could not enjoy the food on his plate, no matter how finely prepared and how tasty it was. In fact, after only a few bites, Nasruddin was so uncomfortable that he decided to leave.

He hurried home and changed into his finest clothing, including a beautiful coat.

(Leader — Take off worn, ragged clothing and put on the coat or shawl.)

Nasruddin returned to the feast and this time the host welcomed him with a huge smile. "Come in, come in," greeted the host. As Nasruddin entered, people waved and called to him from all corners of the room as they invited him to sit near them and offered him food.

(Leader — Ask, "I wonder what the host and the other guests were thinking now?" and accept a few answers. Then ask, "I wonder what Nasruddin was feeling," for brief responses before you continue.)

Nasruddin sat down quietly. Picking up a plump fig, he carefully placed it into a coat pocket, saying, "Eat, coat, eat." (Leader — If you have brought fake food, act this out.) Next he took a handful of nuts and put them into the pocket, saying, "Eat, coat, eat." Now he began to feed his coat in earnest, grabbing all sorts of foods. (Leader — Pause here and invite the children to try to name some foods Nasruddin might have fed to his coat. Use their suggestions: "Nasruddin put \_\_\_ in his pocket, saying, 'Eat, coat, eat!'")

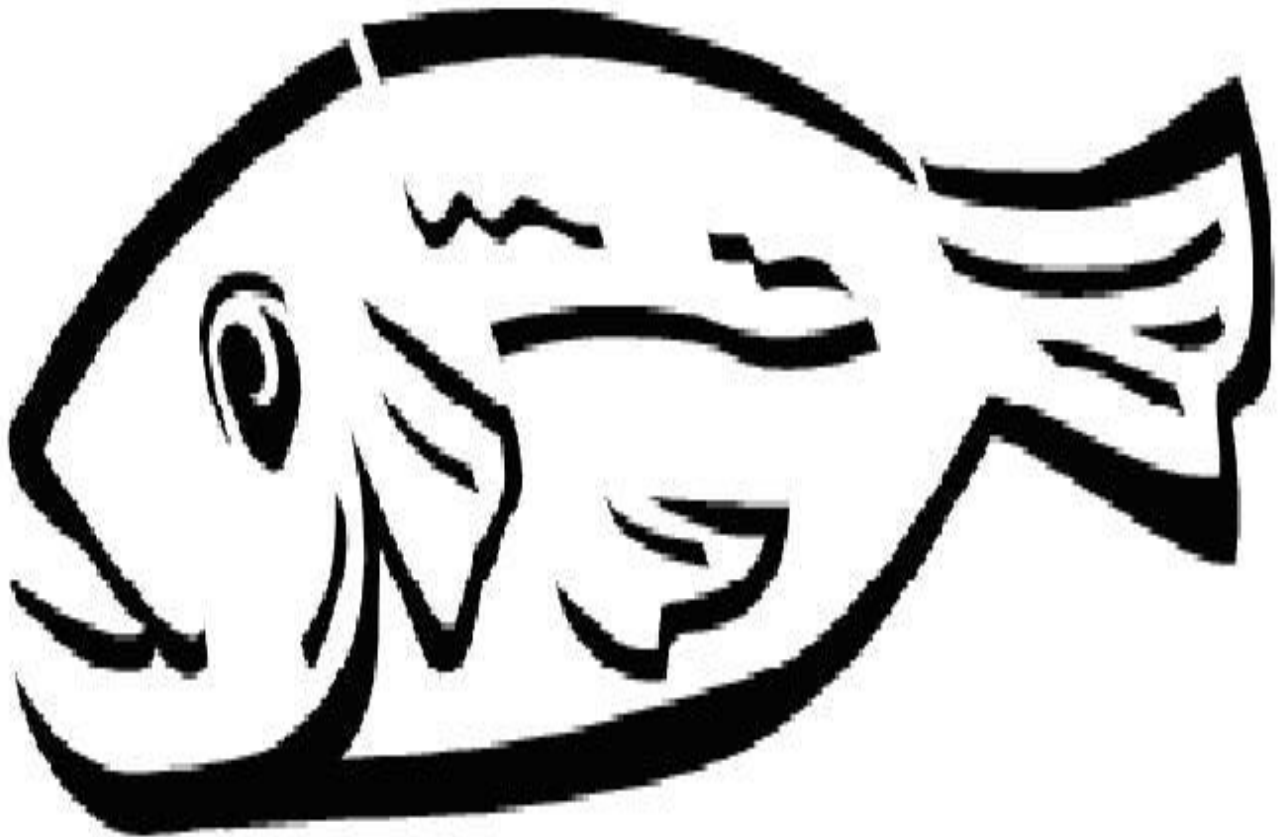
He fed the coat lentils and chickpeas, olives and bread, hummus, falafel, chicken and beef — and best of all — the desserts — halvah, date rolls, figs and baklava!

Nasruddin became silent as they watched this strange behavior. Soon everyone in the room was staring at Nasruddin, wondering what he was doing. The host hurried over. "Nasruddin, whatever are you doing? Why are you feeding your coat in this manner?"

"Well," replied Nasruddin, "when I first came to this feast in my old farming clothes, I was not welcome. No one would speak with me. But when I changed into this coat, suddenly I was greeted warmly. So I realized it was not me that was welcome at this party, but my clothing. And so I am feeding my coat."

(Leader — Use the sound instrument to signify that the story has ended. Briefly ask children how they think the host and the other guests might have been feeling when Nasruddin told them why he was feeding his coat. After they have offered a few answers, ask them whether they think it was fair or kind when the people wouldn't talk to Nasruddin.)

**MORAL TALES: SESSION 6:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: FISHING FOR FRIENDS**



## FIND OUT MORE

### Islamic Folk Tales

Find more Islamic folk tales in these books, which provided source material for the version of "Mullah Nasruddin Feeds His Coat" in this curriculum:

[Ayat Jamilah](#): *Beautiful Signs, A Treasury of Islamic Wisdom for Children and Parents* (Skinner House, 2010)

*Once the Hodja* by Alice Greer Kelsey (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1967)

*Once Upon a Time: Storytelling to Teach Character and Prevent Bullying* by Elisa Davy Pearmain ( Greensboro : Character Development Group, 2006)

*Watermelons, Walnuts and the Wisdom of Allah and the Other Tales of the Hoca* by Barbara Walker (New York: Parents Magazine Press, 1967).

### Middle Eastern Feast

If you wish to buy or prepare some traditional [Middle Eastern treats](#) (at <http://allrecipes.com/recipes/world-cuisine/middle-east/>) for the Welcome Feast, find suggestions and recipes online. You may also check the Yellow Pages or internet for Middle Eastern, Turkish, or Syrian food stores in your area. Humus, pita bread, dates and olives can be found in most supermarkets.

### Fidget Objects

The idea of having a basket of "fidget objects" available during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, koosh balls, and other soft, quiet, manipulatable objects.

When you introduce the fidget object basket to the group, begin by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may wish to use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children that the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the basket available for the duration of the session, or bring the basket out only during activities, such as hearing a story told, that require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

# SESSION 7: SEEING OTHERS WITH AWE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

To enter into the presence of another human being ... is to enter into the presence of God in a new and different way. — Stephen L. Carter

Drawing upon the first Unitarian Universalist Principle, which affirms the inherent worth and dignity of all people, this session rests on the idea that goodness and justice require more than tolerance of diversity. Children are given guidance to actively embrace differences as they learn to see others — indeed, all living beings — with awe.

In traditional religious terms, as stated in the quotation from Stephen L. Carter's *Civility*, we bring awe to that of God in every living being. A non-theist might bring awe to the Spirit of Life, the "inner light" or simply the uniqueness in every person.

"Respect" is added to the Moral Compass in this session. When we see another with awe, our respect for them is activated. Justice and goodness will surely follow.

The activities in this session require a certain amount of trust among the group, as well as prior acquaintance. This session should not be moved to an earlier place in the curriculum, unless the group is already well established. This session will benefit from the inclusion of at least one, additional adult volunteer who knows the children. This will help the group build sincere, authentic affirmations in Activity 5, the affirmation portraits exercise.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Explore the implications of the first Unitarian Universalist principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Introduce the idea of "awe" and the notion that all living beings are worthy of awe
- Acquaint participants further with one another as they learn to value their similarities and differences
- Demonstrate that seeing others with awe leads to interactions that are characterized by justice and goodness
- Help participants experience themselves as valued members of the Moral Tales community

- Guide participants to identify their own gifts and talents, as well as those of their peers.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Hear a story about some children who learn to see each other with awe
- Think about what they value in each of their peers and articulate these observations as they write or draw them on affirmation portraits
- Identify and name things that they enjoy and/or are good at
- Make a self-portrait.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Welcome Game — Find a Friend	10
Activity 3: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 4: Story – A Messiah Is Among You	10
Activity 5: Life-size Affirmation Portraits	23
Activity 6: Clean-up	2
Faith in Action: Congregational Hunger Awareness – Long-term	10
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Group Affirmation Book	15
Alternate Activity 3: Appearing Ink Books	30

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read the story, "A Messiah Is Among You," a few times. Spend a few minutes thinking about the group, imagining each child as a potential messiah. If there is a child whom you consider difficult, try to reframe this

perception. Take any behaviors you see as negative and think about how they might be positive. For example: stubborn can also be persistent, loud might mean

passionately involved, rebellious might be independent, and silly might mean full of humor.

Over the next few weeks, try to extend this sort of thinking to everyone you meet.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource 2, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle

- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

#### Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness



Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.

- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2: Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2, Introducing the "Moral Compass") and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!"

or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: WELCOME GAME – FIND A FRIEND (10 MINUTES)**

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Push back chairs and table to make room for participants to move freely around the meeting space.

### **Description of Activity**

This game helps children build a community of respect and friendship, as participants learn ways they are similar to and different from one another. Tell the children:

In a moment, I am going to tell you to find a partner and I will tell how to choose that person. And, I will give you a sharing question to do together with your partner.

Tell the children there are two rules for this activity:

- You can't have the same partner two times in a row.
- Show your respect for differences. No put-downs or insults,

You may wish to have an adult or teen volunteer demonstrate finding a partner and discussing the sharing question with that person.

Although adult volunteers should participate, one co-leader should read all the directive statements and monitor the activity to make sure everyone is included and partners show respect for one another.

Use as many directive statements as you have time for. Vary them and use your own ideas to make sure children can find different partners each time:

- Find a friend that ... has the same favorite color as you. Tell each other why it's your favorite color.
- Find a friend that ... has a different favorite color from you. Tell each other what you like about your own favorite color.
- Find a friend that ... has the same favorite food as you. Describe why you love to eat it.
- Find a friend that ... has a different favorite food and describe why you love to eat it.
- Find a friend that ... has not been your partner yet. Tell that person an active game or sport that you love to play.
- Find a friend that ... has not been your partner yet. Tell that person about a book or movie you love.
- Find a friend that ... you know really well. Tell that person something they don't already know about you.
- Find a friend that ... you don't know very well. Tell that person two things they don't already know about you.
- Find a friend that ... has the same color eyes as you. Tell that person one thing that you are very good at.
- Find a friend that ... has different colored eyes than you. Tell that person one thing you love to do.

After you have finished the game, gather in a circle.

Pose these questions:

- Did you learn anything that surprised you about any of the other children in our group?
- Did you learn you have something in common with someone that you didn't already know about?
- Did you find any interesting differences?
- What would this group be like if we all liked and disliked the exact same things? What would the world be like?

### **Including All Participants**

If you have any new children or visitors today, listen carefully to their answers in this activity. The information

you learn will help you give them sincere affirmations during the affirmation portrait activity.

To fully include children with limited mobility, make sure other children approach them to share information about their similarities and differences and partner with them.

### **ACTIVITY 3: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "A Messiah Is Among You," such as a yarmulke (Jewish head covering) or a piece of paper with the word "Messiah" on it
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

#### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket today."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the storytelling basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story

with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Explain that yarmulkes are worn by some Jewish men to cover their heads. Some wear them all the time, others just when they go to synagogue or when they pray. Some Jewish women wear them, too.

Children may ask further questions about some of the items, or start to tell stories about similar things they have seen. Tell them they can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story.

Tell the group that the story they will hear is about a class of third graders, their school teacher who is Jewish, and the school teacher's Jewish rabbi. Ask if anyone knows what a rabbi is. Tell them:

A rabbi is a religious leader at a Jewish temple or synagogue, much like a minister in our congregation.

Now ask whether anyone has heard of a "messiah." Explain:

In some religions people believe that God will send a special person to save the Earth and the people on it from our troubles. This person is called a messiah.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open

your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 4: STORY – A MESSIAH IS AMONG YOU (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[A Messiah Is Among You](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try adopting different voices for Mr. Cohen, the rabbi, or the various students.
- Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props. Place them where you can reach them as you tell the story.

### **Description of Activity**

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person.

If you did not discuss the meaning of the word, "messiah," during the story basket activity, do so now. Explain that some people believe that God will send a special person, called a messiah, to save the Earth and the people on it from our troubles. Explain that Christians believe that Jesus was a messiah. Read or tell the story.

torso. When it is time for them to write on one another's self-portraits, arranging the self-

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over.

### **Including All Participants**

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

## **ACTIVITY 5: LIFE-SIZE AFFIRMATION PORTRAITS (23 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Roll of plain paper large enough to draw, life-size, a child's head and torso, and scissors, or large sheets of poster board for each participant
- Pencils, pens, and color markers, including multicultural skin tone markers
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Consider whether you would prefer to use Alternate Activity 2, Group Affirmation Book, a story integration activity that also involves affirmation of each child, but takes less time.
- Post newsprint where you can write on it.
- Cut sections of plain paper for all participants. Make each section wide enough to trace the child's head and torso and provide room for other children to write affirmations. Write the words, "Seeing (name of child) with Awe" across the top of each piece of plain paper or poster board.
- Think about each child in the group and be ready with a few honest affirmations that you can add to each affirmation portrait. If this is difficult, try to reframe behaviors that seem negative as their positive counterparts: Stubbornness becomes persistence, loudness becomes passion.
- Move tables and chairs out of the way so children can work on the floor. They will need floor space to trace one another's head and

portraits in a circle on the floor may help you make sure each child writes on each self-portrait.

### Description of Activity

Say, in your own words:

When the children in the story thought that one of their classmates was a messiah, they began to see each other differently. That's because they started to see each other with awe.

Ask if children have an idea of what the word, "awe," means. Listen to responses. You may want to mention that the slang use of the word "awesome" captures the meaning well. Ask the children:

- When you say something is "awesome," what does that mean?

Allow responses. Then say:

When you look at something or someone with awe, it means you are looking with respect and wonder, because you see that it is so amazing or special.

Unitarian Universalists believe that all people are amazing and special and should be looked at with awe. This is part of what our first Unitarian Universalist principle means when we say that we affirm that all people have inherent worth and dignity.

Today we're going to practice recognizing the worth and dignity of each person here and looking at each other with awe. We're going to notice and write things we like about each person here. The things we see when we look at each other with awe will be part of each person's affirmation portrait.

Lead a brief brainstorming to draw out some things the children can say and write about each other. Make it very clear that they can only say positive things about one another. Model affirmations by saying things like, "I've noticed that May often shares things with friends," "Sammy's friendly smile makes me feel happy," "Joy's really good at playing soccer," or "Terence draws very realistic dragons."

Explain that children will write on one another's affirmation portraits. Tell them they may write a whole sentence ("You are creative,") or just a word that describes the person ("creative"). Write some key words on the newsprint for children to copy. Ask if children want any particular words include on your list. Common words might be: friendly, creative, loyal, kind, helpful, gentle, or courageous. Encourage the kids to really think

about each child when they choose what they will write on his/her portrait.

Distribute writing and drawing implements. Have participants trace one another's head and torso onto the large paper. Trace one child's shape to show the group how to position themselves on the paper.

Invite them to do this quickly and then create self-portraits on their traced bodies. Keep this part of the project brief, just enough time for children to draw in their faces, hair and any other distinguishing features. They should not color in the bodies, as they may need this space for affirmations.

Once all the self-portraits ready, give each child a pen or pencil. Ask the children to circulate the room, writing affirmations on every other child's portrait, including their own. Remind them that an affirmation must be positive, and it can be a sentence, a phrase, or a single word.

Not all children may be proficient writers. Make yourself and any other adult volunteers widely available during this exercise to write dictated affirmations for children who cannot write. In order to avoid embarrassing any children, make the option of dictation available to all the children. Another possibility is for children to draw affirmations; however, this is likely to require more time. As you write your own affirmations on self-portraits, speak them aloud. This will help the children, and, as needed, writing dictated affirmations.

To help children think of affirmations, use these questions:

- What do you like about them?
- What can you think of that they are good at or really likes to do?

Pay attention to whether any child's self-portrait is receiving fewer affirmations than the others. If this is happening, subtly direct children to that portrait or have an adult write a few extra affirmations. Help the children think of affirmations, but do not insist they write something if it will be insincere.

If the children did Activity 2, Welcoming Game — Find a Friend, help them remember things they learned about each other. This will be especially helpful for generating affirmations for newcomers or visiting children.

The goal of this activity is to give participants the opportunity to practice looking at others with awe. In the process of thinking about each other in a positive light, relationships will strengthen as understanding and respect develop. Moreover, each child will experience being affirmed by his or her peers and teachers. Invite children to take their self-portraits home with them. Or,

you can display them in your meeting space.

### **Including All Participants**

At this age, there is a wide range in writing proficiency. Invite all the children to dictate their thoughts to an adult or an older child to write. You may decide to allow the children to draw affirmations, but, this will take much more time.

Be aware of new children in the group. Help them come up with affirmations, but if they simply do not know the others, they can write compliments such as "I like your hairstyle," or friendly sentiments such as, "I'd like to get to know you better."

## **ACTIVITY 6: CLEAN-UP (2 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials
- Waste basket lined with a bag
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite the children to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it. Ask them to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### **Including All Participants**

All children should assist as able.

## **CLOSING (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find some suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. It is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Write the word "Respect" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Respect" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### **Description of Activity**

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to make good decisions and how to be fair. Today we heard a story about a class where the children argued all the time. Then they learned to look at each other with awe when they thought that one of them was a messiah. When you think everybody around you might secretly be a messiah, you're likely to see them with awe and treat them with kindness and respect. We can try to "see others with awe." To remind us, we're going to add "Respect" as a direction on our Moral Compass.

Post or write the word "Respect" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. Encourage them to write down the acts of goodness and justice they do (or witness). If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to try seeing others with awe as a way to find the direction of goodness and justice.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these.

Thank the children. Tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – CONGREGATIONAL HUNGER AWARENESS (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- "Welcome" posters begun in Session 6, Faith in Action: Congregational Hunger Awareness, and color markers
- Optional: Poster board to make additional "Welcome" posters
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- One copy of the *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- If you are a new leader, read Session 6, Faith in Action: Congregational Hunger Awareness and find out from your director of religious education or Moral Tales co-leaders which aspects of this project are underway and what needs to be done in this session.
- If this has not yet been done, contact local food pantries to find out what kind of food drive will help them and what volunteering or visiting opportunities they have for children ages seven and eight.
- If this has not yet been done, plan the date(s) for a staff member or volunteer from the food pantry to visit your congregation at coffee hour and/or for the children to bring donated food to the food pantry or to volunteer at the food pantry.
- Invite parents to participate, using email, telephone, a handout, and personal invitation as families drop off or pick up their children. Encourage parents to take children grocery shopping to pick out some healthy food items to donate.
- Set up location(s) at your congregation for food collection.
- Announce the plan to the congregation through the newsletter, email and announcements during worship and in the order of service.
- Create a sign-up sheet and recruit volunteers to transport food to the food pantry, and if needed, to volunteer at the food pantry with the children and help with transportation.
- Arrange the visit by a food pantry staff member or trained volunteer to talk with the children and

the congregation about local food needs. If this will take place at a coffee hour, communicate with the person who hosts that coffee hour to arrange details. Be ready to explain the food drive and volunteer opportunity at the close of the food pantry visitor's presentation.

- Optional: Plan to gather the children five or ten minutes before the informational session to brainstorm some questions they would like to ask the worker from the food pantry.
- If you will sing it with the group, review Hymn 407, "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Write the words on the newsprint and post it where the children will be able to see it. If the hymn is unfamiliar to you and you do not read music, consider asking your music director to teach it to you. If you are uncomfortable leading the song, invite a musical volunteer to do it for you.
- If children will continue working on "Welcome" signs, place materials they will need on work tables.

### Description of Activity

This Faith in Action activity introduces the idea of extending welcome to others as children make welcome signs for a food pantry, visit or volunteer at a food pantry, and/or hold a congregation-wide food drive. In addition to welcome, the spiritual practices of generosity, gratitude and humility are all activated in this activity as participants confront the local realities of poverty and hunger.

Children in second and third grade are often very compassionate and concerned when they encounter injustice. Participation in a concrete service project provides them with an outlet for their concern and empowers them as agents of justice. Moreover, they will experience what it means to translate into action our Unitarian Universalist principles, which promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person as well as justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

Update the group regarding your plans for the food drive and/or visit to a food pantry. You may say:

We learned today about seeing other people with awe and recognizing their inherent worth and dignity. In the story the children in the class treated each other differently because they believed one of them was the messiah. Perhaps one of the people that we will give food to is a messiah.

If you will be doing a food drive, tell the children which foods are especially needed, so they can tell their parents.

Invite the children to finish their "Welcome" posters or make some now, if you have not yet made any. As they work, talk about the importance of making the guests at the food pantry or soup kitchen feel welcome.

You may like to teach Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table, and plan for the children to sing it for the congregation to welcome a visitor from the food pantry or to promote the food drive. If you have chosen to do this, sing it one or two times through as practice.

Make sure plans for a food drive are coordinated with your minister to involve the entire congregation. Consider collecting food every Sunday for a month in a special offering during the worship service.

If you have set up a visit from a food pantry staff member or trained volunteer, be sure this person understands their audience will include young children.

If you are bringing children to the food pantry, make sure all who will accompany the group can join a post-visit discussion of the experience. Let parents and the wider congregation know when and where that discussion will take place. Ideally, you can convene at your congregation immediately after the visit.

At the food pantry, deliver the food collected by the congregation and present the "Welcome" signs before beginning a tour or volunteer work.

After your visit to the food pantry, gather the volunteers to discuss their experience. This opportunity to share experiences and ask questions will be especially important for the children as they seek to make meaning of the activity. You may wish to ask your minister and/or director of religious education to facilitate a discussion, or lead it yourself, using these questions.

- Did anything surprise you?
- What was one thing you learned?
- What feelings did you experience or are you experiencing now?
- How was this activity connected with being a Unitarian Universalist?
- Is there interest in continuing an on-going relationship with the food pantry? Who would coordinate this?

During the discussion, encourage participants of all ages to share their thoughts and questions in simple language, to be inclusive of the youngest in the group.



## Including All Participants

It is important to remember as you plan and lead this activity that some families in your congregation, and some children in the group, might be homeless or living below the poverty line. Be careful to use language that includes this possibility and that does not assume all of the children come from financially wealthy homes. You can help normalize the experience by saying something like, "Some families in our congregation sometimes go to the food pantry and lots of families need the help of food pantries at some time or other." However, be respectful of the right to personal privacy and do not identify particular individuals without permission.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?

- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*To enter into the presence of another human being ... is to enter into the presence of God in a new and different way. — Stephen L. Carter*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today we heard a story about a very argumentative third grade class. The school teacher asked his rabbi for advice. The rabbi visited and told the children that the messiah was among them, which caused the children to think about and treat each other differently. We imagined that someone in Moral Tales was a messiah and we created affirmation portraits, with each person contributing things they recognize or like about their peers. We talked about the importance and benefit of seeing others with awe.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

Ask your child to tell you about the story, "The Messiah is Among You." Talk about the first Unitarian Universalist principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Ask your child what this means to them and share your thoughts.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

Create your own family affirmation book, with a self-portrait page and affirmation page for each member of your family. In a scrapbook or notebook, have each person create a self-portrait, including a list of personal favorites (food, game, color, sport). On each person's affirmation page, engage everyone in contributing "Things I love about (name)" or "(Name) is a superhero because..."

Keep the book in an accessible location and read it together from time to time. You can do this as a one-time event or you can make it a practice to update the book on a regular basis with new self-portraits and affirmation pages.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

Consider setting aside a weekly or daily family time for expressing gratitude and appreciation to one another. Simply sit together and say "thank you" for the daily or weekly actions which you have appreciated. Try to be as specific as possible. Instead of saying, "Thanks for being great," say, "Thank you for clearing the table with a cooperative attitude today." Give detailed information regarding how another person's actions have impacted you. Instead of, "Thanks for helping me," say, "When you helped me clean the living room that really saved

me a lot of time and I was able to relax for a few minutes before dinner."

This simple practice of saying "thank you" encourages family members to notice and appreciate one another. Specific and detailed praise offers clear information that encourages the desired behavior and makes a thank-you more believable and valuable to the recipient.

### **A FAMILY GAME**

Whenever you are reading a book or watching a movie or television show that has a villain, try to come up with at least three things to appreciate about this individual. In stories that have complex villains, this will be easier than plot lines that reflect a mentality of purely "good" versus purely "evil." Make it a challenge to think of ways to re-interpret the "bad guy." A villain might be exceptionally smart, charismatic, persistent, or creative. Use humor whenever possible. Note: With particularly "evil" characters, be sure to make a distinction between having a talent and what you choose to do with it — help or harm. Be careful not to glorify "evil" behaviors.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### **Description of Activity**

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### **Including All Participants**

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: GROUP AFFIRMATION BOOK (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Three-ring binder notebook
- Blank paper and three-hole punch
- Pens, pencils and color markers
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Create an affirmation page for each participant by writing, "Seeing (name) with Awe" at the top of each piece of blank paper and punching the left-hand side with the three-hole puncher.
- Think about each child in the group and be ready with a few honest affirmations that you can add to each affirmation portrait. If this is difficult, try to reframe behaviors that seem negative as their positive counterparts: Stubbornness becomes persistence, loudness becomes passion.
- Post a page or two of blank newsprint where you can write on it.

### **Description of Activity**

This is a variation on Activity 5: Life-size Affirmation Portraits that requires less floor space and less time. When you are done you will have a group affirmation book which can be photocopied and sent home with each child as a tangible reminder of their learning to "see others with awe."

Say, in your own words:

When the children in the story thought that one of their classmates was a messiah, they began to see each other differently. That's because they started to see each other with awe.

Ask if children have an idea of what the word, "awe," means. Listen to responses. You may want to mention that the slang use of the word "awesome" captures the meaning well. Ask the children:

- When you say something is "awesome," what does that mean?

Allow responses. Then say:

When you look at something or someone with awe, it means you are looking with respect and wonder, because you see that it is so amazing or special.

Unitarian Universalists believe that all people are amazing and special and should be looked at with awe. This is part of what our first Unitarian Universalist principle means when we say that we affirm that all people have inherent worth and dignity.

Today we're going to practice recognizing the worth and dignity of each person here and looking at each other with awe. We're going to notice and write things we like about each person here. The things we see when we look at each other with awe will be part of each person's affirmation portrait.

Lead a brief brainstorming to draw out some things the children can say and write about each other. Make it very clear that they can only say positive things about one another. Model affirmations by saying things like, "I've noticed that May often shares things with her friends," "Sammy's friendly smile makes me feel happy," "Joy's really good at playing soccer," or "Terence draws very realistic dragons."

Explain that the children will write on one another's affirmation pages. Tell them they may write a whole sentence ("You are creative,") or just a word that describes the person ("creative"). Write some key words on the newsprint for children to copy. Ask if children want any particular words include on your list. Common words might be: friendly, creative, loyal, kind, helpful, gentle, or courageous. Encourage the kids to really think about each child when they choose what they will write on that person's page.

Spread the affirmation pages for each child around the room, on work tables. If possible, arrange them in a circle, to facilitate children writing on every page.

Distribute pencils, pens and markers. Invite the children to circulate the room, writing affirmations on every other

child's affirmation page, including their own. Remind them that an affirmation must be positive, and it can be a sentence, a phrase, or a single word.

As you write your own affirmations on children's pages, speak them aloud. This will help the children think of affirmations to write.

To help a child think of affirmations for another child, use these questions:

- What do you like about them?
- What can you think of that they are good at or really likes to do?

If the children did Activity 2: Welcoming Game – Find a Friend, help them remember things they learned about each other. This will be especially helpful for generating affirmations for newcomers or visiting children.

Pay attention to whether any child's page is receiving scanty affirmations. If this is happening, subtly direct children to that page or have an adult write a few extra affirmations. Help the children think of affirmations, but do not insist they write something if it will be insincere.

### **Including All Participants**

Not all children will be proficient writers. Make yourself and any other adult volunteers widely available during this exercise to write dictated affirmations for children who cannot write. In order to avoid embarrassing any children, make the option of dictation available to all the children.

Be aware of new children in the group. Help them come up with affirmations, but if they simply do not know the others, they can write compliments such as "I like your hairstyle," or friendly sentiments such as, "I'd like to get to know you better."

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: APPEARING-INK BOOKS (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Lemon juice concentrate
- Small cups for participants to share
- Cotton swabs or thin paintbrushes
- Blank white paper, four pages per participant
- Stapler
- Two or three toasters
- Magic markers

## Preparation for Activity

- Do a trial run of this activity. Write on paper with lemon juice concentrate, using a cotton swab or a thin paintbrush, and heat the paper in a toaster oven until the writing appears.
- If the electric system in your building is old, set up the toasters in the meeting space in advance. Place the toasters near each other on a table and plug them in. Turn them all on, to make sure that you won't blow any fuses in your session.
- Take four sheets of blank white paper. Write "I'm good at..." on the top of one, "I love to..." on the top of another and "My favorites..." on the top of the third. On the fourth page write "My Magical Me Book," on the top and "By \_\_\_\_" on the bottom. Photocopy all four pages for all participants, collated with the "My Magical Me Book" page on top. Do not staple them at this time.
- Place small cups and cotton swabs or paintbrushes at work tables. Pour a small amount of lemon juice concentrate into each small cup.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children at work tables and say, in your own words:

In the story, when the children heard that someone in their class was a messiah, they began to notice good things about each other because they thought one of them was very special, and they wondered which one. Then they learned that all of them were special, just like all of you. Today we're going to think about some of the things we love to do and some of

the things we're good at and make books about ourselves using appearing ink.

Invite the children to dip a cotton swab or paintbrush into the lemon juice concentrate and write with it on the appropriate pages about things they love to do and are good at and their favorites (favorite color, food, sport). They may use the markers to draw a picture of themselves on the front cover.

The lemon juice will be invisible. Encourage them to use it sparingly. The wetter the paper gets, the longer a mark will take to appear when heated. As they finish a page they can bring it to the toasters, where an adult will place it over the toaster and turn the toaster on. As you watch, the heat from the toaster will dry the lemon juice, causing the image or words to appear on the paper. You may need to move the paper around a bit to dry all areas of the paper. Be patient — it can take a few moments for the marks to appear.

NOTE: This activity has a magical quality to it when the lemon juice writing "magically" appears with heat. It does, however, require adequate time and require close supervision, as unattended paper can catch on fire. Be sure you have ample time and sufficient adult volunteers to monitor the toasters.

As the children complete their pages, allow them to staple the four pages into a booklet and share their booklets with one another before taking them home.

## Including All Participants

Children this age have a wide-range of writing abilities. Offer the option of drawing pictures with the lemon juice rather than writing words. If a child finds it particularly challenging to write or draw with the lemon juice, offered the option of using the color markers for some or all of their pages.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 7: STORY: THE MESSIAH IS AMONG YOU

Recrafted with permission of the author, Francis Dorff, O. Praem, of the Norbertine Community of Albuquerque, New Mexico, from his story, "The Rabbi's Gift," which is copyrighted by The New Catholic World magazine.

Mr. Cohen was the teacher of the most quarrelsome third grade class you could ever imagine. The kids in that class argued about everything. They argued about who should stand in front of the lunch line. They argued about what games to play during recess. They argued about who was the best reader in the class. And if Mr. Cohen asked them whether it was sunny or rainy outside, they even argued about that!

Mr. Cohen was at his wits' end. There was so much arguing going on that no one was learning anything. When they tried to do multiplication problems, Janie and Stan argued about whether "two times two" was the same as "two plus two," or not. When it was time for spelling, Carmen and Ling began to quibble about who should get the first turn in the spelling bee. In music class, Carlos and Beth each tried to grab the tambourine and Carlos ended up in the nurse's office when the tambourine hit him on the head.

Mr. Cohen tried everything. He promised the class an ice cream party if they could get through just one day without an argument. No sooner had he made this offer than Charles and Bobby began to argue about whether they should get chocolate chip ice cream or cookie dough.

Mr. Cohen threatened the kids. He told them he'd send anyone who was arguing to the principal's office. That didn't work either. The principal, Mrs. Sanchez, pulled Mr. Cohen aside at lunch time and politely but firmly told him that 15 students in one morning was quite enough, thank you, and she hoped to be able to get some work done that afternoon.

Mr. Cohen called parents. He tried very politely asking the kids to stop. He kept the class in at recess. Nothing worked. There was only thing left to do. Mr. Cohen went to his synagogue on the Sabbath and prayed. His rabbi noticed his look of despair and went to sit by him. The rabbi listened to Mr. Cohen's tale of the most difficult, argumentative third grade class in history. When she had heard it all, she simply said, "Stay home from work on Monday, and leave it to me."

That Monday, the kids walked into their classroom and found the rabbi sitting at Mr. Cohen's desk. Of course,

they immediately began to argue about whether Mr. Cohen was sick or whether Mrs. Sanchez had finally gotten so tired of the steady stream of arguing children that showed up at her office every day that she'd fired him.

The rabbi sat and listened. She didn't yell or try to interrupt them. She didn't plead or scold. She simply sat quietly at Mr. Cohen's desk. After a while the kids began to wonder what was going on. The arguments gradually died down as the kids watched the rabbi to see what would happen next.

When the classroom was finally quiet, the rabbi slowly stood up. "Mr. Cohen will not be here today. I am your substitute teacher but I have only one thing to teach you. Listen carefully for I will not repeat it."

The kids were too surprised to argue. The rabbi's voice rang out in the stunned silence. "Last night in my dreams, God told me a messiah is among you."

(Leader: Ask, "What do you suppose happened next?" Wait until someone says "fighting" or "arguments.")

They argued, of course! Pandemonium broke out in the classroom as the kids argued about who might be the messiah.

It couldn't be Charles; he was always getting into mischief. But on the other hand, Charles could always be counted on to help a friend or share his lunch. And Ling was clearly too bossy to be a messiah. But, then again, Ling went to church every single Sunday and prayed every night before bed. What about Janie? She always did her work so carefully and neatly.

The arguing didn't stop overnight. When Mr. Cohen returned to school on Tuesday morning, the first thing he heard was Stan's angry voice. "I'm telling you Carmen, Bobby is the messiah! Just the other day I saw him comforting a little first grader who had scraped her knee. Isn't that the sort of thing a messiah would do?"

Soon, however, the arguments began to disappear. When Janie began to argue with Charles that she should be the line leader, she suddenly offered to stand behind him in line. After all, Charles might be the messiah.

And in music class, Carlos and Beth took turns using the tambourine. After all, one of them might be the messiah.

All that year the kids kept trying to figure out who might be the messiah. They began to think about each other differently. They noticed all of the good things about each other. Stan was a great artist with a huge imagination. Ling was passionate and strong. Carmen was the most loyal friend you could ask for. As for Mr.

Cohen, he was a gentle, kind teacher. Maybe he was the messiah.

The kids also began to think about themselves differently. Each child wondered: Could I be the messiah? The children were inspired to try to be the best people they could be.

Soon the kids in Mr. Cohen's class had a reputation for treating one another well. Teachers came from far and wide to visit the class and ask Mr. Cohen for teaching tips. The year ended and the kids in Mr. Cohen's class graduated having learned a very important lesson they

would never forget: Everyone around you is special, and anyone could be a messiah.

The next fall, Mr. Cohen looked at his brand new class of third graders. Already, Jon and Anna were arguing about whether or not alligators were the same as crocodiles. "Good morning, children," he began. "Has anyone here ever heard of a messiah?" He lowered his voice to a whisper, so everyone had to be quiet and listen, and he said, "I have been told there is a messiah in this class."

# SESSION 8: DO UNTO OTHERS

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

This session promotes the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," and the suggestion from scripture to "Love thy neighbor as thyself." The central story, "The Good Samaritan" from Christian scripture, guides exploration of what it means to "love thy neighbor" and helps raise the idea that our "neighbors" include everyone in the world.

The experience of helping and caring for others will be explored in the session through role plays and a cooperative game. The session also promotes two Unitarian Universalist Principles, the inherent worth and dignity of all people; and justice, equity and compassion. The words "Golden Rule" will be added to the Moral Compass poster.

Before planning the session, read descriptions of all of the games, including those which are presented as alternate activities. Choose the one(s) you think will work best with the particular group of children and in your meeting space.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Foster participants' pride in sharing acts of goodness and justice that they have done (or witnessed)
- Create a forum for children to share with one another about acts of goodness and justice
- Explore the meaning of the "Golden Rule"
- Explore the meaning of the words, "Love thy neighbor" and their application in a variety of situations
- Guide participants to experience offering help to others
- Strengthen participants' connection to and sense of responsibility to their Moral Tales group.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Participate in the "Gems of Goodness" exercise
- Hear a story illustrating an act of compassion for a stranger

- Participate in a cooperative game in which they think about how they would like to be treated, and have an opportunity to treat others with care
- Imagine how they might apply the Golden Rule to a variety of scenarios
- Visualize and portray the concept that all people are our neighbors
- Optional: Planning a faith in action projects in which they will practice reaching out with kindness to neighbors near and far.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming & Entering	0
Opening	3
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story – The Good Samaritan	5
Activity 4: How Would You Want to Be Treated?	10
Activity 5: Frozen Tag	8
Activity 6: Processing the Frozen Tag Game	2
Activity 7: Neighbors Collage	15
Activity 8: Clean-up	2
Faith in Action: Good Neighbor Coupons – Short-term	10
Faith in Action: Outreach to Local Neighbors – Long-term	15
Faith in Action: Outreach to World Neighbors – Long-term	15
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Circle of Friends	10
Alternate Activity 3: Blizzard Helping Game	15

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Review the story of "The Good Samaritan." The story is significant not only in that the man from Samaria helps someone he does not know, but that he helps someone who belongs to a group — the Hebrews — that his people consider an enemy. This is often left out of the children's story, but is considered to have been a factor in the original telling.

Close your eyes and imagine the place where the story happens. Explore the many details, down to the flies buzzing around the wounded man's bloodied head. Try to imagine yourself in the position of the Samaritan.

Imagine what it was like for him to tend to the wounded Hebrew.

Think of times when you have had to drop everything and put yourself fully into the service of helping another. Have you ever done this for a stranger? Someone you considered an enemy, or for whom you felt enmity? Has a stranger ever done this for you? How did it feel to show, or be shown, compassion?

Think about the children in Moral Tales. In what situations might they face a choice to show compassion, mercy and caring?



## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (3 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2: Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2, Introducing the "Moral Compass") and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts in goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to

three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "The Good Samaritan," such as a cloth bag or backpack, a first aid kit, a bag of coins, a cloth, a shawl or blanket, or some bread
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more

effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket today."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the storytelling basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

While children pass the items, you may ask them to guess what they think the story will be about. Tell them that the story you are telling them today is called "The Good Samaritan" and is a story that Jesus told. If you like, tell them that Jesus did most of his teaching by telling stories.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

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Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE GOOD SAMARITAN (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Good Samaritan](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Items from the story basket to use as props
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times. Practice telling the story aloud.
- Consider using the participatory version of the story. Specific instructions for preparing volunteers to take roles in the "The Good Samaritan" are included with the story.
- Think about how you will use items from the story basket as props. You may wish to fill the cloth bag with the other props and put it next to you. If your storytelling will be participatory, pack the cloth bag with the other props for the child playing the Samaritan to use.

### **Description of Activity**

The story, "The Good Samaritan," introduces the idea that everyone deserves our compassion and care,

including strangers and those we think of as our enemies. All of these are, in fact, our neighbors. Through the storytelling, the children will vicariously experience compassion.

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Read or tell the story. Ring the chime (or other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over.

### **Including All Participants**

If you have children in the group for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

The participatory version of this story will probably engage most children who otherwise benefit from using "fidget objects." If you have a fidget object basket, make it available just in case.

## **ACTIVITY 4: HOW WOULD YOU WANT TO BE TREATED (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of Leader Resource 1, [Golden Rule Role Play Scenarios](#) (included in this document)
- A bell or other sound maker

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Set up chairs in a semi-circle, leaving an open area for children to perform role plays.

### **Description of Activity**

A review of the story and engagement with questions and scenarios help the children apply the idea of helping or getting help from a "neighbor." The goal of this activity is to cement the story sequence, help the children to more deeply understand the concepts of neighbor and compassion and, to make personal connections from the story to their own lives.

To keep children engaged, you may wish to move back and forth between questions that help them review the story and scenarios that engage their application of the story concepts. Both are provided in Leader Resource, Golden Rule Role Play Scenarios.

If you have told the story, "The Good Samaritan," in a participatory manner with some of the children taking roles, draw out the volunteer actors' experiences.

Gather children in chairs set in a semi-circle. Review the story, "The Good Samaritan," with these questions:

- Who did Jesus think was the lawyer's neighbor?
- Did Jesus mean that everyone is our neighbor? Did he mean that everyone should be treated with care, no matter who they are?
- A commandment in the Hebrew scripture says to "treat your neighbor as yourself?" I wonder what this means?
- Does anyone know what the "Golden Rule" says? Who in this story practiced the Golden Rule?
- Why do you think the first two people in that story who passed the wounded man did not help him? (Possible answers: They thought that he was from a different religious or ethnic group. He was a stranger who they didn't know. They didn't consider him to be someone they had to help. They were afraid — maybe robbers were still nearby, or maybe the man himself was faking it to attack them. They didn't think he was hurt that badly. They were too busy.)

If you have done the participatory version of the story, ask the two children who played the people who didn't stop to help, "How did it feel to be acting out this part and not to help the wounded man?"

- Why do you think we are willing to help some people more than others?
- How do you think the man felt after he had been hurt and robbed?

If you have told the participatory version of the story, ask the child who played the wounded man how they felt.

- In what ways did the Samaritan help the wounded man? (Make a list that includes giving his time, wine, strength (walking while the man rode on his donkey) energy, food and money.)
- What did the Samaritan expect to receive in return for helping the man? Discuss the fact that sometimes helping others involves sacrifice on our part. In other words, it involves generosity, sharing, and giving up things that we wanted to keep or wanted to do. Do you think the Samaritan man regretted sharing all of these things? Why, or why not?

If you have told the participatory version of the story, address these questions directly to the child who played the Samaritan.

Choose one or two scenarios to suggest to the group. You may lead a whole group discussion of a scenario, or ask for volunteers to role play. Use the sound maker to start and stop role play action so that you can interview each child participating in the role play.

Introduce the role-playing by saying:

Situations like the one in "The Good Samaritan," where someone needs help and we have to decide whether to help or not, happen all of the time. I will describe a situation to you and you tell me how you would like to be treated if this happened to you, and how you could act with caring and compassion if it happened to someone else.

Choose one or more of these scenarios for children to discuss and/or volunteer to act out in a role play.

- What if you fell off of your bike on the side of the road? How would you want to be treated? What if you saw it happen to someone you didn't know very well in your neighborhood?
- What if someone at school was bullying you? What would you want other people to do? (You may want to get more specific here: What if someone was spreading mean gossip about you, or someone else? What if a group of children surrounded you on the playground or at the bus stop and threatened to hurt you? What if you saw this happening to someone else?)
- What if you dropped your lunch in a puddle, on the way to school? What if it happened to someone else? What if it happened to someone who had been mean to you before? How would it feel to share with someone who had been mean to you?

Ask the children if they can think of other situations in which they have had to help someone they didn't know very well, or have been helped by someone they didn't know very well. Ask how these situations felt.

To close this activity, remind the children that, like empathy, compassion is relating to how another person or living being feels and opening your heart to their need.

### **Including All Participants**

The children will probably prefer role-playing these situations than talking about them, but may not treat them as seriously. Shift the mode of this activity between discussion and role-playing, as needed.

There may be children in the group who have special needs and often require others' help, or children who are frequently bullied. Try to be sensitive to how this

discussion may feel to them, particularly and how exposed it may make them feel. Try to choose examples that could happen to any child in the group.

## **ACTIVITY 5: FROZEN TAG (8 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A sound maker
- Optional: Bean bags for all participants

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find a large open space indoors or out of doors.
- Read the description of this activity and decide which rules you will use.

### **Description of Activity**

This is a cooperative game of tag that involves the children in helping one another. You can play it a number of ways, using these basic rules:

- One person, or several in a large group, will be tagger(s).
- Everyone who is not a tagger moves around the open space. The tagger counts to ten and then begins to chase the runners.
- When a tagger catches a child, that child must freeze in place. Another child can unfreeze them either by crawling through the frozen child's legs or shaking their hand. (Choose which in advance, so that frozen children know whether to stand with legs astride or hand extended).
- When the frozen child has been freed both they and the helper can go free, but the tagger can tag the helper, in which case both are frozen.

The game ends if everyone is frozen, or when you end it by sounding the chime or other instrument.

If space is limited you can play Bean Bag Frozen Tag. Every child must move while holding a bean bag on their head. If a child is tagged, they must put the bean bag on the ground and stay frozen until a helper picks it up and puts it back on their head without dropping their own. If children drop their bean bags while moving, they also freeze with their bean bag on the floor until a helper rescues them.

The goal of this activity is for the children to experience what it is like to help someone else even when it involves risk to oneself. Children will also experience what it feels like to need someone else's help and have a chance to think intentionally about how they wish to be treated.

### **Including All Participants**

Children who have limited mobility can play from their chairs and can be tagged and unfrozen just as the other children; make it clear to the group that everyone is in the game, whether or not they are moving around when unfrozen.

## **ACTIVITY 6: PROCESSING THE FROZEN TAG GAME (2 MINUTES)**

### **Description of Activity**

Help the children reflect on how they felt in the role of helper and in the role of someone needing help. Use these questions:

- When you were frozen, how did you want people to take care of you?
- Did you care who unfroze you?
- How did it feel when someone unfroze you?
- Did you ever feel that people were leaving you frozen? If so, how did that feel?
- Were you treated the way you wanted to be treated during this game?
- When you were running around did you want to unfreeze other people?
- How did it feel to unfreeze other people?
- Did you try to unfreeze everyone who was frozen or only your friends?
- Did you treat other people the way they wanted to be treated?

End the discussion by making the point that we all want to and deserve to be treated well by friends and neighbors and strangers alike. Say:

When we treat all others the same way we want to be treated, we are following the Golden Rule.

### **Including All Participants**

Everyone should be able to participate in this activity. To encourage participation by all, you may want to go around the circle for answers rather than having the children call out.

## **ACTIVITY 7: WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? COLLAGE (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- A large piece of poster board

- Magazines and newspapers to cut up, with images of people from all over the world
- Newspapers to cut up for additional images of people from all over the world
- Colored construction paper, scissors (including left-handed scissors) and glue

### Preparation for Activity

- Collect a variety of magazines and newspapers with images of people from all over the world. Good choices may be National Geographic, UU World, Good Housekeeping, Ebony, and healthcare or travel magazines.
- Identify a wall space to display the finished collage poster, in or near the room where Moral Tales meets.
- Post the newsprint where you can easily write on it. Write at the top of a blank page "Who is my neighbor?"
- On the poster board write the words "Our Neighbors" (large) and "by the Moral Tales group" (smaller).
- Place magazines, scissors, glue, markers, and construction paper at work tables.

### Description of Activity

Making a collage that includes images of people in all walks of life, from all around the world, broadens children's concept of neighbors to include everyone.

Tell the children:

We are going to make a group collage about our neighbors. Everyone here gets to add to the collage. First, let's talk about who are our neighbors.

Ask the children what types of people are our neighbors. Write on the newsprint every type of person they list. As they run out of ideas, ask, "Are strangers my neighbors? Are Iraqis my neighbors? Are people in jail my neighbors? Are people who do not come to Unitarian Universalist congregation our neighbors? Are teenagers our neighbors? Are elderly people our neighbors?" Write down all the suggestions they affirm.

Once you have enough suggestions, tell the children that together you are going to make a poster collage of all the types of people that could be our neighbors. Invite them to look in the magazines and cut out a few pictures of people they want to include in the collage.

When everyone has some faces cut out, begin to put them together on the poster board. If some children finish more quickly than others, allow them to glue their

pictures on the poster board. The idea is to cover all of the space.

As the poster board fills with images, ask the children if there are any types of people missing that they wish were included on the poster. Invite them to look for these faces in the magazines. When the poster is finished, invite one or two volunteers to help you post it.

### Including All Participants

Allow children who have difficulty cutting to look for pictures and designate a volunteer to cut out pictures for others. If a child is sight-impaired, partner them with another child to whom they can make suggestions about what sorts of faces to look for in the magazines.

## ACTIVITY 8: CLEAN-UP (2 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials
- Waste basket lined with a bag
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers

### Preparation for Activity

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.
- Make sure you know the proper way to dispose of waste and where to store unused materials at your congregation.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it. Ask them to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of

recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### Including All Participants

All children should assist as able.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. To close this session, you may wish to give the children another opportunity to sing "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.
- Find additional suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. However, it is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, invite a musical volunteer to do it for you.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Write "Golden Rule" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the words "Golden Rule" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions about how to be fair. Today we heard a story about a person from Samaria who was kind to a stranger who needed help. The Samaritan followed the Golden Rule. He treated the wounded man the way he, himself, would want to be treated. Jesus told the lawyer that story, because he thought that rule was so important. We are going to add "Golden Rule" as a direction on our Moral Compass.

Post or write "Golden Rule" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to pay special attention to times when they are being welcoming, without prejudice, as well as times when they have a chance to practice any of the other virtues on the Moral Compass poster.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Or, lead the group in once again singing "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these.



Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: SHORT-TERM – GOOD NEIGHBOR COUPONS (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

Short term

- Coupons cut from Leader Resource 2: [Good Neighbor Coupons](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- Pencils, pens and color markers
- Newsprint pad

### **Preparation for Activity**

Short term

- Print out and photocopy Leader Resource, Good Neighbor Coupons. Make enough copies to give each child at least one coupon to fill out.
- Since this activity begins in the session but must be completed at home, you will want to include information about it in the Taking It Home handout. You can also mention the Good Neighbor Coupons to parents picking up their children.

### **Description of Activity**

Making "Good Neighbor Coupons" generates opportunities for children to put their learning into action. As you distribute Good Neighbor Coupons (from Leader Resource) and pencils, pens and markers to participants at to work tables, explain the activity. You may say:

We're going to brainstorm to help each other think of some people in our community (or school, family, neighborhood or congregation) that each of you could help or visit or do something nice for. We'll try to think of people who may need a helping kindness, people who we haven't thought of helping before.

Ask the children to think of ways that they could help someone in their community (or school, family, neighborhood, or congregation) whom they might not have thought about helping before — for example, an elderly neighbor, a school crossing guard or custodian, a younger sibling, or a new child in their school classroom or on their street. Suggest children think of something they could do to help that person that would take a half hour or less. Engage the children in sharing their ideas.

Tell the children to write the name of the person they want to help on the coupon. They can give the coupon

to that person and let the person decide what kind of help they want. Or, the child can think of a helping kindness they want to do for that person. Some suggestions might be:

- I will bring my dog to visit you in the nursing home.
- I will help you fold the family's laundry.
- I will help you recycle bottles after school.

A kindness might be sharing a new toy with a younger child or taking brownies to someone who is new to the neighborhood. If children have a specific idea, ask them to write it on the coupon. Invite children to take the coupons home and share them with their parents who can help them carry out the act of kindness. Be sure to mention the Good Neighbor Coupon project in your Taking It Home handout for this session.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – OUTREACH TO LOCAL NEIGHBORS (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Post newsprint where you can write on it and everyone can see it.
- Look at as the book, *Kids Random Acts of Kindness*, or another book or online resource (see Leader Resources and Find Out More), for stories by and/or for children that demonstrate acts of caring and kindness. Choose several short examples to share with the children to help inspire their own ideas.
- Find out about local institutions where the children could send greetings of kindness in the form of flowers or cards. These might include a prison, a rehabilitation hospital, a psychiatric or addiction recovery facility, a nursing home, a veteran's hospital, or a homeless shelter.

### **Description of Activity**

This long term Faith in Action project guides you to help the children reach out with kindness to local neighbors whom you do not personally know and who may be in need of inspiration and support.

Gather the children in a circle. Tell the group that the Golden Rule and "Love thy neighbor" are ideas they can put into action by reaching out to neighbors in your community.

Share briefly with the children the stories you have chosen about children who performed acts of kindness and compassion. Tell the children that there are people in your own community who may be in need of a show of kindness. If you have researched local institutional options as described above (Preparation for Activity), you can suggest a few actions of kindness that they could realistically make. Invite them to discuss the various options.

Write the ideas of each child on the newsprint. Help the group consider each one. If some of the actions do not seem realistic, thank each child for their ideas.

Suggested projects might be:

Sending greeting cards at holiday times. An example would be sending handmade valentines to a local hospital or prison and asking the institution's workers to put one on each patient's breakfast tray.

Collecting flowers, arranging them, decorating plastic vases and delivering the bouquets to long-term patients in psychiatric or veterans' hospitals or nursing homes who infrequently receive flowers. (Note: Do not use glass vases.)

Collecting a new pair of socks from each family and donating these to a homeless shelter.

Follow-up steps for these three projects are presented in Session 9, Faith in Action: Outreach to Local Neighbors – Long-term.

Once you have several ideas that could work, ask the children to vote on which they prefer. Discuss how the group can make their chosen act of kindness happen. Again, brainstorm a list of actions and write down the children's ideas.

An example of a project would be send valentines to prisoners. A good plan would be for you to call to see how many inmates are in the local prison or one part of the prison, and how the valentine delivery might be arranged. You would then obtain materials and arrange a time for the children to make the appropriate number of valentines. Help the children discuss what they want to say on the valentines or if they just want to send hearts.

See Session 9, Faith in Action: Outreach to Local Neighbors for the next steps in this project.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – OUTREACH TO WORLD NEIGHBORS (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers and tape

- Information you have gathered about organizations and projects for the group to consider

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Ask your director of religious education, your minister or members of a congregational social justice committee for information about non-local organizations the congregation already supports. If any projects involve actions that express the “love thy (non-local) neighbor” theme, invite a member who is involved to come and talk to the children about the project and help the children come up with ways that they can participate. Often our children are not aware of the actions of generosity and caring that the congregation already extends. Show the children what people they know are already doing to help them learn by example.
- Look at the book *Kids Random Acts of Kindness* edited by Dawna Markova (Conari Press, 1994) or another resource book for “love thy (non-local) neighbor” project ideas.
- Research online. The Heifer Project is widely supported by Unitarian Universalist congregations. Its Passing on the Gift program connects donors with people who need agricultural resources to improve their lives. The recipients are required to pass on some of their livestock offspring or harvest to others, who can then do the same. On the website you will find many examples of fundraising projects and a world map that shows where the hundreds of projects are happening. The children could choose, for instance, to raise funds to donate a beehive to a farmer in Asia, or a cow to a family in Africa. UNICEF USA also has many projects, such as one that supports Iraqi children, millions of whom have been displaced by the war and who lack adequate food, water and medicine. Examples from the website of what donations buy include \$15, immunizations for 10 children, \$109, basic family water kits which include water purification and sanitation equipment for ten families; \$250, emergency health kit with basic drugs, medical supplies and equipment for 1000 Iraqi people for three months. Save the Children helps individuals and groups to sponsor children for \$28 per month and supplies photos and opportunities to communicate with a sponsored child. If you feel the relationship can be sustained beyond the Moral Tales program, this option can provide a tangible connection between the children in the congregation and a

“neighbor” child they are helping in another country. Doctors without Borders provides medical help and supplies in nearly 80 countries. The website offers suggestions for effective fundraisers and how to arrange for a speaker presentation, and describes what varying dollar amounts of donations can buy. Through Operation USO Care Package, the children can help the congregation sponsor a care package that can include individual messages of support. Soldiers’ Angels is an organization started by the mother of a soldier who heard that some soldiers did not receive any messages or care packages. Check the website for details. On the website of Any Soldier, Inc., learn what soldiers stationed in Iraq need and how you can contribute support and items. One interesting item the children in Moral Tales might like to collect is used beanie babies, which some soldiers like to carry to give to local children they encounter.

### **Description of Activity**

In this non-local long-term Faith in Action project, you reinforce the idea that all people are our neighbors even if they live in another country, even if they are involved in a war, and even if our government is at war with their country.

Tell the children that the Golden Rule and “Love thy neighbor” are ideas they can put into action. Ask them to remember that our neighbors are everyone on the planet Earth, not just people who live on our street or community or belong to our congregation or go to our school.

Invite the children to help you brainstorm about some neighbors in different parts of the world who may be in need of a show of kindness or support. Tell them you have some ideas for kindness to neighbors far away, and want to know what they think. Share briefly the information you have gathered about organizations and programs you have researched, and what they do. If you have identified projects through which children could reach out to people their own age – such as the Heifer Project International – mention that, to help children identify with the recipients of the kindness they will undertake to do.

As children respond to your information and contribute their own ideas, write each idea on the newsprint. Thank each child for their idea and discuss every one. If something is not realistic, gently explain why it might be hard to do.

Once you have several ideas that could work, ask the children to vote on which they prefer. Once you have

chosen a Golden Rule project, discuss how the children will be involved in making it happen. On a new sheet of newsprint, brainstorm a list of actions that need to be taken. Examples could be gathering new or gently used books, school supplies, or clothing, sponsoring a child, sending holiday greetings and or calling cards to soldiers or doing a bake sale to raise money for an organization.

Session 9 provides next steps in this Faith in Action project.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?

- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*This is the sum of all true righteousness—  
Treat others, as thou wouldst thyself be treated.  
Do nothing to thy neighbor, which hereafter  
Thou wouldst not have thy neighbor do to thee.  
— The Mahabharata*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We heard the story, "The Good Samaritan." We talked about the fact that everyone is our neighbor. Children explored the idea that when someone else needs help, we should treat them the way we would want to be treated. We played a game that involved helping each other, we role-played some situations in which we or someone else might need help, and we made a "Who Is My Neighbor?" collage.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.

Let your child retell the story of the Good Samaritan for the family at meal time. Share stories about times when you or other family members have been helped by or have helped strangers or people they didn't know, or even people toward whom they felt enmity.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

Thinking together about people in your community to whom you could extend a kindness. Make a list of people who are new or whom you don't know that well who might appreciate a kind word or gesture of welcome, or someone who might appreciate an offer of help with shopping, raking or another necessary task. Decide on one person or family to help. Keep it simple and a one-time plan. Remember that an important part of this activity is to experience the joy of giving and caring. It is its own reward!

After you have done a kindness together with your child, talk about it and how it felt. Do not focus on how it felt to receive praise or thanks for your help. Focus on simply how it felt to do the kindness.

If your child has brought home a "Good Neighbor Coupon" help them decide whom they might give it to.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

At dinner, begin a practice of sharing one act of kindness that family members did or received, in an interaction with a stranger or someone who is not a close friend or family member. Keep the focus on how it felt to do or receive a kindness, rather than on praise or other rewards involved.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: CIRCLE OF FRIENDS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Sound maker

### Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have adequate open space for this game.

### Description of Activity

Arrange the children standing in a tight circle. Tell the children that this is a trust game called "Circle of Friends." Ask them whether they can agree to play by the rules and keep each other safe at all times. If anyone is reluctant to agree, allow them to stand out and watch.

If the group has more than 15 children, cycle the children through the activity in groups of ten to 15. If the group is smaller than ten, adults should join the circle so it has enough people.

Tell the children:

One person will go into the center of the circle. That person in the center is going to lean back as if falling. The people who are closest should reach out their hands and hold the middle person so they lean gently, but do not fall near the ground. Then you will gently push the person back to standing.

Ask for a volunteer to stand in the center of the circle. Try the game. Then add:

Now when (name of child in the center) comes back to the middle, they're going to turn a little bit, and fall back again, so different children will have a chance to catch them.

To expand the game, have the child in the center stay leaned back. Instruct them to pivot on their heels as the others pass them around the circle. It is best to have an adult in the circle to demonstrate this process, first, so the children see the readiness, gentleness and care they will need to use.

Do this game a few times. Try to let everyone who wants to go in the circle have a turn.

Then, ask the children to sit down at work tables or in a circle. Guide them to process the game:

- How did it feel to be the person in the center of the circle?
- What helped you to feel more trusting of the group in the outer circle?

- Were you treated the way you wanted to be treated?
- Did you not feel safe? If not, why?
- How did it feel to be one of the people in the circle of friends?
- What was it like to be responsible for catching someone?
- Did you treat others the way you wanted to be treated?

You may want to end this activity by making the point that we all want to be treated well by friends and neighbors and strangers alike, and that we should treat others in the same way. This is the Golden Rule. You might also add that the feeling of caring and being responsible for someone is called the feeling of compassion.

### Including All Participants

A wheelchair-bound child can join the circle. Position an adult next to the child, to ensure that the center child can be gently caught.

Some children will not be comfortable in the center of the circle. If a child is reluctant but wants to try, have everyone in the circle move in very close so that the child is barely leaning at all before being held.

You will need to ask any child to sit and watch who is not being careful or not taking the activity seriously.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: BLIZZARD HELPING GAME (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Blindfolds
- A bell or other sound instrument
- Chairs, cones or other objects to create a simple obstacle course.

### Preparation for Activity

- Find an open space you can use that is at least fifteen feet across. If you can't get this much space in your meeting space, bring the children to another area in your congregation's building. Instead, you may create a long obstacle course for one child to do at a time, from one end of the room to another.
- Place cones, chairs or other objects to create an obstacle course. Make sure there are no objects that are sharp or otherwise dangerous to run into.

- Decide how you will form pairs of children for this activity.

### Description of Activity

Show the children the obstacle course you have made. Tell them that they will each go through the obstacle course blindfolded, with a partner explaining to them the best way to go. Tell them:

When you are the one who is blindfolded, pretend to be an airplane pilot who is trying to land at an airport during a blizzard. The partner will pretend to be an air traffic controller who must guide you to safety, using only their voice. When you are the air traffic controller, your job is to guide your airplane pilot successfully to you, without having them bump into any obstacles or other airplanes.

Depending on how you have set up the obstacle course, you may be able to have two or three pairs of children enact a "landing" at once. Make sure the child who is the air traffic controller says their partner's name each time they give an instruction.

As children do this activity, you may want to help them notice how tone of voice and attitude can communicate caring or lack thereof. You can model this by demonstrating with your co-leader, showing a caring, encouraging tone of voice versus an impatient, commanding, or put-down type of tone.

The goal of this activity is to give the children an experience of caring for someone else's wellbeing, and for thinking about how they would like to be treated. When done successfully, it builds trust in the group.

When all children who wish to have tried the obstacle course, take a few moments to talk about the experience of playing this game. Help the children to think about what they felt when in the role of helper and one needing help by posing these questions:

- When you were blindfolded, how did you want people to take care of you?
- Were you treated the way you wanted to be treated during this game? (If children answer that they were not, try and draw them out without finger-pointing by asking what other children could have done to help them to feel safer.)
- What made you feel that people were following the Golden Rule in the way they treated you?
- What made you feel that you were not being treated with compassion? (Again, if they did not feel that they were treated with compassion, try to avoid finger pointing and ask them what

people could have done to help them to feel better.)

- How did it feel to be the one guiding the blindfolded person?
- What did you do that felt like acting with compassion and kindness and following the Golden Rule?

At the end of this processing time you may wish to make the point that we all want to be treated well by friends and neighbors and strangers alike, and that we should treat others in the same way. This is the "Golden Rule."

### Including All Participants

If children are not comfortable putting on a blindfold, they can close their eyes or only take the role of guide.

A child who has limited mobility can be an air traffic controller for more than one of the other children. If you think the child can do the obstacle course with modifications, make these modifications for the whole group. If you have a large enough space, cones can be placed far enough apart for a wheelchair to round them and still make an obstacle course that is challenging for physically mobile, blindfolded children.

It is important that the children are careful not only with the blindfolded person's bodily safety, but also with their feelings. Tone of voice and attitude of care are just as important in this game.

To encourage all the children to contribute their reflections, you may want to go around in a circle for answers rather than having children call out.

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 8:**

### **STORY: THE GOOD SAMARITAN**

Adapted from Hebrew scripture (Leviticus 19:18) and Christian scripture (Luke 10:25-37).

To make this story participatory:

1. Open up the storytelling circle to include a "stage area."
2. Ask for volunteers. You will need a child to play the Good Samaritan, the wounded man, the priest, the Levite, the innkeeper, and a thief. If more children volunteer, you may cast a donkey and additional thieves — as many as you like. Most parts can be modified to accommodate a child's limitations.
3. Decide who will be "on stage" and who will be "off stage" when the story begins. If you have room, designate an area off to one side to be the inn, where the story ends.
4. Let children know how you will direct them where to stand as you tell the story. On your copy of the story, mark the places where you will need to give the actors directions.
5. Give the child who will play the Good Samaritan props from the story basket, in a cloth bag or backpack.

Props may include a cloth bag or backpack, a first aid kit, a bag of coins, a cloth, a shawl or blanket, and some bread.

Following the story, when you do Activity 4, How Would You Want to Be Treated?, pose questions to particular children about the roles they played.

Tell or read the story with the children acting their parts. Stop the action by sounding the chime or other sound instrument whenever you feel that there is a teachable moment or to regroup if you think the children are getting too silly and not experiencing the emotions of this story. Use the chime or other sound instrument when you are finished, to signal the end of the story.

#### **The Good Samaritan**

One day a lawyer came to Jesus and asked what he needed to do to live forever or, "to get into heaven" or "to become enlightened."

Jesus asked him what the law of the Ten Commandments said. The lawyer answered, "You shall love God with all your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself." "Right!" said Jesus. Then the lawyer asked, "But, Teacher, who is my neighbor?" In other words, "who do I have to treat lovingly?" This is the story that Jesus told to the man:

Once, a man was walking on a lonely stretch of road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Suddenly a gang of thieves jumped out from the side of the road and surrounded him. "Give us your money," they demanded. "I need my money" he cried. "I have to buy food with this money, for myself and my whole family."

One of the thieves picked up a rock from the side of the road and hit the man in the head. He fell to the ground with a groan, bleeding. Seeing no one around the thieves jumped on the man and took everything he had, including his money, and his clothing. One of the thieves picked up a stick and hit the man hard several times before leaving him on the side of the road half dead.

After a time, a priest came walking down the road. He saw the man lying on the side of the road and crossed over to the other side as he hurried by.

Soon another man, a Levite appeared. He too, saw the wounded man lying in the hot sun, naked and bleeding and he scurried on by.

A long time passed. Flies buzzed around the man who was dying from his injuries. Luckily someone else was coming down the road. He was a Samaritan riding on his donkey. Now the people of Samaria were not friendly with the people of this man's country. They were sworn enemies of each other.

But the Samaritan man did not hesitate when he saw the man lying by the side of the road. He didn't stop to think about whether he should help him because of where he was from, or what group the man belonged to. He saw that this man needed help and he felt compassion.

The Samaritan took healing oil and wine from his bag and cleaned the man's wounds and bound them up with bandages made from the cloth of his own shirt. He covered him with a robe. He gave the man a drink of water and helped the man onto his donkey. Slowly, for the man was in great pain and the road was long, they walked to the next town. There the Samaritan found an inn and asked the innkeeper to give him what was necessary to make the man comfortable.

The next day, the Samaritan gave money to the innkeeper to pay for the wounded man to stay at the inn until he got better. The Samaritan promised to come back in a few days and pay whatever else was needed to bring the man back to health.

When Jesus finished telling this story, he asked the lawyer, "Which one of these three men acted like a neighbor to the man who fell among thieves?" The lawyer said, "The one who showed kindness." "Yes," said Jesus, "go and do the same."

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 8:

### LEADER RESOURCE 1: GOLDEN RULE ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS

Questions for reviewing the story, "The Good Samaritan"

Gather children in chairs set in a semi-circle. Review the story, "The Good Samaritan," with these questions:

- Who did Jesus think was the lawyer's neighbor?
- Did Jesus mean that everyone is our neighbor? Did he mean that everyone should be treated with care, no matter who they are?
- A commandment in the Hebrew scripture says to "treat your neighbor as yourself?" I wonder what this means?
- Does anyone know what the "Golden Rule" says? Who in this story practiced the Golden Rule?
- Why do you think the first two people in that story who passed the wounded man did not help him? (Possible answers: They thought that he was from a different religious or ethnic group. He was a stranger whom they didn't know. They didn't consider him to be someone they had to help. They were afraid — maybe robbers were still nearby, or maybe the man himself was faking it to attack them. They didn't think he was hurt that badly. They were too busy.)
- If you have done the participatory version of the story, ask the two children who played the people who didn't stop to help, "How did it feel to be acting out this part and not to help the wounded man?"
- Why do you think we are willing to help some people more than others?
- How do you think the man felt after he had been hurt and robbed?
- If you have told the participatory version of the story, ask the child who played wounded man how they felt.
- In what ways did the Samaritan help the wounded man? (Make a list that includes, giving his time, wine, strength (walking while the man rode on his donkey) energy, food and money.)
- What did the Samaritan expect to receive in return for helping the man? (Discuss the fact that sometimes helping others involves sacrifice on our part. In other words, it involves generosity, sharing, and giving up things that we wanted to keep or wanted to do. Do you think the Samaritan man regretted sharing all of these things? Why, or why not?)
- If you have told the participatory version of the story, address these questions directly to the child who played the Samaritan.

#### Golden Rule Role Play Scenarios

- What if you fell off of your bike on the side of the road? How would you want to be treated? What if you saw it happen to someone you didn't know very well in your neighborhood?
- What if someone at school was bullying you? What would you want other people to do? (You may want to get more specific here: What if someone were spreading mean gossip about you or someone else? What if a group of children surrounded you on the playground or at the bus stop and threatened to hurt you? What if you saw this happening to someone else?)
- What if you dropped your lunch in a puddle, on the way to school? What if it happened to someone else? What if it happened to someone who had been mean to you before? How would it feel to share with someone who had been mean to you?



**MORAL TALES: SESSION 8:  
LEADER RESOURCE 2: GOOD NEIGHBOR COUPONS**

**GOOD NEIGHBOR COUPON**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of child), would like to do a helping  
kindness for \_\_\_\_\_ (name of recipient). I would like  
to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ for you  
on \_\_\_\_\_ (day), \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

(signature) \_\_\_\_\_

**GOOD NEIGHBOR COUPON**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of child), would like to do a helping  
kindness for \_\_\_\_\_ (name of recipient). I would like  
to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ for you  
on \_\_\_\_\_ (day), \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

(signature) \_\_\_\_\_

## FIND OUT MORE

### Cooperative Games

Terry Orlick's book, *The Cooperative Sports & Games Book* (Pantheon Books, 1978) was the source for cooperative games in this session. See pages 20, 24, 27 and 38.

### Stories about Compassion

*Earth Care: World Folktales to Talk About* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Shoe String Press, 1999) is a collection of world folk tales that emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings, and the concept of caring.

*The Book of Virtues* by William Bennett, Jr. (Simon and Schuster, 1993) has a chapter on compassion that includes a number of wonderful stories and poems.

*Once Upon a Time: Storytelling to Build Character and Prevent Bullying*, by Elisa Pearmain (Character Development Group, 2006), is a collection of world folk tales that help teach about kindness in its many forms.

In *The Two Brothers: A Legend of Jerusalem* retold by Neil Waldman (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1997), two brothers who live on opposite sides of a field worry about each other's wellbeing. In the night they put grain into one another's storehouses, until the night they meet in the middle of the field and rejoice.

One of the most popular folk tale motifs across nearly every culture on Earth is the situation in which a kind-hearted person helps another person or animal and later is helped by them in return. Examples of these that appear in children's picture book form include:

*Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale* retold by John Steptoe (Scholastic Inc., 1989)

*The Tongue-Cut Sparrow* by Momoko Ishii, translated by Katherine Paterson (Lodestar Books, 1987)

"The Greedy Man" in *Moon Tales*, retold by R. Singh and D. Lush. (Bloomsburg Publishing, 1999)

### True Stories

*Caring* by Robin Doak Raintree (Steck-Vaughn Publishers, 2002) is a book written for children about different types of caring. For each type of caring, the author provides real-life examples from "small deeds" to profiles in courage. The book includes information about Craig Kielburger a 12-year-old Ontario boy who started the international organization, Free the Children, after learning about a Pakistani boy who was murdered for speaking out against child labor practices.

*Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul* by Jack Canfield (Health Communications, Inc., 1998) includes 101 stories for children about caring, courage and kindness.

*Kids Random Acts of Kindness* edited by Dawna Markova (Conari Press, 1994) contains stories by and for children that demonstrate acts of caring and kindness.

A website celebrates the [achievements of caring kids](#) from 5th grade up, recognized annually since 1995 by the Prudential insurance company's Spirit of Community Awards.

The [Giraffe Heroes Project](#) (at [www.giraffe.org/](http://www.giraffe.org/)) honors people who "Stick their necks out for the common good." Read about heroes of all ages and their projects.

This [website by author Jeffrey Moses](#) (at [www.onenessonline.com/](http://www.onenessonline.com/)) has quotes from his book, *Oneness: Great Principles Shared by all Religions* (Ballantine Books, 2002), that show the similarities among many religious principles in both word and intent. It includes such themes as Love thy Neighbor, the Golden Rule and Blessed to Forgive.

# SESSION 9: GENEROSITY: GIVE AND YE SHALL RECEIVE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Giving brings happiness at every stage of its expression. We experience joy in forming the intention to be generous, we experience joy in the actual act of giving something, and we experience joy in remembering the fact that we have given. — Buddha*

This session introduces generosity as an important spiritual discipline and religious act that is a central component of justice and goodness. It is based on the notion that generosity is a way of life which reaps benefit for both giver and receiver. The quote from the Buddha illustrates that this value can be found in many world religions. In Hinduism positive acts accrue good karma. In Islam it is believed that alms given in Allah's name will be rewarded ten to one hundredfold, while the Christian Bible states that alms given secretly will be rewarded by God (Matthew 6:2-4). In Judaism, to give charity is considered a blessing that shows obedience to God. Some Wiccans believe that what you do in the world, whether for good or for ill, will return to you three-fold.

As Unitarian Universalists we engage in generosity and other acts of goodness not for a promise in a future life, but in order to create and reap the rewards of a better world for ourselves and others in the here and now.

This session assumes that generosity stems from an attitude of gratitude and a feeling of abundance, both of which grow with giving. It reflects the conviction that a deepening in compassion that leads to action on behalf of others is an integral part of spiritual maturation.

In the United States, children are immersed in a culture which promotes accumulation and materialism. This session counteracts that lifestyle with an opportunity to experience the joy of giving. Generosity is added to the moral compass.

Please note that the central activity includes visiting with a group of younger children in your religious education program. Leaders will need to work with the younger children's program leader(s) to arrange this visit in advance.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Help participants understand the connection between generosity and the second Unitarian Universalist Principle: justice, equity, and compassion in human relations

- Develop participants' empathy as they are encouraged to think about the needs and wishes of other people
- Communicate that generosity is an important part of justice and goodness
- Give participants opportunities to experience themselves as capable of creating and giving a gift
- Give participants practice in being generous with their time, talents, and treasure
- Encourage participants to experience themselves as helpers and mentors to younger children in your congregation.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn an example of generosity from a true story about an Islamic man who gave away caravans of food to hungry villagers during a drought
- Consider the benefits of generosity from the points of view of both the giver and the receiver
- Explore the gifts of time, talent, and mentorship they can offer other children by sharing their home-made modeling dough with a younger group.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	3
Activity 3: Story --The Better Offer	15
Activity 4: Home-made Modeling Dough	10
Activity 5: Modeling Dough Fun	15
Activity 6: Clean-up	5
Faith in Action: Toy and Book Drive -- Long-term	5

Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Material World	10

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Read the session, especially the story. Take a few minutes to think about a time when someone was

especially generous to you with no strings attached. Remember the gift you received. Was it a gift of time, of talent, or of treasure, material or intangible? What were you feeling at the time?

Now take a few moments to think about a time when you extended generosity from a free and willing heart. What were you feeling at that time? Take a moment to think about ways you have been rewarded for your own acts of generosity.

# SESSION PLAN

## WELCOMING AND ENTERING

### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

### Description of Activity

As children enter, direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

## OPENING (2 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

## ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Optional: Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introductory version of this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2: Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction) and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts in goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in or witnessed, and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues that their actions represent. Whenever appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If participants are not mobile or verbal, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. You may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, such as a globe or map, pictures of a caravan, or a toy camel
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover

### **Preparation for Activity**

- If you, or some of the children in the group, will be using the story basket and/or the centering activity for the first time, review Session 1, Activity 3, Introducing the story basket and Session 1, Activity 4, Centering. You may find the descriptions of these activities helpful.
- Optional: Place the cloth cover on the box or small table to create an altar as a focal point, next to your storytelling area.
- Place the story-related objects in the basket, along with the chime, rain stick, or other instrument. Place the filled basket in your storytelling area, next to the altar if you have made one.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket and say in your own words:

Let's see what's in our story basket today.

The story basket is introduced in Session 1, We Are All One. As this ritual is repeated in each session, children will come to expect it and be curious; they will tune in to find out what objects are in the basket and what the story will be.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. If you have brought a globe or map, locate Medina for the participants.

Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now show the children the chime, rain stick, or other sound instrument you have brought. Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). Suggest that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

The goal of this activity is to help the children settle in and deepen their ability to listen. The sound made by the instrument helps to activate children's concentration.

### **Including All Participants**

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If a child is resistant, respect that resistance. Suggest they instead choose a single point

of focus, such as the altar display of story-related objects.

### **ACTIVITY 3: STORY – THE BETTER OFFER (15 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of story, "[The Better Offer](#)" (included in this document)

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read through the story a few times. If possible, prepare to tell the story rather than read it. Practice telling it aloud. Try adopting different voices for the merchants or for Uthman ibn Affan.

#### **Description of Activity**

Tell the children that this is a true story from the Arab lands that happened nearly 1,400 years ago. It illustrates that generosity reaps benefits for both giver and receiver. To help the children better understand this concept, you will engage them in a brief, guided discussion after you tell the story.

Make eye contact with each listener before you begin. Then, tell or read the story.

Use the chime, rain stick, or other instrument to signify the story is ended.

Engage the children in a brief discussion. Aim to help them repeat and integrate the message from the story, as they make links between the story and their own, real life experiences of being generous. You may like to use these questions:

- I wonder why Uthman ibn Affan brought so much food all the way to Medina, and then gave all his food away. Why do you suppose he did that? (Affirm all children's answers related to kindness. If none of the children mention kindness nor the notion that Uthman ibn Affan expected to be rewarded by Allah, be sure that you do.)
- What kind of reward do you suppose Uthman got? (Draw out or offer contributions such as "It feels good to make others happy," "The pleasure of seeing everyone happy and healthy because they were well fed," "People might have invited him to dinner or become his friend," "People would have been grateful," "People might have wanted to be generous with him in the future," or "People would think he is nice, or think of him as a hero.")

Now, tell the children you will go around in a circle, giving each child a chance to share about a time they were generous, especially times when they might have been rewarded for their generosity. Remind the children that there are different kinds of rewards. You may say:

Sometimes a reward is something you can see, taste, or hold, such as a toy, a treat, or a gift of money. Sometimes a reward is a nice feeling, as when someone thanks you or tells you something good about yourself that makes you feel good.

If children have difficulty thinking of possible rewards, either for Uthman or for their own examples of generosity, it may be helpful for you to share about a time you felt "rewarded" by being generous. Or, you may wish to offer these examples:

- One girl shared her snack with her friend one day at school and felt rewarded by how much her friend enjoyed the food. Another day, the girl forgot her snack and her friend shared his with her.
- One boy helped raise money to buy a cow for a family that didn't have enough food or money. When he did this he was rewarded by feeling proud and by knowing that he had helped to make a difference for a family.

Thank each child who contributes.

#### **Including All Participants**

Some children have difficulty sitting still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who find themselves in situations where they are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in the Resources section. These fidget objects can provide an outlet for a child's need to move that need not disrupt the storytelling or discussion.

### **ACTIVITY 4: HOME-MADE MODELING DOUGH (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Smocks or old tee shirts for all participants
- Flour, water, vegetable oil, salt, and food coloring as detailed in Leader Resource 1, [Modeling Dough Recipe](#) (included in this document)
- Measuring cups
- Tablespoons



- Large mixing bowls
- Waxed paper
- Mixing spoons for all participants
- Pint-sized sealable plastic baggies or food containers, one for each child in the younger group you will visit

### Preparation for Activity

- Consult with your director of religious education and the leaders responsible for teaching younger children at the time Moral Tales meets. Arrange a mutually convenient time and date for a shared 15-minute activity. Figure out about what time the Moral Tales group will have made modeling dough and be ready to visit the younger group, to help the other leader(s) incorporate this activity into their own session plan. Decide together whether the older children will surprise the younger children, or whether the younger group will be expecting the older visitors.
- Calculate how much modeling dough you will need, in order for the Moral Tales group to give one parcel to each of the younger children. Adapt accordingly the quantities of each ingredient in Leader Resource, Modeling Dough Recipe or an alternate recipe you prefer to use.
- Set ingredients, mixing bowls, and other materials on work tables. The recipe in Leader Resource 1 makes enough modeling dough to give three children. You may like to have the Moral Tales children work together in groups of three. Each group will need a large mixing bowl, a mixing spoon, and the correct amount of each ingredient.
- Gather smocks or old tee shirts for participants.
- Tear off a sheet of waxed paper approximately 18 inches long for each participant, including the younger children

### Description of Activity

This activity gives children an opportunity to make and give something that will be valued by a younger child and, hopefully, to feel a measure of accomplishment and joy in doing so.

Gather the children at work tables where they will make modeling dough. Say, in your own words:

Today we are going to have the chance to be generous, like Uthman ibn Affan. We are going to make modeling dough and give it to our

younger friends and siblings here at our congregation. If they want us to, we can help them make something with the modeling dough after we give it to them.

Ask the children to imagine how the younger children might feel when they receive this gift. Encourage them to think about the younger children and imagine their happiness while they make the modeling dough.

Distribute smocks and tee shirts; ask children to put them on. Form groups around each mixing bowl, and assist each group to measure ingredients (except the food coloring) into their bowl. Invite the children to take turns mixing and kneading their batch of white modeling dough in the mixing bowl.

If the modeling dough is too sticky, add flour. As groups finish, help them divide their batches of modeling dough into smaller portions, one for each child in the younger group you will visit. Place each small portion on top of a piece of waxed paper.

Invite each child to choose a color they think a younger child might especially enjoy. Let the children add food coloring to a portion of the modeling dough and knead it on the waxed paper. To minimize the food coloring mess, make an indentation in the modeling dough for the food coloring and cover it over before kneading.

If there are more younger children than older ones, have a few volunteers add food coloring to extra portions of modeling dough. If the younger group is smaller, invite the children to suggest recipients for the extra modeling dough, such as other young children in the congregation. Or, the children may like to donate the modeling dough to the congregation for use by any group. If so, you may like to invite the Director of Religious Education to this or another session to receive this gift.

Place finished modeling dough in the plastic bags or plastic containers, and seal the bags or containers.

## ACTIVITY 5: MODELING DOUGH FUN (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Parcels or containers of modeling dough made by children in Activity 4: Home-made Modeling Dough
- Waxed paper
- Optional: Smocks or old tee shirts for all participants
- Optional: Modeling dough tools, such as cookie cutters and rolling pins

### Preparation for Activity

- As planned with your director of religious education and the leaders who teach younger children (see Activity 4: Home-made Modeling Dough, Preparation for Activity), gather the children and bring them to the room where the younger children meet.
- Ask some volunteers to help you carry the parcels or containers of modeling dough the children have made, along with waxed paper, smocks or tee shirts, and tools for use with modeling dough.

### Description of Activity

Before you visit the younger children, ask the older children to predict how the younger children will feel. You may say:

One way to be generous is to give someone your time and attention. Now that we've made modeling dough for the younger children, we're going to visit them and you each will be a special helper for a younger buddy.

If the modeling dough will be a surprise to the younger children, talk about how much fun it can be to get a nice surprise.

Walk together to the younger children's meeting space. When you arrive, introduce the children to one another as needed.

Give the modeling dough to the younger children. You may like to do this by asking each younger child to close their eyes and each older child to anonymously hand a younger child a parcel of modeling dough. If you have modeling dough left over, see if any of the children have a younger sibling or a neighbor for whom they would like to bring some home.

Pair or group the older children with younger children, and invite them to enjoy it together. Guide the Moral Tales children to let the younger children decide what to make together. You may suggest that the older children help the younger ones form the first initials of their names, or spell their names, in modeling dough letters.

### Including All Participants

If either group of children includes one or more who cannot physically manipulate modeling dough, assist as needed in helping children interact with the modeling dough in alternate ways, such as by smell or sight or by contributing a color suggestion or an idea for what shape to form with the modeling dough.

## ACTIVITY 6: CLEAN-UP (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Containers to hold markers, stickers and other arts and crafts materials children have used
- Lined wastebasket
- Paper bag for recyclable paper products
- Another bag for recycling plastic cups, juice bottles, or cans
- Trays or a rolling cart to carry dirty dishes to the kitchen

### Preparation for Activity

- Put extra garbage bags or trays or rolling cart near the tables to clean up after the modeling dough.
- If your congregation does not have a recycling program in place, find out whether parents are willing to assist with this activity by taking home items to recycle at the end of this session.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, the children practice generosity by returning the meeting space to the neatness and cleanliness in which they found it. Tell them that putting all of their materials away and cleaning up is a generous thing to do. Remind them that other people may use the room before they meet here again.

Tell the group that cleaning up gives them an opportunity to be generous to the Earth and those who share it, as well as to others who share this meeting space. Ask them to look around the room and think about what materials can be recycled.

The goal of this activity is to help children take responsibility for their actions, think about how their actions affect others, and participate in a group effort. If your congregation has a recycling system, ask one or two children to take the recyclable materials to the appropriate bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good project to think about for the Moral Tales group! In the meantime, you might ask the children to find out whether their families would take home the recyclables today or after a future session. It would be best to ask parents if they wish to participate in this project first.

### Including All Participants

Make sure all of the children have a way to assist, as able.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find some suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource 3, Alternate Closings. It is recommended that you use the same Closing song in each session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass where all of the children can see it during the Closing.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Repeating the same Closing each time you meet helps accustom the children to a practice as an affirmation of belonging in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass. Say, in your own words:

Our compass shows us ways to make good decisions and how to be fair. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe in justice and

goodness in human relations. Generosity is one way to make things fair and to show that we care about other people. We're going to add "generosity" as a direction on our compass.

Write the word "generosity" on the compass.

Remind the children that the next time they meet, they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to focus on "generosity" as they look for ways they can act for goodness or justice.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these. Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – TOY AND BOOK DRIVE (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Leader Resource 2, [Toy and Book Drive Letter](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Confer with the director of religious education, minister, or social action committee to determine a local agency or organization that has need of new or gently used toys and books.
- Contact the agency or organization you have chosen and find out what sorts of toys and books they need.
- Invite a worker or trained volunteer from the agency or organization to tell the children and adult congregation members about the group's mission and the population it serves. Set up a visit during coffee hour or another time that

coincides with a scheduled session of Moral Tales. Be sure that the visitor knows they will be talking to a group that includes young children.

- Inform parents about the scheduled visit from the organization or agency representative and about the toy and book drive by customizing Leader Resource, Toy and Book Drive Letter to Parents and distributing by email or as a handout for children to take home.
- Obtain permission to place collection boxes and signs in area organizations, such as the local library, as well as at your congregational meeting space.

### **Description of Activity**

This Faith in Action activity translates belief in the value of generosity into the act of being generous. It is based on the notion that mature spirituality includes compassion and generosity. All major world religions include charity as an important aspect of religious life. Participants will have the opportunity to develop empathy and compassion as they think about and work to meet the needs of children who do not have access to many toys or books.

In addition to generosity and compassion, the children also experience the spiritual practices of gratitude and humility. Encourage them to notice their own blessings, as they give to others.

Children in second and third grade are often very compassionate and concerned when they recognize injustice. Participation in a concrete service project provides them with an outlet for their concern and empowers them as agents of justice. Guide them to see how their actions express our Unitarian Universalist Principles, which promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, as well as justice, equity and compassion in human relations. Through participation in this or similar projects, children will learn that one aspect of a religious life is serving others and being responsive to their human needs.

To introduce this project, say, in your own words:

In the story you heard about Uthman ibn Affan, he gave away a caravan's worth of food, for free, to people who did not have enough to eat. In our community, there are children who do not have enough toys and books. We are going to learn more about what these children need, and gather toys and books to give them for free, just like Uthman ibn Affan.

Tell the children about the toy and book drive and the people and organization who will receive the donations. Encourage the children to go through their own toys and

books and choose a few gently used or never-used things to give away to a child who does not have so much.

Future Planning: Decorating Signs and Collection Boxes

Set up a table during coffee hour for the children and adult volunteers to make and decorate signs for the toy drive. Make signs to publicize the drive as well as signs to identify the boxes where you will collect items.

Be sure the signs identify the agency or organization that will receive the donations as well as your congregation, and particularly the children in Moral Tales, as the organizers of the drive. You can also include a list of items the charitable agency or organization has requested.

Future Planning: Children's Announcements

Recruit a few children as volunteers to stand up during worship and announce the toy and book drive. Coordinate with parents to be sure the children will be in attendance and can arrive a few minutes early. Show the volunteers where the microphone is, if your congregation uses one. Give the children speaking pointers, such as facing the congregation when talking. One possibility would be to have each child volunteer name a favorite toy or book and encourage the congregation to contribute to the drive so that all children can enjoy playing and reading.

Future Planning: Field Trip

At the conclusion of the toy and book drive, you may like to arrange a time for the children to visit the agency or organization to deliver the donations. Obtain any needed permission forms from your director of religious education and recruit adult volunteers to help with transportation and supervision. Arrange for an adult worker or volunteer to receive the gifts at the agency or organization site, lead a brief tour (if appropriate), and thank the children.

### **Including All Participants**

It is important to remember as you plan and lead this activity that some children in the group might be living below the poverty line. There may be members of your congregation who seek assistance from the charitable agency you have selected. Be careful to use language that includes this possibility and that does not assume all of the children come from financially wealthy homes or have an excess of toys and books. Avoid language that refers to the recipients as "different" from the children in Moral Tales or categorizes them as "other." Emphasize that all donations are welcome, big and small, because each item will make someone else happy.

Avoid situations where the donations can become competitive, for example, a public sharing that could highlight different levels of giving and embarrass some children. As long as you are sensitive to the varied economic situations that may be reflected in the group, every child should be able to participate in and learn from this activity. No matter what our circumstances, we are all capable of the spiritual discipline of generosity.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Be ready to share your thoughts with other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of the children in the group? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What could we do differently for a session to work better within our time frame?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What kind of information or help do we need?
- What connections did children make with the activities? What connections did they make with the session's central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children?
- Are we creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Giving brings happiness at every stage of its expression. We experience joy in forming the intention to be generous, we experience joy in the actual act of giving something, and we experience joy in remembering the fact that we have given. — Buddha*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today the children heard a true story about Uthman ibn Affan, who gave away all of the goods on his caravan to the starving villagers of Medina during a drought. We talked about the rewards of being generous. We made modeling dough and gave it to some younger friends in our congregation. The children experienced being generous with their time and enjoyed some modeling-dough fun time with the younger children.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

Make it a point to notice acts of generosity together — on the part of family members, friends, or strangers. Discuss together how it feels to receive a gift, as well as to give a gift.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

Consider adopting the following practice. If your child receives an allowance, for every dollar that you give your child, set aside a dollar that they can donate to charity. Allow the money to build over a period of time. Then talk with your child about what sort of needs they would like to support with this money.

Go online together to explore organizations that address the needs your child is most interested in. To name just a few, these might include:

[Alternative Gifts](http://www.altgifts.org/) (at [www.altgifts.org/](http://www.altgifts.org/))

[Habitat for Humanity](http://www.habitat.org/) (at [www.habitat.org/](http://www.habitat.org/)), which creates affordable housing

[The Heifer Project](http://www.heifer.org/) (at [www.heifer.org/](http://www.heifer.org/)) for world-wide poverty relief through sustainable agriculture assistance

The [National Audubon Society](http://www.audubon.org/) (at <http://www.audubon.org/>), which supports conservation and restoration of ecosystems

[Save the Whales](http://www.savethewhales.org/) (at [www.savethewhales.org/](http://www.savethewhales.org/))

[Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](http://www.uusc.org/) (at [www.uusc.org/](http://www.uusc.org/))

Locally, your family might like to focus on donation to your Unitarian Universalist congregation, a no-kill animal shelter, a hunger relief project, or a local museum. The goal is to empower your child to make a donation to a cause that they care about. You can also set aside an

equivalent amount of money as "savings," teaching your child a valuable lesson in financial management.

## A FAMILY RITUAL

There is a link between gratitude and generosity. To cultivate generosity, set aside a daily time when family members focus on and name the things for which they are grateful. When all have shared, light a candle of gratitude. As you experience the fullness of your blessings, take a moment to think about the people who do not share in those blessings. Light a candle of compassion. Next, take a moment to consider and name ways you can extend your bounty to them. Light a candle of commitment.

## A FAMILY GAME

Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty. As a family, come up with a list of things you can do to bring cheer to a neighbor, friend, or even strangers. Set aside a regular time to act together, using your list. Or, use the list many times. Possibilities include: writing anonymous thank you cards to workers in local establishments, leaving flowers at someone's doorstep, scattering coins in a neighborhood park for others to find, compiling a basket of toys or books and giving it anonymously to a child, or creating artwork and leaving it in someone's mailbox.

## FAMILY DISCOVERY

Read books together about people who have made a difference in the lives of others through generosity with time, talents and treasure. Learn about the lives of people such as Mother Teresa, Oprah Winfrey, and Bill and Melinda Gates.

Recommended family reading: *Thanks & Giving All Year Long* by Marlo Thomas and *Friends and I Can Make A Difference: A Treasure to Inspire Our Children*, by Marian Wright Edelman.

To learn more about the spiritual benefits of generosity read *The Giving Heart: Unlocking the Transformative Power of Generosity in Your Life* by M. J. Ryan and *The Courage to Give: Inspiring Stories of People Who Triumphed over Tragedy to Make a Difference in the World* by Jackie Waldman.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter

- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policy allows for open flames. If not, consider doing the ritual as described below with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to face the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: MATERIAL WORLD (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copy of the book, *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* by Peter Menzel (Sierra Club Books, 1994)
- Optional: Copy of the book, *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by Peter Menzel (Random House, Inc., 2005)

### Preparation for Activity

- Look through the book or books and bookmark some pages to show the children which will demonstrate visually the large discrepancy in what people in different parts of the world own and eat. You may also wish to read some of the captions and prepare to share with the group the information you learn.

### Description of Activity

The goal of this activity is to show visually patterns of ownership and wealth across the globe. Both books photographically depict families around the world. In *Material World*, families place all of their worldly belongings in their yard for a picture. In *Hungry Planet*, photographs reveal the eating habits of 30 families from 24 different countries. Photographs are both respectful and honest, revealing the large discrepancy in what people in different parts of the world own and eat.

Show the children the pictures that you have selected and share information from the books. Ask questions like:

- What do you notice in this picture?
- What differences do you notice between this picture and the last one?
- Does this seem fair to you?
- What would be in a picture of your belongings?
- What would be in a picture of your family's meals?

### Including All Participants

It is important to remember as you plan and lead this activity that some children in the group might be homeless or living below the poverty line. Be careful to use language that includes this possibility and that does not assume all of the children come from financially wealthy homes. Avoid language that refers to people with less money or people living in other countries as if they are "different" from these children, or in a category of "other."

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 9: STORY 1: THE BETTER OFFER**

Adapted from a historical Islamic tale.

Uthman ibn Affan was one of the very first followers of the prophet Muhammad, who started the Muslim religion. He was a very wealthy man who was known far and wide for his generosity. In fact, he was so generous with his money and possessions that people still tell stories about him today, more than a thousand years later!

Uthman lived in Medinah, which is in modern day Saudi Arabia. This is a very dry part of the world where there isn't a lot of rainfall. One year, in the year 640, to be precise, the rains did not come and there was a drought.

Without any rain, food crops withered. There were no figs on the fig trees, no olives on the olive branches. The people of Medinah and all of their animals were running out of food. In fact, things got so bad that the people had to eat the leaves from the trees in order to survive. Without food, the people knew they could starve.

You can imagine how happy the people were the day they learned that a caravan of 1,000 camels was approaching Medinah. Each camel was laden down with food. The people began to imagine the smells that would fill their kitchens when they were cooking their favorite meals. Their mouths watered as they imagined the tastes of their favorite foods. Best of all, they imagined going to bed with full bellies for the first time in weeks.

Knowing that the caravan belonged to Uthman ibn Affan made the people rejoice even more, for they knew of his reputation for generosity. Surely he would give them a good price on the food he had for sale.

The merchants also rejoiced to hear that the caravan was approaching. For months business had been slow because they had no food to sell. The people of Medinah had stopped spending money in their shops. The merchants began to imagine their shops filled with hungry people, willing to spend any amount of money in order to eat and feed their families.

Knowing that the caravan belonged to Uthman ibn Affan was not welcome news for the merchants, however, for he had a reputation for being a very sharp businessman.

Although he was fair, Uthman ibn Affan drove a very hard bargain.

Nonetheless, the merchants immediately went to Uthman ibn Affan. They wanted to buy the food from his caravan from him so they could sell it in their shops. They knew that in this time of famine, they could re-sell the food in their shops for two or even three times its usual price. So they were ready to pay any price Uthman ibn Affan asked.

Uthman ibn Affan received all of the merchants graciously. No one was surprised, however, when he rejected their first offers.

"I am afraid I cannot do business with you," he said, "for I have already received a better offer."

The merchants had expected they would have to offer him more money for the food, and they did. They raised their offers, again and again, but each time Uthman declined, repeating, "I am afraid I cannot do business with you, for I have already received a better offer."

The merchants began to grumble among themselves. At this rate, they would barely make any money when they sold the food. Besides, they would have to charge so much money for the food the people of Medinah would barely be able to afford it. Perhaps Uthman's reputation for generosity was exaggerated. By refusing the prices they offered, he was driving the price for the food higher and higher. Some folks in Medinah might not even be able to afford it at all.

Finally the merchants made their best offer: five times the value of the cargo. Surely Uthman would accept. Who could possibly have offered more?

"I am sorry," Uthman responded. "I cannot do business with you. You see I have received a better offer from Allah, from God, for Allah has said that anyone who gives away wealth in Allah's name will get back far more than he gave away."

So it was that Uthman ibn Affan refused all of the money the merchants offered him. Instead, he gave away all of the food carried by the 1,000 camels in his caravan. He gave it away in Allah's name for free to the starving people of Medinah.



## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 9: LEADER RESOURCE 1: MODELING DOUGH RECIPE**

This recipe will make enough modeling dough for two or three children to use in Session 9: Generosity.

This can be messy. Use smocks or old tee shirts.

For each batch, you will need:

- a very large mixing bowl
- waxed paper
- a measuring cup
- a tablespoon
- mixing spoons

You will also need:

- food coloring in a variety of colors
- pint-sized sealable sandwich bag or plastic container, one for each child in the younger group who will receive some modeling dough

Mix these ingredients:

- 3 cups of water
- 3 TBSP vegetable oil
- 3 cups of salt
- 6 cups of flour

Calculate how many batches you need to make, so that each child in the younger group you will visit receives a portion of the modeling dough.

Divide the ingredients (except food coloring) into equal parts and have small groups of children each mix up and knead a batch of white modeling dough in a large mixing bowl. Add extra flour if the modeling dough is sticky.

When the ingredients are mixed, divide the modeling dough into smaller portions for the children to give to the younger children. Invite each child to choose a color they think a younger child might especially enjoy and add food coloring to a portion of the modeling dough, kneading it on top of waxed paper. Note: food coloring mess can be reduced by making an indentation in the modeling dough for the food coloring and covering it over with white dough before kneading to mix it in.

Have volunteers add color to extra portions for a group of younger children that is larger than this group. Or, if the younger group is smaller, some of the children in this group can mix batches to give to other youngsters in the congregation or to leave in the congregation for use by anyone.

Place finished modeling dough in the Ziploc baggies or Tupperware containers.

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 9: LEADER RESOURCE 2: TOY AND BOOK DRIVE LETTER TO PARENTS**

Dear Parents,

The children in Moral Tales will be collecting new and gently used toys and books for (name of agency or organization), from (start date) until (end date).

This Faith in Action project will begin with a visit from (agency or organization) on (day, date). They will talk about the organization's mission and the population it serves with the children in their Moral Tales session and will speak with congregants at coffee hour following worship.

Please support your child's participation in this Faith in Action project by learning about the work of (agency or organization) and helping your child collect toys and books. Encourage your child to go through their own toys and books and choose a few gently used things to give away to a child who has fewer things. If you wish, go to a toy or book store with your child and buy items to donate.

If you want to do more, we will be glad for you to take a role in publicizing the toy and book drive, gathering the items we collect, and/or volunteering for supervision or transportation when the children deliver the items they have collected to (agency or organization) on (day, date).

In faith,

(Co-leaders)

## FIND OUT MORE

Visit a website of "[alternative gifts](http://www.altgifts.org/)" (at [www.altgifts.org/](http://www.altgifts.org/)) to target a donation of any amount toward a specific program focused on saving lives and preserving our planet. The website explains how to hold an [Alternative Gift Market](#) to engage contributions to humanitarian efforts.

Learn more about the spiritual benefits of generosity in these books:

*The Giving Heart: Unlocking the Transformative Power of Generosity in Your Life* by M.J. Ryan (Conari Press, 2000)

*The Courage to Give: Inspiring Stories of People Who Triumphed over Tragedy to Make a Difference in the World* by Jackie Waldman, Janis Leibs Dworkis, and Joan Lunden (MJF Books, 2000)

These books offer examples of generosity:

*Thanks & Giving All Year Long* by Marlo Thomas and Friends (New York : Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing, 2004)

*I Can Make a Difference: A Treasury to Inspire Our Children* by Mark W. McVeigh, Marian Wright Edelman, and Barry Moser (Harper/Collins, 2005)

## Fidget Objects

The idea of having a basket of "fidget objects" available during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, koosh balls, and other soft, quiet, manipulatable objects.

When you introduce the fidget object basket to the group, begin by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may wish to use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children that the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the basket available for the duration of the session, or bring the basket out only during activities, such as hearing a story told, that require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

# SESSION 10: FOOTPRINTS: TREADING SOFTLY ON EARTH

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*When one tugs on a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world. — John Muir*

In today's world, one cannot speak of morality, goodness and justice without considering human impact on the Earth. The Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes promote and affirm both an attitude of respect and actions that honor the interdependent web of life of which we are a part.

This session focuses on interconnections. It communicates to children both facts and meaning of the interdependent web of life, and aims to instill the need to act responsibly. Participants will hear a true story about human attempts to control nature with unexpected (and undesirable) results. With an emphasis on living in balance and harmony with nature and being mindful — even shrinking — the footprint we humans leave on planet Earth, "Balance" will be added to the Moral Compass poster.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Expand participants' understanding of the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part
- Introduce the concept of balance in nature
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn about and discuss how nature's balance "works" and how human actions can help or harm it
- Empower participants to act as agents for the Earth
- Convey that caring for the Earth is as an act of justice and goodness.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Hear a story that demonstrates interconnections in the web of life
- Explore their own physical balance in an interconnected circle
- Make "Live in Balance" posters
- Learn some things that the Earth needs in order to be in balance

- Practice evaluating whether particular actions will help or harm the Earth
- Optional: Take action to help the congregation care for the Earth through a Faith in Action project.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Lap-Sit Balance Game	8
Activity 3: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 4: Story – Parachuting Cats to the Rescue	10
Activity 5: "Live in Balance" Posters	25
Activity 6: Clean-up	2
Faith in Action: Helping Others Keep the Balance – Short-term	25
Faith in Action: Toy and Book Drive – Long-term	30
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Interdependent Web Game	5
Alternate Activity 3: Help or Harm the Earth? Game	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

If at all possible, try to spend 5 minutes in nature. Listen for the sounds of animals and insects. Experience the weather — hot, cold, misty, or windy... Briefly meditate on your connection with all that is.

If you are not able to actually go outside or find a natural setting to enjoy, take a few minutes to imagine yourself in your favorite outdoor place. If possible, put on a tape or CD with nature sounds, or sit near a decorative fountain. Briefly meditate on your connection with all that is.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2, Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2, Introducing the Moral Compass) and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to

three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: LAP-SIT BALANCE GAME (8 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Music tape or CD and music player

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Select music. Arrange to have a music player for this activity.

### **Description of Activity**

Ask the group if they can define the word "balance." Invite everyone try to stand on one foot. Explain that when your body is off balance, you sway to one side, and then you might sway to the other side, but balance is when you come back to center.

Gather the children standing in a circle. Ask everyone to turn one-quarter of the way to the left — you may need to demonstrate — so that they are all facing clockwise. Say:

Please take two big steps sideways, into the center of the circle. Keep moving toward the center until you are all standing very close together.

Tell the group that you are going to turn the music on and while it is playing they should walk clockwise around the circle but when they hear the music stop, they should bend their knees until they are sitting on the lap of the person behind them. Start the music. After 30

seconds, stop it. Help the children from outside the circle to help the group achieve balance with everyone sitting on the lap of the person behind them.

Once balance is achieved, have the group stand up, turn around and walk counterclockwise with the music. Again, stop the music and have everyone sit on the lap behind them. Keep the group in this position and ask:

- What would happen if one of you left the circle?

Allow some responses, but ask them not to move. Then ask:

- What could you do to try to maintain balance?

After they've answered the question briefly, invite one child to slowly, carefully remove themselves from the circle, while others try to compensate and maintain balance.

If necessary, reform the circle in lap-sitting position. Now ask:

- What would happen if more than one person left the circle?

Tell the group that you are going to go around the circle and choose people who should leave the circle slowly and carefully. Remove people, one at a time, until the whole circle has lost balance and can no longer maintain the lap-sitting circle position.

Have everyone sit down in the circle and take a few moments to discuss the experience. Ask questions such as:

- When you were sitting on laps, what helped you keep balance?
- What made it harder to stay balanced? (If people of different sizes were in the circle, include an observation about that.)
- When one person lost balance, what would happen to the circle?

Say something like:

Today we're going to talk about balance on the Earth. Nature is kind of like the circle we just made. In your circle, you were all interconnected. If one person moved it affected everyone. In nature everything is interconnected. We call that the interdependent web of all existence. When one part of nature changes, all of nature is affected and things can become unbalanced.

The goal of this activity is to give participants a hands-on, concrete experience of community-based balance. This will help them understand the notion of balance in nature later in the session. It is also a fun, group-building

activity that will be beneficial to kinesthetic (movement-oriented) learners.

### **Including All Participants**

To include a child who is in a wheelchair or has limited mobility, consider how you can keep this child safe during the activity. A child with limited mobility could have an adult leader behind them to help stabilize the circle and maintain safety. Another possibility is to invite the child with limited mobility to exit the circle first so that they will be less likely to fall as a result of the experience. A child in a wheelchair could have someone sit on their lap but cannot sit on the lap of the person behind them. They will have the advantage of not falling, along with the child on their lap. On the other hand, it will be difficult for the person behind the wheelchair to replicate the action of having another person on their lap, without tipping the wheelchair. Include these observations in the conversations you have about the activity. If any particular child would be unable to participate in the lap-sitting, you could ask them to control the music and/or to help people balance from outside of the circle.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "Parachuting Cats to the Rescue," such as a small toy parachute, a toy or stuffed cat or rat, a plastic mosquito, pictures of Southeast Asian island homes with thatched roofs or a toy or stuffed rat
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Optional: See Activity 5, "Live in Balance" Posters, for directions to make a parachute from a paper coffee filter and some string, which would be a good object for the story basket.
- If you have a globe or map in your story basket, make sure you know where the island of Borneo in Southeast Asia is located, so you can show the group.
- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the

filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.

- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket today."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the storytelling basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate Borneo. Tell the children that today's story is a true story, and Borneo is an island country where it happened.

As the story basket items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.



Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 4: STORY – PARACHUTING CATS TO THE RESCUE (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[Parachuting Cats to the Rescue](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it.
- Think about how you might use items from the story basket as props. Place these items nearby, where you can reach them as you tell the story.

### **Description of Activity**

Tell the group that this story is about something that really happened in 1959. You might want to tell them how many years ago this was, to make the date more real to them. You can tell them that while it certainly did happen, some people say there were 20 cats and others say there were many thousands of cats.

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Read or tell the story.

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over. Pause for a moment. Then help the group briefly discuss the story to make sure they understand it and to allow it to resonate. Allow personal experience comments about things such as children's pet cats, previous air travel, or knowledge about malaria, DDT, mosquitoes or rats.

### **Including All Participants**

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

## **ACTIVITY 5: "LIVE IN BALANCE" POSTERS (25 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Large sheets of poster board, at least one for every two or three participants
- A permanent marker that will write on coffee filter paper
- Color markers
- Medium-size paper coffee filters, one for every two or three participants
- String or yarn
- Single-hole hole-puncher
- Stapler
- Nature magazines to cut up or other pictures from nature, scissors (including left-handed scissors) and glue sticks or tape

### Preparation for Activity

- On the top of each piece of poster board write, "Live in Balance. The Earth Needs... "
- Punch three holes on the edges of each coffee filter, in a triangular pattern, as on a parachute
- On each coffee filter write the phrase, "The parachuting cat says... " using the permanent marker
- Cut the string into approximately six-inch pieces. Tie each string into a hole on a coffee filter. Tie the bottoms loosely together, as a parachute.
- Cut out pictures of a variety of creatures and plants from the magazines. Provide additional magazines and scissors for participants to cut out more pictures.

### Description of Activity

Say in your own words:

*In our lap-sitting circle, we saw that when one person left the circle it made it harder for everyone else to keep balance. In the story we just heard we learned that when one kind of animal dies or there are too many of one kind of animal, that can make it hard for nature to keep its balance. We learned about scientists who used chemicals in Borneo which killed some animals and made nature get out of balance.*

We are going to make posters about keeping balance but first we're going to think about what things the Earth needs to be in balance.

As children name ideas, write each idea concisely on the sheet of newsprint you have posted. Allow no more than two or three minutes for this part of the activity. If the children have difficulty coming up with ideas, suggest things such as clean water, good atmosphere, clean air, insects to eat weeds, different kinds of birds, trees, different kinds of plants, pollinators or safe places for all animals to live.

Next form pairs or small groups of children and invite them to work together to create a "Live in Balance" poster. Read them the heading ("Live in Balance, the Earth Needs... ") and ask them to make pictures of everything they can think of that the Earth needs to have balance. Invite them to focus on one of the Earth's needs that the group has generated, and use pictures to show it. Not all children will be interested in doing or able to do this, but it may give some a helpful structure for this task. Others may be helped by an invitation to think broadly; you can point out that all creatures and plants

have a role in nature's balance, so their posters can have lots of different animals on them.

Children can glue on pictures that you have cut out, or cut out their own to use.

Give each pair or small group a coffee filter parachute. Help them glue or staple it to the top of their poster so it reads, "The parachuting cat says ... Live in Balance, the Earth Needs... " If they like, one person can cut out or draw a picture of a cat to glue or staple to the bottom of the parachute. Hang completed posters on the wall of your meeting space or display them for the larger congregation.

The goal of this activity is to deepen the understanding of balance in nature and encourage a respect for all life within the web of existence. Concepts are reinforced through naming and artistically representing things that the Earth needs in order to remain in balance.

## ACTIVITY 6: CLEAN-UP (2 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials
- Waste basket lined with a bag
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers
- Damp sponges or paper towels to wipe tables used in group feast

### Preparation for Activity

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.
- Make sure you know the proper way to dispose of waste and the best place to store extra food or beverages at your congregation.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it. Ask them to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about

how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. Note: You may like to tie today's clean-up together with this session's short-term Faith in Action project, Helping Others Keep the Balance.

If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### Including All Participants

All children should assist as able.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find some suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. It is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.

- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Write the word "Balance" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Balance" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions. Today we heard a story about a time when nature got out of balance because of a mistake made by human scientists. Unitarian Universalists believe that balance is very important in our interdependent web of all existence. We believe that to live in balance and to care for the Earth are acts of goodness and justice. We're going to add "Balance" as a direction on our Moral Compass.

Post or write the word "Balance" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. Encourage them to write down the acts of goodness and justice they do (or witness). You may like to invite them to pay special attention to times when people, including themselves, interact thoughtfully with nature and perform acts that help to keep the balance.

If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to try using forgiveness the other virtues you have posted on the Moral Compass poster.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,

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Love give light to every face;

May the kindness which we learn

Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these. Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: SHORT-TERM – HELPING OTHERS KEEP THE BALANCE (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Poster board
- Color markers
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Scout your congregation's building to identify central trash bins and learn about any recycling procedures that are in place. Take notes so you can meaningfully direct participants to make posters that (1) direct members and visitors how and where to dispose of trash and/or (2) provide information about recycling and indicate the proper receptacles for different materials, such as bottles or paper.
- On sheets of newsprint, write out the wording for children to print on posters. Post the newsprint.
- Make sure there are no building fire codes or other rules that would prevent your placing posters to indicate trash and recycling receptacles. If there are such rules, adapt the poster-making as needed.
- Decide whether you will post the posters around your congregation yourself or include children in this part of the activity, which will take additional time.
- Optional: Plan to take the group on a brief tour of the locations where the congregation collects trash for disposal and recycling.
- Optional: Invite a congregational leader involved with recycling for the building to talk with the children and help them make and display their posters.

### **Description of Activity**

Tell the children that even when there are plenty of trash bins and recycling bins around, people often appreciate reminders to help, not harm, the Earth by properly getting rid of their trash. Say:

Today we are going to make some posters to help people keep the balance, here at our congregation.

If a congregational leader is joining you to talk about recycling, introduce that person now and invite them to make a short presentation about how the recycling program came about at your Unitarian Universalist congregation and why it is an important endeavor for the Earth and for your congregation (a question the children may be able to answer, if you pose it to them).

If you have planned a small tour, gather the children and take them to the locations in your congregation that you have scouted. Then return to your meeting space to make posters.

Allow children to work in pairs on posters that require a lot of writing. Some participants like to lavish attention on bold arrows that you can later position around the building so they are pointing toward trash or recycling bins.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?

- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*When one tugs on a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world. — John Muir*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children heard a true story about unexpected consequences after scientists sprayed DDT in Borneo to get rid of mosquitoes. A chain of subsequent events led to an overpopulation of rats, which was solved by parachuting 20 cats into Borneo. We talked about the importance of balance in nature and made "Live in Balance" posters.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

Ask your child to tell you about the story and what happened. Talk about the ecosystem your city, town or country location is part of. Discuss the wildlife and plants in your area and the interconnections that exist.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

#### A FAMILY RITUAL

Create a family ritual of going for a night hike whenever there is a full moon. Walk quietly and listen for the night sounds. Note the differences in plant and animal life based on the seasons. When you have returned home, have each person light a candle and name something they appreciate about nature or something they noticed or learned on the hike. Close the ritual with lemonade in the summer, hot chocolate in the winter, mulled apple cider in the fall or another seasonal treat.

#### A FAMILY GAME

Create an ecological balance version of the traditional game "rock, paper, scissors." In this game, each person secretly decides to be "rock," "paper" or "scissors." Participants count to three with one hand behind their backs. On "three," they pull their hands out front and use their hands to indicate which things they've chosen. A rock is shown by making a fist, paper is a flat hand, and scissors are made in a cutting motion using the index and middle fingers. Rock crushes scissors, scissors cut paper, and paper covers rock. Make up your own version using natural food chain relationships. For example: frogs eat mosquitoes, mosquitoes bite humans, and humans eat frogs. Make up hand gestures for each creature you include. Be creative and don't feel constrained by the number three. If you like, add multiple plants or creatures to your game and think about the ways they are interdependent.

### FAMILY DISCOVERY

Study the problem of global warming with your family. Your library and the internet will have multiple resources. You can also check out the website of [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)), an affiliate organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Ask a local energy company to do an audit of your home's energy usage and create a plan for more efficient energy use. Create a family plan to reduce your family's carbon emissions and help stop global warming.

You may like to find out about local nature or ecological organizations in your area. These may have visitor centers, family programs or volunteer opportunities for young school-age children.

Visit a local conservation area and talk to rangers or other workers about local conservation needs. Learn about ways you can help keep the balance in your ecosystem. Possibilities might include planting bushes or flowers that are helpful to insects or birds, reducing your household waste and increasing your recycling efforts, or volunteering with a local environmental group.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles

- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: INTERDEPENDENT WEB GAME (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A ball of yarn

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to sit in a circle. When everyone is settled, hold the ball of yarn in your hand and say:

Hello. My name is (your name).

I love to (something that you love to do).

Holding onto the end of the yarn, pass the ball to someone else in the circle. Greet that person by saying:

Hello, (person's name).

Prompt the person to respond with these words:

Hello.

My name is (person's name).

I love to (something that they love to do).

Instruct the person to hold onto a piece of the yarn, pass the ball of yarn to someone else in the circle, and say:

Hello, (person's name).

The new person holding the ball of yarn repeats the process, saying "Hello," sharing their name, and telling something they love to do before passing the ball of yarn along to someone new.

As the ball of yarn gets passed, the yarn will begin to form a web. Encourage children to gently toss the ball of yarn across the circle. If the ball of yarn is only passed and never tossed, no web will form.

When all participants are included in the web, invite everyone to stand up and hold onto their pieces of yarn. Then, gently tug on the yarn you are holding. Ask the group:

- If I pull on my yarn, who here can feel it?

Then, drop the yarn you are holding. Ask:

- When I drop my yarn, what happens to the web? What would happen if more people dropped their yarn?

Allow some children to drop their yarn to see what happens. After the children have offered a few observations, tell the group in your own words:

The Earth is a lot like this web. We are connected to everything in our world by a web just like this one — only you can't see the yarn. When we pull on the web or if we break it, all of the other animals and plants feel it, just as you could all feel it when I pulled on this yarn. Just like our web fell apart as some of us began to let go.

That's why we have a Unitarian Universalist principle that says we are all part of the interdependent web of all existence.

This exercise serves multiple purposes. It is fun, and it gives the children a tangible experience of the Unitarian Universalist Principle of interconnectedness along with a chance to practice using one another's names.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: HELP OR HARM THE EARTH? GAME (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, [Help or Harm the Earth?](#) (included in this document)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Post two blank sheets of newsprint on opposite walls. Write "Help the Earth" on the top of one and "Harm the Earth" on the top of the other.
- Download Leader Resource, Help or Harm the Earth? Add items if you wish, then print out a copy,

### **Description of Activity**

Tell the children:

Just like the scientists who accidentally created a problem in Borneo, there are lots of things people do that can harm the Earth or mess up

nature's balance. There are also things we can do to help the Earth.

Explain that you will read off some actions that people do. Invite the children to move to the "Help the Earth" sign if they think the action you name is helpful or the "Harm the Earth" side if they think it harms the Earth.

Once you exhaust this list, add your own items or ask the children to come up with suggestions. To add action to the activity, you can give the children different ways to move around the room. These might be movements such as crawling, hopping, or tip-toeing, or you can strengthen the lesson by asking them to pretend they are various living creatures such as a frog (hop), a horse (gallop) or a honeybee (fly and buzz).

To end the game, invite two volunteers to remove and throw away or recycle the two newsprint signs and help the Earth.

### **Including All Participants**

Include a child with limited mobility by engaging the group to find a way they will indicate the "Help the Earth" or "Harm the Earth" sign, such as by pointing to one sign or the other.

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 10: STORY 1: PARACHUTING CATS TO THE RESCUE**

A true story.

The mosquitoes in Borneo were terrible. On bad days, the people of Borneo would be covered in mosquito bites.

(Leader — Ask, "And what do you suppose would happen?" Wait for someone to suggest that it would itch and people would scratch / make the bites bleed.)

That's right — those mosquito bites made them itch and scratch like mad. (Leader — Act out scratching and invite the children to do the same.)

The itching made them uncomfortable, but the real problem with the mosquitoes was that they carried a sickness called malaria. This meant that sometimes the people who got bitten by mosquitoes would get really sick or even die.

Scientists from an agency called the World Health Organization wanted to stop the people of Borneo from getting sick and dying from malaria. They decided to do something about those mosquitoes. They sprayed a chemical called DDT all around the villages of Borneo, because they knew that would kill the mosquitoes. It worked. The mosquitoes died and the people stopped catching malaria.

Everything seemed fine, but what the people didn't know at first was that the mosquitoes weren't the only insects that the DDT had killed. Some wasps died, too. These were parasitic wasps whose larvae ate caterpillars. Without the wasps there wasn't balance in the ecosystem. Because they were not there to eat the caterpillars' larvae, the caterpillar population began to grow and grow. More and more caterpillars were born and they were hungry. They ate and they ate and they ate.

The problem was, the people of Borneo lived in houses with thatched roofs made out of grasses. (Leader — Ask, "What do you suppose those caterpillars liked to

eat?" When someone suggests the roofs, continue with the story.)

That's right, the caterpillars ate holes in the thatched roofs and soon the roofs began to fall in. The people of Borneo replaced the roofs, but ... (dramatic pause) there was an even bigger problem to deal with.

The wasps weren't the only insects that ate the DDT. Cockroaches and other insects did, too. So, the cockroaches and other insects began to get sick. And these insects were the food for Borneo's small lizards, the geckos. The more cockroaches and other insects the geckos ate, the more DDT got inside the geckos. The geckos started to die, too.

And the geckos of Borneo were eaten by cats. (Leader — Ask, "What do you suppose happened to the cats?" When someone suggests they died, continue the story.)

That's right, the cats began to die. But even worse ... (dramatic pause) the cats were important because they killed rats. When the cats died there wasn't balance in the ecosystem. There were not enough cats to kill the rats. So the rat population of Borneo grew and grew. The rats began to overpopulate. More and more rats were born.

The trouble with rats is that — just like mosquitoes — they often carry serious diseases which people can catch from them. Now the people of Borneo worried that they might have an outbreak of the plague or another illness that could kill lots of people. (Leader — Ask, "What do you suppose they did?" and take a few answers.)

The people of Borneo realized they needed more cats to bring back the balance in their ecosystem. Some were borrowed from neighboring villages but they still needed more. And that is why in 1959 members of the British Royal Air Force flew over Borneo in a helicopter and sent 20 cats in parachutes to the ground. Can you imagine that? Twenty cats in parachutes — all because nature got out of balance.

(Leader — Use the sound instrument to signify that the story has ended.)



## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 10: LEADER RESOURCE 1: HELP OR HARM THE EARTH?**

Call out these human actions, your own ideas, and ideas suggested by the children to play the game in Alternate Activity 3, Help or Harm the Earth? Game.

- Build a house of wood by cutting down an entire forest of trees
- Eat fruits and vegetables grown at a local farm or in your own garden
- Spill oil into the ocean
- Leave all the lights on in your house all the time
- Plant trees
- Drink soda and then recycle your bottle
- Throw out your garbage in lakes or rivers
- Use cloth shopping bags instead of plastic or paper
- Go fishing in a river until all of the fish are gone
- Set aside special protected spaces for wildlife where animals and plants can live
- Walk, bicycle or take a train whenever possible instead of driving
- Try to kill all ants because they are pests

## FIND OUT MORE

For more information on Unitarian Universalist efforts to heal the environment, visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) online.

Explore the green sanctuary movement, an outgrowth of the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth, and how it is practiced at local congregations such as the [Unitarian Church of Evanston](http://ucevanston.org) (at <http://ucevanston.org>) (IL).

This session's central story, "Parachuting Cats to the Rescue," is true. However, multiple versions are more, or less, credible. Some sources claim that 40,000 cats were parachuted. In contrast, the log book of Borneo's Royal Air Force was the source for the more plausible number of 20 cats. There is also a book written about this event, *Day They Parachuted Cats on Borneo* by Charlotte Pomerantz (Addison Wesley Longman, 1971).

# SESSION 11: DO NO HARM

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being. — Mohandas K. Gandhi*

This session introduces non-violence as an aspect of goodness which is integrally connected with justice. While children are more ready to understand the expressions of violence and non-violence than the inner conditions that create these expressions, this session address both inner spiritual peacefulness as well as peaceful relationships within the world. As suggested by the 1948 quotation from Mohandas Gandhi which opens this session, you cannot have one peace without the other.

Through hearing a story in which a boy holds the wellbeing of a bird within his hands, and playing a game in which participants are encouraged to think about non-violent responses to conflict situations, the children will be encouraged to be peacemakers. As a reminder of the importance of making choices that are grounded in Unitarian Universalist values, the children will make and take home bracelets with the initials, "WWUUD?" standing for "What Would A Unitarian Universalist Do?"

Reflecting the sixth Unitarian Universalist Principle, which promotes "the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all," this session draws on the Buddhist and Hindu notion of non-harm, or ahimsa. It is written, in the Buddhist Digha Nikaya, "Abandoning the taking of life, the ascetic Gautama dwells refraining from taking life, without stick or sword." This session also draws on Christian scripture: "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52) The word "Non-violence" will be added to the Moral Compass poster.

### GOALS

The session will:

- Develop participants' empathy and nurture a sense of life as sacred
- Empower participants as peacemakers
- Build participants' ability to take responsibility for their actions and choices
- Deepen participants' understanding of the sixth Unitarian Universalist Principle, which promotes world peace.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Hear a story in which the fate of a bird lies in the hands of a boy
- Play a game and name non-violent ways to handle conflict situations
- Make a "What Would U.U. Do" bracelet as a reminder of the importance of making good decisions that reflect Unitarian Universalist values.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story – The Answer Is in Your Hands	10
Activity 4: The "In Your Hands" Ball Game	16
Activity 5: What Would UU Do? Bracelets	16
Activity 6: Clean-Up	3
Faith in Action	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Frogs and Lily Pads Cooperative Game	10

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Read the story, "The Answer Is in Your Hands," a few times. Then take a few minutes to think about your answers to the following questions:

- Whose wellbeing do I hold in my hands?
- Are there ways in which I cause harm to other living beings? How can I decrease that harm?
- How do I cultivate living peacefully in my life? How do I cultivate peace in the larger world?

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the "Gems of Goodness" Project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#)) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on particular directions on the Moral Compass that you have posted, so far.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource [2, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2, Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2, Introducing the Moral Compass) and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to

three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "The Answer Is in Your Hands," such as a small stuffed or ceramic bird
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more

effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket today."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the storytelling basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate India, the source of this folk tale.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear

its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE ANSWER IS IN YOUR HANDS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Answer Is in Your Hands](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try adopting different voices for the boy and the wise old woman. You may find it helpful to close your eyes and to picture the place where the story happens, and to observe the action and characters in the story as if you were watching a movie.
- Think about how you might use items from the story basket as props, such as holding a bird behind your back during the appropriate part of the story.

### **Description of Activity**

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Read or tell the story, "The Answer Is in Your Hands."

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over. Pause for a moment. Then guide a discussion with these questions:

- How do you suppose the bird felt, when it was in the boy's hands?
- How do you suppose the old woman felt, when the children were testing her? When the boy had the bird behind his back?
- How do you suppose the boy was feeling? Why do you think he wanted so badly to prove the old woman wrong?
- What would you have been feeling if you were one of the children standing with the boy?
- Why did the old woman answer the boy's question by saying, "The answer is in your hands?"
- What would you have done, if the bird was in your hands?

The object of this discussion is to encourage empathy for all of the characters in the story, while helping the children to understand and integrate the moral teaching.

### **Including All Participants**

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

## **ACTIVITY 4: THE "IN YOUR HANDS" BALL GAME (16 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Small, soft ball or a small stuffed bird to pass around the circle
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, "[In Your Hands](#)" [Scenarios](#) (included in this document)

### **Description of Activity**

Gather children in a circle. Say, in your own words:

The boy in our story wanted to prove his point so much that he was willing to kill a bird in order to do that. He was in a situation where he could decide whether the bird would live or die.

Every day we all make decisions to hurt or help the people, other living beings, or the Earth around us.



Ask the children to think of some examples. You may prompt them with an example of your own, or use one of these:

- Making a choice to hit or push someone hurts them.
- Stealing something hurts the person you took it from.
- Pulling leaves off a tree hurts the tree.
- Dropping trash on the ground hurts the Earth and the others who live on it.
- Pulling a dog's tail hurts the dog.
- Saying mean words hurts someone's feelings.

You can mention positive choices people can make to avoid doing harm, such as sharing, doing chores, saying kind words, petting your dog, or, like the boy in the story, letting the bird go free.

Tell the children:

Unitarian Universalists believe that we should have peace for everyone in the world. Sometimes when we're angry it's very tempting to do something hurtful to other people, but we can choose to do something peaceful that doesn't harm others, instead. The answer is in our hands.

Have everyone sit or stand in a tight circle with their hands behind their backs. Pass the ball (or stuffed bird) around the circle in this way so that no one can see who has the bird or ball. After a few moments, call out, "Peace!"

Instruct everyone to stop passing the ball or bird. Ask that the person who is holding it think of a non-violent solution to one of the conflict scenarios in Leader Resource, "In Your Hands" Scenarios. Tell the group:

There is only one rule. Your solution cannot cause harm to another living being.

If you want to take the time, you can solicit additional ideas from other participants. After you are done generating non-violent solutions, invite the children to resume passing the ball or bird behind their backs.

The goal of this activity is to encourage children to think of and name alternatives to violence in conflict scenarios that are commonplace at their age. They will envision themselves acting as peacemakers, as well as hear many ideas for peaceful resolutions to conflict from their peers.

## ACTIVITY 5: "WHAT WOULD UU DO?" BRACELETS (16 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Lanyard, cord, or wire for beading
- "W," "U," and "D" beads, enough for each child to make a bracelet with the initials, "WWUUD"
- Decorative beads
- Scissors or another device to cut the lanyard, cord or wire
- Bowls to hold the beads
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Purchase decorative beads and enough letter beads for the group. For 20 bracelets, you will need 40 Ws, 40 Us and 20 Ds. You may also want to provide a "?" bead for each bracelet, if you can find these.
- Purchase enough lanyard, cord or wire to cut to the appropriate size for the number of bracelets the group will make.
- Sort beads by letter and place them in the bowls. Place decorative beads in bowls, as well.
- Write "WWUUD" (or, "WWUUD?" if you have question mark beads for the children) on a piece of newsprint, and post.

### Description of Activity

Settle children at work tables. Show them the newsprint you have posted with "WWUUD" and tell them they will make bracelets with this message on them.

Say, in your own words:

Every day we have to make choices about all sorts of things, like whether or not we will share, or be kind to a dog, or cut someone in line, or hit someone. We are going to make bracelets to remind us to think about the things Unitarian Universalists believe when you have these choices to make. When you find yourself in a situation where you are deciding what action you should take, and maybe wondering what is good, and what is fair, you can look at your bracelet and ask yourself, "What would a Unitarian Universalist do?"

Explain that the letters on the beads stand for the phrase, "What would UU do?" This has a double meaning, as "UU" means both what would "you" do, as well as "What would a Unitarian Universalist do?"

Distribute bowls of beads and lengths of lanyard, cord or wire. Help children secure the first bead in their bracelet by knotting the lanyard, cord or wire around it, leaving a tag on the end to finish the bracelet later.

As children finish their bracelets, you may say:

You can take your bracelets home and I hope you will wear them a lot. They may help you think about whether what you are doing will hurt someone, or help someone. When you look for the answer, look at your hands, and see this bracelet, I hope it will help you make good choices that are peaceful, loving and fair.

### **Including All Participants**

If you have a child for whom small motor tasks are difficult, a leader or friend can help that child string the beads. You may also adapt this activity by providing large beads that are easier to string or providing a needle to help a child pull the lanyard through the beads.

## **ACTIVITY 6: CLEAN-UP (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials
- Waste basket lined with a bag
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers
- Damp sponges or paper towels to wipe tables used in group feast

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.
- Make sure you know the proper way to dispose of waste and the best place to store extra food or beverages at your congregation.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite the children to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it. Ask them to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about

how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### **Including All Participants**

All children should assist as able.

## **CLOSING (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. To close this session, you may wish to give the children another opportunity to sing "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.
- Find additional suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. However, it is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, invite a musical volunteer to do it for you.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.

- Write the word "Non-violence" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Non-violence" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to make good decisions and how to be fair. Today we heard a story about a boy who had to decide whether he was going to kill a bird or set it free. When we are trying to make decisions about whether something would be a good or fair thing to do, one way to decide is to think about whether or not it hurts someone, including yourself. We're going to add "Non-violence" as a direction on our compass.

Post or write "Non-violence," on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to pay special attention to times when they are making a choice for non-violence, a choice that ensures they are not harming another living being or the Earth, as well as times when they have a chance to practice any of the other virtues on the Moral Compass poster.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
 Love give light to every face;  
 May the kindness which we learn  
 Light our hearts till we return.

Or, lead the group in once again singing "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these. Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being. — Mohandas K. Gandhi*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We talked about the importance of making choices that bring peace and do not harm others. After hearing a story in which a boy holds the fate of a bird in his hands, we played a game in which the children had conflict scenarios "in their hands," and were challenged to name non-violent solutions. We also made "WWUUD" bracelets. These initials stand for the question, "What Would a Unitarian Universalist Do?" as reminders to make choices that reflect our Unitarian Universalist values.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

Talk with your child about times when a conflict situation in your family has been resolved peacefully. Point out times when they have been a peacemaker, or share a story about a time when you handled a conflict non-violently. Talk about the strategies you each use to calm down and keep your temper under control.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

#### A FAMILY RITUAL

Post the initials "WWUUD?" in various places around your home. Whenever a conflict situation or a morally questionable action arises in your home, ask one another, "What would U.U. do?" or, in shorthand, "WWUUD?" In order to help answer that question with Unitarian Universalist values in mind, take time as a family to learn about the [Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml)). Set aside one evening a week and discuss each principle in turn at dinner time. Try to include everyone in a conversation about what the principle means, as well as how it should inform our choices and behaviors.

#### A FAMILY GAME

Make your own family version of the board game, *Scruples*. Using index cards, write down situations that require ethical thinking, such as whether or not to share your favorite dessert, whether or not to admit that you flushed the rubber ducky down the toilet and caused the overflow, or how to react when given a gift you do not like. Be sure to have situations that children might face. To play the game, turn the deck of index cards over and have each family member in turn choose a card and speak about how they would behave in the given circumstance. You can also bring the cards along to pass the time on long car drives or while waiting in

restaurants. Encourage everyone to think about how Unitarian Universalist values influence their answers.

### FAMILY DISCOVERY

Learn about peacemakers who have worked for justice using non-violent means. Study the lives of such great men and women as Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Lucretia Mott, and Albert Schweitzer.

Read this Caldecott Honor book that tells the story of how Rosa Parks' bravery and perseverance inspired others to take up the cause of desegregation and brought about the Supreme Court ruling that segregation was illegal in the United States: *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni (Henry Holt and Company, 2005).

These collections include many folk tales that reinforce peace:

- *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope* by E. Brody, et al. (New Society Publishers, 2002)
- *Peace Tales* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Linnet Books, 1992)
- *Kindness: A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children and Parents* by Sarah Conover (Boston: Skinner House, 2010)

Read a picture book that teaches that war is not a game: *Playing War* by Kathy Beckwith (Tilbury House Publishers, 2005).

Listen to *Holding Up the Sky: Peace Tales for Kids* (2003), an [award-winning CD](http://www.peacetales.org/) (at <http://www.peacetales.org/>) of stories from around the world read aloud by New Mexico storyteller, Sarah Malone (2003).

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

## Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: FROGS AND LILY PADS COOPERATIVE GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint pad
- Music tape or CD and player

## Preparation for Activity

- Obtain music and a tape/CD player
- In a large, open space, lay individual sheets of newsprint on the floor as lily pads in a pond. You will need enough "lily pads" for all participants.

## Description of Activity

Say:

We are going to play a game of frogs and lily pads. All of you can be frogs. When the music is playing, you dance and hop around the lily pads as frogs like to do. But when the music stops, you must be on a lily pad.

Be careful, because you must keep everyone safe from the crocodile that lives in the pond. The crocodile can only eat frogs that are not on a lily pad when the music stops. If anyone gets eaten, the whole group loses the game.

After each round of music, remove a lily pad until the entire group is working together to stand on a single piece of newsprint. If this does not present enough of a challenge, you may rip the last sheet of newsprint in half.

### Including All Participants

In many cases, children with limited mobility or sight or other disabilities can play this game if their peers are guided to make sure the child is helped to "safety" on a lily pad. Another way to adapt would be to ensure the child who cannot move ably or quickly is always near one of the remaining lily pads when you stop the music. Seven-, eight- and nine-year-old children can understand how they need to be physically careful of this particular child. Tell the group what they need to know about physical safety in this game, without calling undue attention to particular children's disabilities. A group that includes children with limited mobility presents a desirable opportunity for applying the concept of "non-violence" in this game.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 11: STORY 1: THE ANSWER IS IN YOUR HANDS

Adapted from an Indian folk tale.

There was once a wise woman who lived by herself near a small village. Rumor had it that she could always accurately predict when the rains would come, or help heal a sick child with herbs, or calm angry neighbors and help them to resolve their fights and arguments. People came from all over the land to meet with her and seek her advice on matters both small and great. Her reputation was such that was said she was never wrong — not ever.

Some of the children of the village didn't believe that it was possible to always be right. Surely she could not know everything! They decided to test her knowledge. First they asked her to answer questions about the planets, the animals, and the world. No matter how hard the questions, she always answered correctly.

The children were amazed at her knowledge and learning and most were ready to stop testing the wise woman. However, one boy was determined to prove that the old woman couldn't know everything. Hatching a devious scheme, he told all of his friends to meet him at the woman's home the following afternoon so he could prove she was a faker.

All through the next day he hunted for a bird. Finally he caught a small songbird in a net. Holding it behind his back so no one could see what was in his hands, he walked triumphantly to the wise woman's home. (storytelling tip: take a wooden or stuffed bird and holds it behind your back.)

"Old woman!" he called. "Come and show us how wise you are!"

The woman walked calmly to the door. "May I help you?" she simply asked.

"You say you know everything — prove it — what am I holding behind my back?" the young boy demanded.

The old woman thought for a moment. She could make out the faint sounds of a birds wings rustling. "I do not say I know everything — for that would be impossible," she replied. "However, I do believe you are holding a bird in your hands."

The boy was furious. How could the woman have possibly known he had a bird? Thinking quickly he came up with a new scheme. He would ask the woman whether the bird was alive or dead. If the woman replied, "alive," he would crush it with his hands and prove her wrong. If she answered, "dead," on the other hand, he would pull the living bird from behind his back and allow it to fly away. Either way he would prove his point and the wise woman would be discredited.

"Very good," he called. "It is a bird. But tell me, is the bird I am holding alive or dead?"

The wise woman paused for a long moment while the boy waited with anticipation for his opportunity to prove her wrong. Again the woman spoke calmly, "The answer, my young friend, is in your hands. The answer is in your hands."

The boy realized that the wise woman had once again spoken correctly and truthfully. The answer was indeed in his own hands. Feeling the bird feebly moving in his hands as it tried to escape his grasp, he felt suddenly very ashamed.

The answer was in his hands — slowly and gently he brought his hands to the front of his body. Looking into the eyes of the delicate bird he apologized, "I am sorry little one," and he opened his hands to let her go free.

(Storyteller uses the sound instrument to signify that the story has ended.)

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 11: LEADER RESOURCE 1 IN YOUR HANDS SCENARIOS**

Your younger brother has just destroyed an art project that you worked on for hours! You are furious and you feel like hitting him, or maybe destroying one of his favorite things. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

A bully has demanded that you give her your lunch money. You are scared and angry. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

Your cat just scratched you. You are bleeding, hurt and angry. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

You have brought a juice box to the playground and now you are finished drinking it. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

A kid in your neighborhood just hit your younger sister. You feel protective of her and angry. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

Your dog chewed up your favorite stuffed animal. You are very sad and angry. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

You are coming down the front steps of your school and there are a lot of older children standing and talking there, who are blocking your way. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

You were picking a rose and you pricked yourself on the thorns. You are angry and feel like stamping on the rose bush. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

There is one last cookie in the cookie jar. You and your older sister both want it. The answer is in your hands—what will you do?

You've had a bad day and someone on the school bus line pushes you and says, "Get a move on, stupid." You feel like screaming and hitting her. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

There's a new kid in your class. Everyone hates him and your friends have been calling him names. The answer is in your hands — what will you do?

## FIND OUT MORE

For group games and activities that reinforce cooperation and teach peace, see:

- *The Cooperative Sports and Games Book* by Terry Orlick (Pantheon, 1978)
- *Creative Conflict Resolution: More than 200 Activities for Keeping Peace in the Classroom K-6* by William J. Kreidler (Good Year Books, 1996)

*Holding Up the Sky: Peace Tales for Kids* is an [award-winning CD](http://www.peacetales.org/) (at <http://www.peacetales.org/>) of stories from around the world read by New Mexico storyteller, Sarah Malone (2003).

Read these collections of folktales that reinforce peace:

- *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope* by E. Brody, et al (New Society Publishers, 2002)
- *Peace Tales* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Linnet Books, 1992)
- [Kindness](#): *A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children and Parents* by Sarah Conover (Boston: Skinner House, 2010)

This picture book teaches that war is not a game: *Playing War* by Kathy Beckwith (Tilbury House Publishers, 2005).



# SESSION 12: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do. — Edward Everett Hale*

This session introduces the concept of responsibility. It reinforces the ideas in the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, respect for the interdependent web of all existence, by demonstrating the idea that our action or lack of action makes a difference in an interdependent world. It encourages the children to feel empowered to take action when love, faith and conscience call. The session is woven around a folk tale from Thailand and Burma, "Not My Problem." In this story a queen is repeatedly asked to take action on what she considers a matter too small for her attention. She continues to ignore it until the situation grows to the point that her whole kingdom is lost. During the session the children explore the concept and experience of responsibility through acknowledging ways that they already make a difference, considering through role play how to make a difference in real life scenarios, and brainstorming problems that matter to them, and how even small actions on their part promote positive change. Responsibility is added to the Moral Compass.

### GOALS

The session will:

- Take pride in sharing ways that they acted with courage this week
- Learn more about courage from hearing other children share their acts of goodness
- Gain a greater understanding of the meaning of courage to act with conscience
- Experience feeling more assertive and courageous
- Identify situations in which they would like to feel more courageous
- Strengthen connection to their faith community
- Strengthen their sense of responsibility to the community.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Participate in an adaptation of the "Gems of Goodness" exercise focused on courage
- Hear a story that illustrates risk taking in the face of injustice
- Experience an assertiveness training exercise and practice using assertiveness skills
- Share a way that they would like to be more courageous, in the closing ceremony

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	3
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness – Responsibility	12
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story – "It's Not My Problem"	10
Activity 4: Role Play – We Can Make a Difference	10
Activity 5: If I Had a Magic Wand	15
Activity 6: Clean-up	3
Faith in Action: Responsibility Steps to Make a Difference – Long-term	15
Closing	2
Alternate Activity 1 Candles of Joys and Sorrows	5
Alternate Activity 2: Making Magic Wands	15
Alternate Activity 3: All My Friends and Neighbors Make a Difference	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

To prepare for leading and fully engaging in this session we suggest that you reread the quote at the start of the session by Edward Everett Hale. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the amount of need that we see in this world. It is easy to feel disempowered when it seems that what is needed is so much money or a change of heart by governing officials, profit driven corporations,

and warring factions. Still in the end our actions in the world do make a difference. Take some time to think, write, or share about all of the ways that you do make a difference in the lives of others, and that you do contribute to positive change, both locally and in the world.

You might try the "magic wand" exercise for yourself, thinking of what you would change if you could wave your magic wand. Then think, well what do I already do toward these ends? Is there another step you could take, whether alone, or with a group such as your family

or your church community? You might also think about the difference between, "magic" as in a fairy tale, and the real heart-felt experience of knowing that people including yourself are giving their love and care to the world's problems.

Take some time to read the story and to picture it in your mind. Have you had personal experiences that remind you of this story, in which you did or did not consider something your problem? Did you feel empowered, or more connected, when you chose to act?

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (3 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS – RESPONSIBILITY (12 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Copies of Handout 1, [I Make a Difference](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth

- Moral Compass poster

### Preparation for Activity

- Copy the handout, I Make a Difference, for all participants. Write each child's name on an I Make a Difference handout ahead of time.
- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2, Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2, Introducing the Moral Compass) and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.
- Place the I Make a Difference handouts, pens and markers within your reach.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Show the children the I Make a Difference handouts. Tell them that today you are going to do the Gems of Goodness activity in a slightly different way. You may say:

Today our topic will be taking responsibility and making a difference. To get us started, I invite you to put a gem of goodness in the jar today for some of the ways you take responsibility and make a difference at home, at school and here at our congregation. After you have all done that, you may share one or two additional acts of goodness from your notebooks, if you wish. And then we will look at acts of goodness and responsibility and making a difference a bit more, using the handouts I have brought.

Invite volunteers to stand up and share about a way that they take responsibility and make a difference. After they have shared, allow them to put a gem into the glass jar or vase. Prompt by suggesting some ways the children already make a difference at home, such as

being responsible with chores, recycling trash, helping to take care of younger siblings or grandparents, cleaning up after themselves so that others don't have to, caring for a pet. You can also suggest that they probably have responsibilities at school, such as being a line leader, picking up at the end of the day, or other tasks the teacher suggests or that make other people's jobs easier. Suggest that the children make a difference with their friends if they share and offer kindness, stand up for another child who is being bullied, or work together on a sports team or in a musical band. Some children probably make a difference for people they don't even know, too, such as by collecting money for UNICEF at Halloween or participating in a bake sale to raise money for an organization or cause they care about. You can even remind them that they make a difference at your congregation, such as by helping with clean-up at the end of each Moral Tales session and perhaps in other ways that you can name from other times you have been together.

As the children share, write on their individual handouts a few words about the way or ways each child takes responsibility and makes a difference. Read aloud what you are writing, so children begin to hear you articulate that they already do make a difference in many aspects of their lives. This will prepare them to feel empowered to think of new ways to make a difference, later in the session and in their lives. In Activity 5 you will come back to the handout and fill out the bottom sections for each child. Some helpful hints to keep the Gems of Goodness process going:

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.

- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.

- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness. Collect all participants' handouts.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

NOTE: The Gems of Goodness for this session has been adapted especially to focus on the theme of responsibility. The work children do with handouts in the Gems of Goodness activity is continued in Activity 5, If I Had a Magic Wand and may be extended further with the long-term Faith in Action project that begins in this session, Responsibility Steps. You may also wish to look at Alternate Activity 3: All My Friends and Neighbors Make a Difference, if you think your students need to be more physically active.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "It's Not My Problem," such as a jar of honey
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

## Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket today."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the story basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate Burma and Thailand. Tell the children that today's story was originally a folk tale from Burma and Thailand.

As the story basket items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

## Including All Participants

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## ACTIVITY 3: STORY – IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, ["It's Not My Problem"](#) (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times. Take time to picture the story in your mind so its setting is clear.

- Make a short outline of the sequence of events in the story: (honey, flies, lizard, cat, etc.). Think about how you might use items from the story basket as props. Place these items nearby, where you can reach them as you tell the story.
- Tell the story out loud to yourself to be sure that you remember all of the important parts. Try speaking like a bored queen and a nervous but obedient advisor.

### Description of Activity

The story, "It's Not My Problem," has a repeating refrain which provides an obvious place for audience participation. You may choose to teach this to the children before you start to tell the story. Let them know that you will pause to invite them to say it with you, as if they were the queen. Participating in the story will help children become engaged with the message that all things are interconnected and that our action or lack of action does make a difference to the rest of the world.

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Read or tell the story.

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over. Pause for a moment. Then help the group briefly discuss the story in this activity. Guide the group to explore the theme of taking responsibility and the notion that our actions and inaction do make a difference. The goal is to help the children to see all of the places that the various characters could have acted differently to make a better ending to the story. You may choose to lead the discussion with these questions:

- This story had a pretty sad ending didn't it? What do you think the queen could have done to avoid having her whole kingdom burn to the ground?
- What do you think the advisor could have done differently? (Possible answers: Clean up the drop of honey herself. Call a servant herself. Call the soldiers herself. Call down to the people to stop fighting. Go down and tell the people to stop fighting.)
- Why do you think the advisor did not do anything to stop the problems that she saw? (Possible answers: She thought she had to have the queen's permission. She thought it was the queen's problem, since the queen started it.)
- What could the baker or the butcher have done differently?
- What could the other shopkeepers and neighbors have done differently?

- What could the soldiers have done differently?

Ask the group:

- Who could have made a difference in this story? (Answer: All of the people who were there.)

Remind the children at this point that this is the way it is when we see a problem at school or in our neighborhood or in the world. We may not have started it, and we may not be able to stop it alone, but by doing something we can probably help to keep the problem from getting worse. We are taking responsibility and that makes a difference.

### Including All Participants

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

## ACTIVITY 4: ROLE PLAY – WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Sound making instrument
- Role play scenarios

### Preparation for Activity

- Choose one scenario from the suggestions below.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a seated circle, with room for actors to play roles. Lead a role play using the scenario you have chosen:

#### Scenario: Don't Pass It On – How to Stop Gossip

In this role play the children are challenged to think about how to act responsibly if they hear someone talking meanly about someone else. Describe to them a scenario in which some children are telling a rumor about another. Ask for a volunteer to be the child whom the rumor is about.

Have the children stand in a line. At one end start the rumor that some child (make up a name, do not use a name of a child in the group) stole something from someone else, or threw up, or had a pants-wetting accident, or some such situation that would upset and embarrass a child this age. Have the children pretend to

pass the rumor on down the line, going, "Pssst, pass it on," until it reaches the last person, who has agreed to pretend to be the person the rumor is about. Ask that person how it would feel if they found out that people were telling that story about them. (Possible answers: mad, sad, embarrassed.)

Then tell the children that they are to imagine that someone has started this rumor, by whispering it in someone's ear. Ask the children to imagine that someone told it to them and said, "Pass it on". Ask them for suggestions as to how to take responsibility for not hurting someone's feelings. Possible answers:

- Refuse to pass it on
- Pass it on but correct the hurtful information to say, "So-and-so didn't steal money, or "So-and-so fell in the mud during soccer and that's why their pants were wet," or "So-and-so didn't throw up."
- Say, "It's not nice to spread stories about other people."

### **Scenario: Don't Exclude Me! – How to Make Sure No One Is Left Out**

In this role play the children are challenged to think about how to act responsibly if they notice someone being excluded on purpose or simply left out. Describe to the children a situation at school, such as at recess, or in the lunch room in which a group of children are playing a game, or sitting together. Another child wants to join in but some of the children tell them that there is no more room, or they have enough people already.

Pick all but one of the children to be the players and one child who doesn't mind being the "child left out." Have them role play the game to the point where they tell the child that they can't play. Then have that child tell the group how that felt to be left out. (Possible answers: sad, lonely, not fair, mad.)

Then have the children act out the scene again, imagine the scene again but this time ask them to brainstorm how they might do something to help include everyone. Possible answers:

- Sit a turn out if the game can only have a certain number of people.
- Tell your friends that you want to include that new child and everyone should take turns.
- Ask that child if they wants to do something else with you, or go sit somewhere else with that child if you can't get the group to agree, or if there aren't enough chairs.

### **Including All Participants**

If any children are disrespectful or disruptive or you are worried that they might be, do not assign them roles that require respectful engagement. You can ask them to sit quietly and watch, or give them a "fidget object" and ask them to sit quietly and watch.

## **ACTIVITY 5: IF I HAD A MAGIC WAND (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Magic wands for all participants, made in Alternate Activity 2: Making Magic Wands, made by you in advance, or store-bought
- Participants' "I Make a Difference" handouts begun in Activity 1, Gems of Goodness — Responsibility
- Markers or pencils

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Decide whether this session has room for Alternate Activity 2, Making Magic Wands, or whether you will purchase wands for the group or make simple ones yourself. You can make magic wands by stapling shiny ribbons or cut-out stars onto 1/4-inch wooden dowels or long, stiff plastic straws; as described in Alternate Activity 2, Making Magic Wands.
- If the group will not do the wand-making activity, obtain the materials and make wands in advance for all participants plus a few extra for co-leaders and unexpected guests. Or, purchase wands at a party store, an arts-and-crafts store, or a toy store.
- If children will already have magic wands (for example, from Alternate Activity 2, Making Magic Wands), ask everyone to place their wands behind them or under their chairs before beginning this activity. If you will distribute magic wands, have them nearby.
- Prepare to offer examples of small, concrete steps that children have taken to tackle big problems. In Leader Resources, find books and websites that feature young people taking action.
- Post newsprint where you can write on it and children can see it.
- Make sure all participants received the handout, If I Had a Magic Wand, in Activity 1, Gems of Goodness – Responsibility and have each filled out their handout.



## Description of Activity

In this activity you will guide the children to figure out some things they can really do to change problems that concern them. You will demonstrate that an individual's actions do make a difference.

This activity has two parts. In the first part, you will draw out children's passion and concern about problems both locally and in the world, and help them articulate things they would change if they had the power to do so. In the second part of the activity, you will guide them to identify real steps they can take to help solve these problems.

Tell the children, in your own words:

When I was young I used to wish that I had a magic wand which could bring me anything that I wanted and could take away all of the problems in the world.

Today we are all going to pretend that we do have a magic wand. If you like, later, you can think about what fun things you would do or ask for with your wand, but right now we are going to imagine that we can use our magic wands to help make the world a better place.

Imagine that with this wand you could help to make a problem that is happening to someone or something, go away. It could be someone or something in your school or neighborhood or in the world. Maybe someone that you care about is sick, or someone you know is picked on at school or after school. Maybe you want to help animals at a local shelter to find homes, or you are concerned about littering, global warming or war.

Then invite children to take out the magic wands they have made, or pass the magic wands you have brought around the circle. Ask each child to make a wish. Make sure that the child who is speaking holds up their wand (while others do not), and everyone else listens. Write down the thing each child wishes on the newsprint, with their name next to it.

After everyone has shared, thank them for their thoughtful suggestions. Tell them that you wish that these problems could be solved with a wave of a magic wand, but that that is not the way that problems get solved. Tell them that magic that they cannot explain does not usually solve problems but that when each person acts out of caring and does some small thing to help, then a true lasting experience of wonder happens in which the world becomes a happier and more love-filled place.

You might give them some examples of every day small acts that help make the world a better place. For

example you might have a sick friend or relative to whom you give comfort by calling on the phone or by doing their shopping for them so they can rest. Give examples of small ways that you or the congregational community helps to make problems better. Give them the examples of scientists and doctors whose daily work helps to find cures for many diseases, and of people working tirelessly to make changes to clean up rivers, end war or hunger, protect endangered species, and reduce global warming. Mention the actual actions people do, such as helping to wash oil off of birds after an oil tanker spill or using a re-usable lunch bag or "travel cup" to reduce their disposable waste.

Next, look at the list of problems that the children expressed concern about. If there is something on the list that more than one child expressed, use that as an example. Ask for suggestions of what one person could do that might help even a little. An example for stopping bullying might be; telling the target of bullying that you are sorry that people are mean to them, inviting them to sit with you and your friends at lunch, or telling the teacher if you see someone being mean to them. Steps to solve world hunger might include; taking a UNICEF box with you when you trick or treat, adding some of your coin collection to it at home, using some of your allowance to help support an agency that feeds children in poor areas of the world, making a poster for a bake sale to raise money, or telling your teacher at school that you want to have a bake sale to raise money. It will also help if the teacher describes a few simple and concrete steps that children have taken. Look at the resource section under books and websites that feature young people taking action.

The goal of this session is to show the children that even a small gesture of help, comfort or support is a valuable contribution, and makes the world a more love-filled place.

## Including All Participants

When you ask children to share about a problem that they would like to change, you are potentially inviting them to talk about a problem that may be troubling them personally. If you make the request that they think about a problem that is hurting someone else, or other living beings, or if you limit their "wishes" to those they would make on behalf of others at their school, in their community or in the world, you will lessen the possibility of this happening. It is, however, possible that children will share personal experiences of pain. If this happens, try to give them concrete steps to feeling safer, expressing their feelings, and asking for help. If you think the child has experienced abuse or neglect or is in need of more help than you can give, inform your director of religious education to make sure

congregational and state policies can be activated, as necessary, and to facilitate the child's issue being explored by professionals.

## ACTIVITY 6: CLEAN-UP (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials
- Waste basket lined with a bag
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers
- Damp sponges or paper towels to wipe tables used in group feast

### Preparation for Activity

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.
- This session may generate more than the usual amount of food-related trash. Make sure you know the proper way to dispose of waste and the best place to store extra food or beverages at your congregation.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it. Ask them to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### Including All Participants

All children should help, as able.

## CLOSING (2 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. To close this session, you may wish to give the children another opportunity to sing "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.
- Find additional suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. However, it is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, invite a musical volunteer to do it for you.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Write the word "Responsibility" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Responsibility" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this

session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions about how to be fair. Today we heard a story about a time when some people didn't help when they saw a problem. The problem got very big and hurt a lot of people. Unitarian Universalists believe that we are all part of an interdependent web of all existence, and that what each of us does or doesn't do, makes a difference.

Tell them that another way to say this is that we all have a "responsibility" to help make this world the best place it can be — so we will add "Responsibility" as a direction on our Moral Compass.

Write or post "Responsibility" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to pay special attention to times when they are being welcoming, without prejudice, as well as times when they have a chance to practice any of the other virtues on the Moral Compass poster.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Or, lead the group in once again singing "We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table," Hymn 407 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these.

Thank the children. You may wish to particularly thank them for sharing the things that they are concerned about and for helping to come up with ways that we

each can make a difference. Tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – RESPONSIBILITY STEPS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- One copy of Leader Resource 1, "[I Make a Difference](#)" (included in this document) Grid
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Copies of the Leader Resource 2, "[I Make a Difference](#)" (included in this document) Commitment to Act for all participants
- Copies of the Handout 1, "[I Made a Difference](#)" (included in this document) Certificate for all participants
- Newsprint sheet with list of problems that children identified during Activity 5: If I Had a Magic Wand.

### Preparation for Activity

- Download, reformat if needed, and print out the three Leader Resources you will need: "I Make a Difference" Grid, "I Make a Difference" Commitment to Act and "I Made a Difference" Certificate.
- Photocopy the "I Made a Difference" Commitment to Act and the "I Made a Difference" Certificate for all participants.
- Draw on a sheet of newsprint the table presented on Leader Resource, "I Made a Difference" Grid. Label your newsprint four columns "Problem," "Small Step," "Small Step" and "Small Step" as shown.
- You may wish to fill in the "Problem" and "Small Steps" columns using the newsprint with children's ideas from Activity 5: If I Had a Magic Wand. Or, you can do this with the group as part of this Faith in Action activity.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, you will prepare and encourage children to take small steps on their own to solve problems they have already identified (Activity 5: If I Had a Magic Wand). Their experience is structured today with a handout that documents their "commitment to act" and rewarded, at a later date, with a handout that is a certificate for completing the actions they committed to do.

Have the children sit in a circle or around a table near where you have the newsprint and markers. Choose a problem from the list the children made in Activity 5 and, if you have not done so in advance, write it in the "Problem" column.

Then, revisit the solutions that students brainstormed for that problem. Engage the children to help you refine the solutions they have already suggested into three specific actions. Write these in the three "Small Steps" column of the grid. Add your own ideas for small steps, if necessary.

Repeat this process for as many of the problems as you have time for.

This Faith in Action activity gives the children an opportunity to increase their sense of responsibility for problems they have already identified, and to identify ways they can express their responsibility and make a difference.

You may like to choose a group activity that requires individual, specific action from each person. Or, you can help each child identify small steps they will commit to take to make an individual contribution to solving a big problem.

Here are some examples of projects that might benefit from individual or group actions to provide something someone else needs or to take a stand and be heard about an issue:

- Visit a local nursing home and bring home-made cookies or books or brighten a day for residents by acting out a story or asking them to tell stories about their lives.
- Cleaning up an area that has litter, or starting a paper recycling program at the congregation or school.
- Planning ahead to practice bullying prevention strategies at particular times, at school or with friends. For example, children can prepare themselves to, when needed, stand with another child who is being teased, invite a child who is picked on to play with them, tell other children to stop bullying someone or tell the teacher if they observe bullying.
- Finding out what a local animal shelter needs and doing a drive.

If several children, in Activity 5, identified the same problem, you might suggest working on that one together, if it is feasible. If you are working on a problem together you can continue the planning and work in an additional session. Meanwhile, you may need to do some research to identify a specific project and some

actions the children can realistically take to move the project along.

If the children have agreed to work individually, doing small steps on their own, all aimed at the same problem, use your newsprint grid to articulate the problem and at least three "small step" solutions. Invite each child to decide which small step they will do.

Or, you may allow each individual child to choose their own action(s) to help solve a problem of their choice. If children show passion about helping to solve particular problems, allow them to choose their problem and their small steps.

For each child, record the small steps they agree to do on both an "I Made a Difference" Commitment to Act sheet and an "I Made a Difference" Certificate. Give the children the Commitment to Act to take home as a reminder, and be sure to mention this Faith in Action activity to parents, in person, via email, and/or in the Taking It Home handout for this session.

Tell the children that once their small steps are completed, they may bring the handout back to you, tell you what they have accomplished, and receive an "I Made a Difference" Certificate that you, and they, will sign. Make sure to keep each child's "I Made a Difference" Certificate and that their names are on them. You may choose in a future session to make a time for children to share the small steps they have done and receive their certificates from you. This follow-up activity is described in Session 13, Faith in Action.

To reinforce participation in this voluntary activity, and particularly to provide an incentive for children to do the small steps on their own, present the "I Made a Difference" Certificate or a special snack as a completion reward. You may wish to schedule a time for children to receive the signed certificates in a brief group ceremony when parents come to pick up their children, during a future session's Gems of Goodness activity, during congregational worship or at coffee hour. During the final ceremony or party it would be important to help the children to talk about how it felt to make a difference, and to connect this feeling with the idea that people actually doing something about a problem is an act of love, which is better than magic because it is real and makes the world a better place.

### **Including All Participants**

It is not realistic to expect every child will follow up on their small step at home. Make sure your plans to reward children who do complete a small step do not exclude or embarrass children who, for one reason or another, have not done so.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do. — Edward Everett Hale*

## IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We focused on the idea of responsibility, and the fact that what each of us does or doesn't do, makes a difference. We heard a story from Thailand and Burma about a queen who saw a problem but thought that it was not her responsibility to solve it, until it was so big that her whole kingdom burned to the ground. We talked about ways that we already make a difference at home and school, and talked about problems that we wish we could help solve and did some brainstorming of small ways that we can make a difference with these problems. Your child should bring home an "I Make a Difference" handout which lists some answers they came up with.

For our Faith in Action project, the children have each agreed to take a small step that they have identified to help solve a big problem at school, in their community or in the world. You can help your child experience taking responsibility and making a difference by reminding and supporting them to complete the "small step" they have chosen.

## EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

It is easy for people of any age to feel powerless against so many big problems in the world. It is important to help your child to remember all of the ways that they already help to make a difference in the world. Look at the list on the "I Make a Difference" handout with your child and add to it more ways that they help around the house, and helps friends, neighbors and relatives. This can include things like cleaning up their toys so people don't trip on them, helping with recycling, sharing with siblings, talking to a grandparent on the phone. Think of "helping" as broadly as possible! Then talk about all the ways as a family that you take responsibility for making the world a better place. This can include things like obeying laws, voting, recycling, charitable donations or whatever any of your family members do to help in your community, at your congregation or at work.

## EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

Look at the "I Make a Difference" handout and talk about the problem that your child identified and the ways they can make a difference. If you can, add to the list or help your child visualize the identified acts with more detail and clarity.

## A FAMILY RITUAL

Magic wand. When your family shares a meal together, pass a pretend magic wand around the table letting each person name a problem they wish they could swish away. Then talk about small ways that you can, or do, make a difference, and how these actions contribute to a lasting effect more valuable than "magic," because of the love and caring you put into them.

## A FAMILY GAME

"It's Not My Problem." Ask your child to share the folk tale they heard in this session. You can find the story online; it is part of the Moral Tales curriculum on the [Tapestry of Faith website](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry) ([www.uua.org/re/tapestry](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry)). Have fun making up a modernized version of the story together, as if it happened in your home or neighborhood or community. Maybe someone left a

## FAMILY DISCOVERY

Explore volunteer opportunities that your congregation or community offers and agree to try participating in one that is family-friendly.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

banana peel on the sidewalk, or a little toy truck on the stairs, and someone slipped which caused something else to go wrong which caused something else to go wrong until it was a disaster! Maybe one neighbor was too lazy to recycle, and then all the neighbors thought the city's recycling program had been cancelled, and people stopped recycling until there was so much trash that it started leaking out of the dump and into the neighborhood. (Try to make it funny!)

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: MAKING MAGIC WANDS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Sticks or dowels, approximately 1/4-inch diameter and a foot long, or long, stiff straws for all participants
- Decorative arts and crafts materials such as ribbons, glitter, feathers, stickers and color markers
- Glue sticks, tape, stapler and scissors (including left-handed scissors) as needed

### Preparation for Activity

- Purchase dowels, sticks or stiff straws for all participants to make wand sticks, plus a few extra.
- Make a prototype for the children to see. If you choose to use straws or cardboard dowels you will want to cut slits in one end so as to be able to stick ribbons and/or feathers around and through it for decoration.

### Description of Activity

Set wand-making materials on work tables.

Show the children the wand you have made. Invite them to make their own magic wands to use in Activity 5: If I had a Magic Wand and to take home to share with their families in the Taking it Home activities. If your session has time, you may like to use this hands-on activity to balance the sedentary activities in this session. While the children are making their wands, you may choose to

ask them to share things they would do if they had a magic wand.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: ALL MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of Leader Resource 3, [All My Friends and Neighbors – Making a Difference](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: A piece of paper or large, flat books for each child
- Optional: Small carpet squares

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Make sure you have a large enough space for everyone to sit or stand in a circle.
- If you want the children to do this exercise standing you will need to give a piece of paper, small carpet square or other object (at least as large as a book) to each child to place behind them on the floor to mark their space.

### **Description of Activity**

Arrange the group so that everyone stands in front of a carpet square or a piece of paper or a book, or sits in a chair, with one person in the center who has no carpet square/paper/chair. Important rules to share before the game begins are that there are no running (fast walking is okay, if children don't bump one another), no pushing, and no shoving. If some children cannot abide by these rules they can take a seat on their chair or in their "spot" and simply watch the action.

Be the first player to stand in the center of the circle. Start the game with a simple statement, such as:

I want to meet my friends and neighbors who like (chocolate ice cream, peanut butter, lima bean, etc.).

Or:

I want to meet my friends and neighbors who have (birthdays in the spring, a cat, etc.).

Instruct all the children to whom the statement applies to rise and move to a different chair or space. Then help

the next child left in the middle to make a general statement, such as:

I want to meet all of my friends and neighbors who (something that pertains to them)."

As soon as the children get the hang of the game you can tell them that they cannot change places with the person next to them in the circle.

Once you feel that the children have had some fun with general questions you can shift the focus to questions about specific ways that they make a difference at home, at school and in the world. Find examples of these questions in Leader Resource 3, All My Friends and Neighbors – Making a Difference.

This game allows the children to release some energy and have fun, giving movement-oriented children a chance to participate with their strength. It helps children to see that they share similarities with many others in the group, not just their friends. They will also see that they are unique, having some differences from their friends, as well as those they don't know so well.

When the questions in this game focus children's attention on ways to make a difference, children are reminded of responsible things that they already do and hear about things some of their peers do. Substitute this exercise for the Gems of Goodness activity as framed in this session, if you want a more active way to elicit this information from the children.

### **Including All Participants**

This active game can be adapted for children with limited mobility. Children can take turns being a "designated mover" for a child who cannot move quickly around the circle. The designated mover can stand in a spot on the circle just in front of the child with limited mobility and if the question posed was something that they could answer yes to the child with limited mobility behind them would tap them and they would move to another square or to the center. If they moved to the center then they would consult with the child they were moving for, who would give them a question. The child with limited mobility would not occupy a "space" but would sit behind it so that the space would be open for another child to jump into thus making them the new designated mover.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 12: STORY 1: IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM

Adapted from a Thai folk tale.

Once upon a time, a queen sat on her balcony eating rice cakes and honey with her chief advisor. As they ate, they gazed down at the busy street below. The Queen pointed to something in the distance, and as she did a drop of honey from her rice cake landed on the balcony railing.

"My Queen, you have spilled a drop of honey," observed the advisor. "Shall I call a servant to come and clean it up?"

But the queen laughed, "A little drop of honey is... (Leader — Pause for a moment so the children know to join you.) ... NOT MY PROBLEM. Someone will clean it later."

They went on eating and talking as the drop of honey warmed in the sun and began to slowly drip down the side of railing until it landed in the street below with a plop!

"Your Highness," the advisor said, "that drop of honey has now fallen into the street, where it is attracting flies. Shouldn't we call a servant to come and clean it up?"

But again the queen yawned lazily and replied, "A little drop of honey and a few flies are... (Leader — Pause, so the children will join in.) ... NOT MY PROBLEM. Someone will deal with it later."

Soon a lizard darted out from underneath the palace wall and began to catch the flies on her tongue. Then a cat sprang from the baker's shop and began to bat the lizard back and forth like a toy. Just then a dog charged out from the butcher's shop and began to bite the cat on the neck.

"Your Highness, " the advisor implored, "now the flies have attracted a lizard, which attracted a cat, which is

now being attacked by a dog. Shouldn't we call someone to stop the fight?"

But the Queen only stretched, and shook her head at her advisor, "Won't you relax. A silly animal fight is... (Leader — Pause, so the children will join in.) ... NOT MY PROBLEM. Someone will surely see to it."

In fact the baker did see to it. She saw the dog attacking her cat and ran out with her rolling pin and began to hit the dog. And then the butcher heard his dog howling and ran out with his broom and began to hit the cat. Soon the butcher and baker were hitting each other. Then the neighboring shopkeepers began to take sides, joining in the fight. Then some soldiers came along, but some knew the butcher and some knew the baker. So the soldiers, too, took sides and the battle grew. It grew and grew until a great battle waged in the streets. People were throwing rocks through windows and tipping over the vendor carts. Someone picked up a torch from the wall and hurled it through a window. Fire raged, and eventually it spread to the palace.

The next thing they knew, the queen and her advisor were being escorted down a ladder from the balcony into the street below because the palace itself was in flames.

Later that day when the fire had died out, the queen and her advisor surveyed the ruins of their land. Suddenly the queen stopped in the street underneath where her balcony had been. She reached down and touched something in a small puddle on the ground. "It's honey," she said, remembering. "I guess I should have cleaned up that drop of honey in the first place. Now, my whole kingdom has been lost because of it."

That was the last day that the queen ever said... (Leader — Pause, so the children will join in.) ...IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM!



# MORAL TALES: SESSION 12: HANDOUT 1: I MAKE A DIFFERENCE

I Made a Difference

This certificate is to honor the fact that

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Did something about the problem of:

They did the following:

We appreciate this act of caring, kindness and responsibility (add other traits that apply).

Signed:

Leader(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 12: LEADER RESOURCE 1: I MAKE A DIFFERENCE GRID**

Problem	Small step	Small step	Small Step
Global Warming	Turn out lights.	Recycle school papers.	Start recycling bin in class.
Loneliness in nursing homes	Visit and bring cookies.	Visit and listen to residents' stories.	
Bullying at school	Tell a teacher.	Ask the bullied child to play.	Tell the bully to stop.
Homeless animals	Collect food or blankets for a shelter.	Visit the animals in a shelter.	

**MORAL TALES: SESSION 12:  
LEADER RESOURCE 2: I MAKE A DIFFERENCE COMMITMENT TO ACT**

"I Make a Difference"

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Is concerned about the following problem:

\_\_\_\_\_

They will do the following to make a difference:

\_\_\_\_\_

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 12: LEADER RESOURCE 3: ALL MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS – MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

Use these questions once the children have got the hang of the game. As you play, make your criteria for friends and neighbors more specific, and encourage children to be specific in their own suggested criteria. The more specific the criteria in this game, the more everyone will learn.

I want to meet my friends and neighbors who:

Help do the dishes

Make their beds

Recycle their drink bottles

Pick up litter

Help feed the pets

Take care of their clothes

Help with the laundry at home

Help teachers by doing errands in school

Help in school by cleaning up

Help an older relative

Help at a food pantry

Help collect food or gifts for those in need at holiday time

Take care of younger siblings

Take care of younger cousins or friends

## FIND OUT MORE

Versions of the Burmese and Thai folk tale on which the story, "It's Not My Problem," is based appear in many books:

"Not Our Problem" in Margaret Read Macdonald's *Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About* (Linnet Books, 1992).

*A Kingdom Lost for a Drop of Honey and Other Burmese Folktales* by Maung Htin Aung and Helen G. Trager (Parents Magazine Press, 1968).

"The Drop of Honey," in *Doorways to the Soul*, edited by Elisa Pearmain (Pilgrim Press, 1998).

*The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* by William Bennett, Jr. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993) includes a true story – similar in theme to the story, "It's Not My Problem" – in which England's King Richard III loses his kingdom because he would not wait to have his horse properly shod.

Other stories that illuminate responsibility and promote taking action to make a difference include "The Grasshopper and the Ant," an Aesop's Fable in many

children's story collections; "The Little Red Hen," in many children's story collections; *Why the Sky is Far Away: A Folktale from Nigeria* by Mary-Joan Gerson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974); and *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney (New York: Viking Press, 1982), the story of how one woman planted lupine seeds and made the world a more beautiful place.

### Small Steps for Children to Take

[The Giraffe Project](http://www.giraffe.org/) (at [www.giraffe.org/](http://www.giraffe.org/))'s motto is "Nobis Es. It's up to us, so stick your neck out." Online, watch a video and read about some "giraffes" – people of all ages who stuck their necks out.

*Earth Book for Kids: Activities to Help Heal the Environment* by Linda Schwartz (Learning Works, 1990); *What Can I Do? An Alphabet for Living* by Lisa Harrow (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004); and *50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth* by The EarthWorks Group (LLC Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1990) are some of many resource books that include specific environmental actions children, and families, can do.

# SESSION 13: JUSTICE FOR ALL

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Riches that leave another poor I do not want. —  
Andre Gide*

This session teaches children about injustice and inequality in our world, and the importance of working for justice. Participants will hear a story about a kingdom in which many people do not have enough food. A dog that is larger-than-life comes to the palace and refuses to stop barking until the king has redistributed the wealth and everyone in the land has been fed. Through an "unfair snack" activity, the children will experience injustice first-hand, and then have the opportunity to turn that injustice into justice. Participants will be encouraged to be like the dog in the story, acting as allies to anyone who is oppressed, suffering, or being treated unfairly. "Fairness" will be added to the Moral Compass.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Make participants aware of the inequitable distribution of wealth around the world
- Build participants' empathy for people who are treated unfairly
- Begin to empower participants to take action when they experience or witness injustice
- Teach participants to be allies for people who are oppressed, suffering or being treated unfairly
- Engage participants in experiences that promote the second and fourth Unitarian Universalist Principles: justice, equity and compassion in human relations, and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Hear a story about a situation of inequitable distribution of wealth and how it was made more just
- Practice noticing and protesting and call attention to unfairness through a game in which participants "bark" at injustice
- Learn to recognize a variety of unjust situations and identify ways to make them more fair
- Experience inequity and engage in a process for bringing justice during an unfair snack activity.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story – The Dog and the Heartless King	5
Activity 4: Story Integration – Barking Dog Game	10
Activity 5: Watchdogs for Justice – an Unfair Snack	15
Activity 6: Processing the Unfair Snack Activity	10
Activity 7: Clean-up	5
Faith in Action: Making a Difference – Long-term	20
Faith in Action: Living Simply That Others Might Simply Live – Long-term	5
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: "Hungry Planet" Picture Book	10
Alternate Activity 3: Barking Dog Role Plays	30

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read the story, "The Dog and the Heartless King." Take a few moments to consider any or all of these questions:

- Whom do you most relate to in the story: the dog, the hungry people and/or the king?
- Whom have you barked for in the name of justice? Whom would you like to bark for?
- Has anyone ever barked for you?
- How, where, and when does justice work fit into your spiritual journey?

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the "Gems of Goodness" Project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately 2"x 3", for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies for newcomers of the handout you have prepared using Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document)
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2: Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2: Introducing the Moral Compass) and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to

three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling, or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.



When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, such as a stuffed dog, preferably one that can bark
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more

effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket today."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the story basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items in the story basket will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate India. Tell the children that the story comes from India.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear

its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY – THE DOG AND THE HEARTLESS KING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Dog and the Heartless King](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times. Note the storytelling tips.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try a voice for the king and another for the hunter. Try a loud bark, like the dog's.
- Think about how you might use items from the story basket as props. If any of these items are on the altar, sit near them or place them where you can reach them as you tell the story.

### **Description of Activity**

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Read or tell the story.

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over.

### **Including All Participants**

There are children for whom it is very difficult to sit still, even when they are paying attention to what is happening around them. This can be frustrating for teachers, as well as for the children who are expected to maintain stillness for prolonged periods of time. If you have children in the group for whom this is the case, consider adopting the use of "fidget objects" as described in Leader Resources. These fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for the need to move.

## **ACTIVITY 4: STORY INTEGRATION – BARKING DOG GAME (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Chime, rain stick or other sound instrument (optional)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Write "justice is fairness" on a piece of newsprint. Hang it where the children can see it.

### **Description of Activity**

Point to the newsprint and read aloud what you've written. Ask the children whether it was fair or unfair that some of the people in the kingdom had lots of food and some people had very little. Say, in your own words:

In our story, the dog barked because she wanted justice for everyone. She barked to make things fair. She was a watchdog for justice.

In our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes we say that we believe there should be justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, and that we want a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all. One of the things that those principles mean is that Unitarian Universalists think fairness is very important. We believe that when things aren't fair, it's important for us to be like the dog and speak up and try to make things fair.

Explain that you are going to play a game where the children will be watchdogs for justice. Tell them you will name different situations and if something sounds unfair they should bark. You may wish to use your chime, rain stick or other sound instrument as a signal to stop the barking. Start and stop a practice round of barking, before you begin.

Read a situation. If there is any barking, ask the children why they think the situation is unfair. Then engage them

in trying to discover ways to make the situation more just.

If there is disagreement about whether something is fair or unfair, give the children a chance to express the different viewpoints.

Use these situations, or add your own:

- In a classroom, a teacher always calls on the same child to answer questions.
- Nancy is three years old and she goes to bed at 7:30 in the evening. Her older brother is eight years old and he goes to bed at 8:30. (You may want to point out that sometimes different people have different needs and so they don't get treated in exactly the same way. What's fair in this situation is making sure each child gets the amount of sleep they need.)
- A boy is teased because he wears glasses.
- One boy has lots of lego sets. Another boy has no legos but he has lots of books. (This could be unfair if either boy is unhappy with what he has but can't change it.)
- Some schools in the United States get lots of money and can buy lots of books and computers and have a lot of field trips for their students. Other schools don't have as much money so the children have to share books and some do not get to learn or use computers or go on field trips.
- Linda lives in a very big house. She has her own bedroom and a big backyard with a swimming pool. Chris lives in a small apartment with his mother, father, and three brothers. All of the boys share one small bedroom and they are not allowed to play outside because there is no backyard.
- Jacob's family has a big dinner and a different dessert every night. Tammy's family has sandwiches for dinner or soup from a can almost every night, and hardly ever has dessert, because they cannot afford to buy much food.
- Mary has peanut butter and jelly for lunch. Jasmine is eating tuna fish.
- Some people live in a city or village where they can take a shower or water their plants or have a drink of water whenever they want. Other people live in a city or village that has not enough clean water, so they cannot water their plants every day and they might get sick from the water they drink.

- Jamal had a big party and received lots of presents for his birthday. Mary's family did not have enough money to give her a party or buy her presents.
- Leslie and Peter are sister and brother. Their mom took Leslie and three of her friends to see a movie. Then Peter had three of his friends come for a sleepover.

This activity gives participants an opportunity to think critically about fairness and justice, identifying unjust situations. Acting as watchdogs reinforces the idea that we are all responsible for acting in response to injustice.

### **Including All Participants**

There is likely to be economic disparity within the group, and possibly extreme disparity such as a particularly wealthy child alongside a child who is living below the poverty line. Be careful to avoid language that assumes all participants have a common situation and common experiences, such as "we live in big houses," or "we all have lots of food to eat."

## **ACTIVITY 5: WATCHDOGS FOR JUSTICE – AN UNFAIR SNACK (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Lots of different snack foods including some plain uninteresting foods as well as some highly appealing foods
- Serving bowls or plates
- Eating utensils
- Plates (one per child)
- Slips of paper and a pencil or pen

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Purchase food that you can divide unfairly and which is easy to serve and share. You may wish to use a variety of snack foods, from fancy cupcakes to plain saltine crackers, from exotic fruit juices to water. If allergies and other dietary restrictions in the group limit your options, pretzel nuggets and potato chips may make good choices (if no one is allergic to wheat).
- Estimate the number of children in the group and write the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on slips of paper. Use this proportion: The "ones" who will get the abundant snack should be 1/10 of the group, the "twos" 2/10 of the group, the "threes" 5/10 of the group, and the "fours" — who will receive inadequate snack — should be 2/10 of

the group. In other words, if the group has 20 children, you will need two "ones," four "twos," ten "threes" and four "fours." This proportion mimics the distribution of wealth in the world.

- Saving some food aside to ensure you can redistribute snacks fairly at the end of the activity, portion the snack food into four kinds of servings: extremely abundant for the "ones," plentiful but not excessive for the "twos," just enough for the "threes" and completely inadequate for the "fours." If you have different kinds of food to work with, you might give all the "ones" several cupcakes, some fruit, some crackers and a full cup of juice, and give the "fours" a saltine cracker and little bit of water. If you have beverages, pour out cups in four different types of portions: abundant, plentiful, no frills and inadequate.
- Cover food and place it on one or two tables, along with necessary dishes and utensils.

### Description of Activity

Say in your own words:

Just as in our story, where some people didn't have enough food while the king had very extravagant amounts of food, people around the United States and all around the world have different amounts of food to eat. Some have plenty and even have too much sometimes. Other people have just enough. Some people have too little food and some people are even starving.

Today we are going to have a special snack so we can see what it is like around the world in terms of how much food different people get to eat.

Ask one or two children to volunteer to be the first watchdogs for justice. Explain that they will bark like the dog in the story until the snack is fair. Tell them that after a few minutes the children will trade roles and everyone will have a chance to be a watchdog for justice. Assure them that the watchdogs will have a chance to eat snack, too.

Give all participants a number. NOTE: it may be best to control which child gets which number such that any children whom you know to be especially wealthy get higher numbers (less food) and any children whom you know to be impoverished get lower numbers (more food).

Have participants sit at the table or tables in groups based on their numbers. Explain that if the watchdogs

for justice bark, no one can eat. Everyone must wait until everyone has been served and the watchdogs are silent.

Position the watchdogs for justice by the tables. Tell them to start their job as soon as you start serving the food. Give children with the number "1" the overabundant snack. Give children with the number "2" the abundant snack. Give children with the number "3" the "no frills" snack. Give children with the number "4" the insufficient snack.

Once everyone has been served, tell the children they may begin eating. Have the watchdogs bark as long as the situation is unfair. They can go right behind the children with plenty and bark loudly. After a few minutes, rotate and have two new children take on the role as watchdogs for justice. Give each child the opportunity to be a justice maker in the role of watchdog.

Help the children make the situation more just. Ask the children with more food what they can do to get the dogs to stop barking at them, i.e., to make the situation more fair. Encourage them to think about the experience from the point of view of their less fortunate peers, to look around and see who has less and — hopefully — offer to share some of their snack with them. Ask the children who have less food what they can do in order to get a fair serving. Encourage them to advocate for themselves by naming the injustice and asking for more food.

If the children who have more food are not willingly redistributing the food, ask the rest of the participants how they can respond. Meanwhile, the watchdogs should still be barking. Ideas include having the rest of the children join the barking watchdogs, taking the food non-violently from the children who have a lot, appealing to the leaders to act on their behalf, eating less (not the desired outcome!), staging a protest, assigning the children who are not sharing their abundant snacks the job of being watchdogs.

If an equitable food situation is accomplished, have everyone sit together and eat the snack. If it is not accomplished, intercede and make it fair, either by taking some food from the children who have too much, or by adding food from the snacks you saved aside. Enjoy the snack!

The goal of this activity is to make unfairness concrete and real for participants while also providing the opportunity to address the unfairness and act as justice makers. By practicing the role of "watchdog," all participants become empowered to stand up against injustice.

### Including All Participants

It is important to remember with this activity that there is likely to be economic disparity within the group, with the

possibility of extreme disparity such as a particularly wealthy child alongside a child who is living below the poverty line. Avoid using language that assumes one financial situation for all participants, such as "in our town we all have lots of food to eat." In addition, as suggested above, if you are aware of any children who are living in poverty, you may wish to place them in groups that get enough food in this exercise.

In planning your snack for this activity, be aware of any allergies or dietary restrictions in the group. You may decide (if no one is allergic to wheat) to use only pretzel nuggets and potato chips, with portions ranging from large handfuls or bowls full (extreme abundance) to a pretzel nugget and a potato chip (inadequate snack).

## **ACTIVITY 6: PROCESSING THE UNFAIR SNACK ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)**

### **Description of Activity**

It is important that children have an opportunity to talk about their feelings and process the justice issues that were raised in the unfair snack exercise. You can gather after the snack in a circle, or, if time is short, you can talk about the experience while eating the redistributed food.

Try to help participants think about the experience critically, process it emotionally and verbalize what they have learned. You may wish to use these questions:

- How did it feel to have too much food?
- How did it feel to have too little food?
- How did it feel to see your friends having a different amount than you?
- How did it feel to be the watchdog?
- In the end, was it fair?
- What did we do to make it fair that worked?
- Was there anything that didn't work?
- What other things might we have tried?
- If the people who had too much food had refused to share it, what could we have done? (Possible answers include having the rest of the children join the barking watchdogs, taking the food non-violently, appealing to the leaders to act on their behalf, eating less (not the desired outcome!), staging a protest, or assigning the selfish children the job of being watchdogs.)

### **Including All Participants**

It is important to remember with this activity that there is likely to be economic disparity within the group, with the possibility of extreme disparity such as a particularly wealthy child alongside a child who is living below the poverty line. Be careful to avoid language that assumes one financial situation for all participants, such as "in our town we all have lots of food to eat."

## **ACTIVITY 7: CLEAN-UP (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials
- Waste basket lined with a bag
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers
- Damp sponges or paper towels to wipe tables used in group feast

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.
- This session may generate more than the usual amount of food-related trash. Make sure you know the proper way to dispose of waste and the best place to store extra food or beverages at your congregation.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite the children to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it. Ask them to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

This session may generate more food-related trash than others. Make sure children put or throw away all extra food and used paper goods in the proper places.

### Including All Participants

All children should assist as able.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Music and player
- Optional: Guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 131 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Love Will Guide Us." You may like to use it as the closing song for this session. If the song is unfamiliar to you and you do not read music, consider asking your music director to teach it to you. Or, invite a musical volunteer to join the group for the Closing and teach and lead the song.
- Or, you may use the closing song or words the group usually uses, or one of the suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. However, it is generally recommended that you use the same closing ritual in every session.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Write the word "Fairness" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Fairness" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the group in a closing circle. Point out the Moral Compass. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to make good decisions and how to be fair. Today we heard a story about a kingdom where some people didn't have enough food because the king was greedy. A dog barked until the king shared his food. We practiced being watchdogs for justice like the dog in the story. Unitarian

Universalists believe that fairness is very important. We are going to add "fairness" to our Moral Compass.

Write the phrase, "Fairness" on the moral compass.

Teach the group "Love Will Guide Us," Hymn 131 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, line by line. Then lead the group in singing it once through together:

Love will guide us, peace has tried us,  
Hope inside us will lead the way  
On the road from greed to giving.  
Love will guide us through the hard night.  
If you cannot sing like angels,  
If you cannot speak before thousands,  
You can give from deep within you.  
You can change the world  
With your love.  
(Repeat verse one.)

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these. Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – LIVING SIMPLY THAT OTHERS MIGHT SIMPLY LIVE (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, [Living Simply Ceremony](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Discuss with your minister, director of religious education, and/or social action committee what justice organization you could raise money for. Give priority to organizations that focus on providing the financial, educational or material tools very poor people need to improve their economic situations and lives. Possible organizations include the [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#) (at [www.uusc.org/](http://www.uusc.org/)), the [Heifer Project International](#) (at [www.heifer.org/](http://www.heifer.org/)) and [Global Envision](#) (at [www.globalenvision.org/](http://www.globalenvision.org/)). [Kiva](#) (at [www.kiva.org/](http://www.kiva.org/)) and [Trickle Down](#) (at [www.trickledown.org/](http://www.trickledown.org/)) are two micro-

granting/micro-lending organizations that work internationally.

- If desired, schedule an informational gathering and invite a member of the congregation or a guest speaker to educate the congregation about the organization you have selected.
- Read the Leader Resource, Living Simply Ceremony. It guides you through planning and executing a celebration to honor the work of the children and other, multigenerational participants in this project.
- Post the newsprint where you can write on it and children can see it.

### Description of Activity

Say in your own words:

In our story today, the king had to give up some of his food in order to make sure everybody in the kingdom was fed. For the next month, some of the adults and children in our congregation are going to give things up, just as the king had to do to make the dog stop barking. People will give up things like chocolate, going to the movies, or eating potato chips. We will save the money that we would have spent on those things and we will give it away.

Briefly tell the children about the organization that has been selected and how it helps make things more equitable and fair. Or, or have them vote democratically to choose an organization and a project.

Spend a few minutes having the children brainstorm things that they can give up. Write their ideas on the newsprint. The Items or activities should be important and special, but not necessary for children's wellbeing, health or survival.

Keep this list to use in a Living Simply Ceremony of Commitment, which you can hold with this group or an intergenerational group at a later date. Encourage them to continue thinking about giving up something so others who have less can improve their lives.

Also encourage children to talk about this Faith in Action project with their parents, who might be able to help them decide on something to give up and calculate the savings that can then be donated. For this activity to work, parents need to be on board. Include them with a letter that explains that the children are learning how a sense of justice can propel acts of kindness, and that this Faith in Action activity offers children a hands-on experience of living with less so that others can have a fair share.

### Including All Participants

It is important to remember with this activity that there is likely to be economic disparity within the group, with the possibility of extreme disparity such as a particularly wealthy child alongside a child who is living below the poverty line. Be careful to avoid language that assumes one financial situation for all participants, such as "In our town we all have lots of food to eat." That said, except in extreme cases, every child is likely to have something they can give up for a month's time.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of these children? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?

- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Riches that leave another poor I do not want. —  
Andre Gide*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today we talked about the importance of fairness and justice and the necessity of taking action in the face of injustice. We heard a story about a kingdom where a greedy king hoards all the food for himself. A huge dog is brought to the kingdom and it barks continuously until all people in the kingdom are fed. We practiced being allies for justice by barking at unfair situations in a game. We experienced unfairness in the concrete example of our snack. Some children received an abundant amount of a variety of foods while others were served small portions of one food item only. Everyone took turns acting as "watchdogs for justice," barking as long as the situation remained unfair. We worked to make the situation fair and afterward talked about the experience together.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

Ask your child to tell you about our unfair snack experience. As a family try to answer some of the following questions, being sure to include everyone, regardless of age:

- What do we have lots of that we can share with other people? This can be material goods, money, time, or talent.
- Does anyone have an example of a time when they stood up for justice?
- Does anyone have an example of a time when someone spoke up for justice on their behalf?
- Are there any examples of injustice we can think of that we should take action upon?

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

#### A FAMILY RITUAL

For a period of a week or a month, have each family member give up something that costs money which they enjoy, but which is not necessary for general health and wellbeing. For example, give up candy, potato chips, going to the movies, buying toys, or eating out at restaurants. Set aside the money that would have been spent on this item or activity. Donate it to an organization that works for economic justice such as the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee ([www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org)); the Heifer Project International ([www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org)); Global

Envision ([www.globalenvision.org](http://www.globalenvision.org)); or, [Kiva](http://www.kiva.org), a micro-lending/micro-granting organization that works internationally.

Ritualize your commitment in a ceremony. Have each person decorate a rock to represent the item or activity they are giving up. Sit in a circle and say something like, "As long as there are people in the world who do not have enough food to eat, clean water to drink, a home to live in, and access to education and medicine, all people must work for justice. In small ways we can change our lives so that others can create better lives." Have each person put their rock into a special container and state, "I will live simply that others may simply live. I promise to give up \_\_\_\_ for one week/month." If desired, allow each person to explain why they chose to give up that particular item or activity.

Place the container filled with rocks in a central, visible location in your home. Place a jar or piggy bank nearby and use it to collect the money you would have spent on the item or activity you have given up.

At the end of the week or month, gather again to count the money you saved and share about your experience of giving up an enjoyed activity or item. Light a candle of hope, expressing a wish or prayer for the people of the world.

#### A FAMILY GAME

Adopt a practice of "barking" at injustice. Let it be a family signal that something unfair has occurred. This can bring some levity and humor to a tense situation while encouraging all family members to take responsibility for bringing attention to injustice.

#### FAMILY DISCOVERY

Learn about who shares our world with this picture book that makes population numbers visual and is informative for people of all ages:

- *If the World Were a Village: A Book About the World's People* by David J. Smith (Kids Can Press, 2002)

Learn about the global distribution of wealth. These books use respectful photographs from around the world to show levels of wealth as displayed in material possessions and differing food customs and expenditures:

- *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* by Peter Menzel; text by Charles C. Mann (Sierra Club Books, 1994)



- *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio (Ten Speed Press, 2005)

Learn about classism and how to oppose it, [on the Class Action website](#).

Learn about ways to reduce world poverty through the global free market system on the website of [Global Envision](#).

Emphasize sharing with this popular picture book about a fish that is covered in beautiful scales and learns to share them with the other fish, *Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister (North-South).

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others,

and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

IMPORTANT: Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: "HUNGRY PLANET" PICTURE BOOK (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the book *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio (Ten Speed Press, 2005)

### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a copy of the book, *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio (Ten Speed Press, 2005).
- Look through the book. Select some pictures to share with the children to show varying amounts and types of foods families eat in different parts of the world.

### Description of Activity

Show children the pages you have selected. Read some of the text describing menus planned, costs incurred, foods eaten, typical recipes and health issues. With each page, encourage the group to comment on what they are noticing — what appears strange or appealing, what is different from other countries discussed, what is different from what they, themselves typically eat, and whether or not the distribution of food is fair.

The goal of this activity is to increase awareness of global inequities in terms of food distribution around the planet. It is also an opportunity to celebrate diversity and learn about different customs around the world.

### Including All Participants

It is important to remember with this activity that there is likely to be economic disparity within the group, with the possibility of extreme disparity such as a particularly wealthy child alongside a child who is living in poverty. There may also be children whose identities are connected with countries abroad that are pictured in the book. Avoid language that assumes all participants

share a common situation, such as "In our town we all have lots of food to eat."

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: BARKING DOG ROLE PLAYS (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [Unfair Scenarios](#) (included in this document)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Download Leader Resource 2, Unfair Scenarios. Decide which ones you will use, and add your own. Print a copy to use during the session.

### **Description of Activity**

This activity may be a good substitute if you opt not to do Activity 5: Watchdogs for Justice — an Unfair Snack. Tell the group they will have a chance to be watchdogs for justice. Ask for volunteers to act out a scenario and another volunteer to be the "watchdog for justice." Instruct the watchdog to bark whenever something is unfair.

Read one of the scenarios from Leader Resource, Unfair Scenarios aloud to participants. Whenever the watchdog barks, have the actors freeze. Ask the group to help calm the dog by figuring out, "What's unfair?" After this question has been answered, have the role play continue, with the watchdog barking if the injustice continues. If the actors in the role play have difficulty resolving the situation fairly, ask the audience if anyone has an idea for making the situation fair. Invite a volunteer with an idea to come and join the role play.

After each role play is finished, ask the actors to turn in a full circle to show that they have left their character behind. Before you start a new scenario, ask the role players:

- How did it feel to be treated unfairly?
- How did it feel to treat someone unfairly?
- How did it feel to be the watchdog?

Ask everyone:

- What worked to make things fair?
- What didn't work?
- What else could have been tried?
- How did it feel to watch someone being treated unfairly?
- If the watchdog had not started to bark, how would you have known the situation wasn't fair?

This activity gives participants an opportunity to practice being justice makers through role play in a safe environment. Moreover, hearing the perspective of each character in a conflict helps children see the situation from a variety of viewpoints and develop empathy for all concerned, with a preference built in for the person who is being treated unfairly.

### **Including All Participants**

It's important in this activity to avoid "typecasting" the participants. If you have someone who tends to be a bully, try to cast them in a different role. Similarly, if someone has been a frequent victim of bullying, do not cast them in that role.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 13: STORY 1: THE DOG AND THE HEARTLESS KING

Adapted, with permission, from "The Heartless King," an Indian folk tale adapted by Sophia Fahs in *From Long Ago and Many Lands*, second edition, by Sophia Fahs and Patricia Hoertdoerfer and illustrated by Cyrus Leroy Baldrige (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1995).

Once upon a time there lived a king who cared for nobody but himself. He had grown rich from the high taxes he had forced his people to pay, while they had become poorer and poorer. He lived in a gorgeous palace, while the poor people who built it for him still lived in thatched huts and tumble-down hovels. The king's table was always heaped with delicious foods, while most of his people had only one plain meal a day, and sometimes not even that. But the heartless king did not care. If he had what he wanted, that was enough for him.

One day a hunter came to the palace gate, intending to teach the heartless king a lesson. The hunter brought with him an enormous dog. The king was fond of hunting and this enormous dog fascinated him. So the hunter and the dog were both welcomed into the palace grounds.

But the enormous dog was no ordinary dog. The dog's bark was like the roar of thunder. The first time the dog opened that big mouth and barked, the awful noise shook the walls of the palace and frightened the king and all his courtiers. If the dog had stopped with one or two barks, the matter might have been forgotten.

But again and again the dog's fierce roaring shook the palace and the Earth itself. Before long there was no resting between barks. Nobody in the palace could hear themselves talk. The king was desperate and sent for the hunter. He asked:

"Why does your dog make such a deafening noise?"

"The dog is hungry," said the hunter.

Immediately the king ordered that a big plateful of meat be brought. In almost no time at all, the enormous dog licked the plate clean. Then at once the dog began barking again.

A second plateful of meat was brought. This the dog disposed of just as quickly as the first. Again the dog began barking.

Over and over the plate was filled, and over and over the enormous dog quickly ate the whole plateful and

began barking as loudly as ever. The king was angry. He called the hunter and said:

"You and your dog must leave the palace at once. We cannot endure this deafening noise any longer." But the hunter was firm.

"Your Majesty, we have been sent to you by One greater than you are. We are here to stay." The king was frightened. He grasped the arms of his chair and stared at the hunter. The king was not accustomed to having anyone speak to him in this manner.

"Will nothing satisfy the hunger of your enormous dog?" the king said at last.

"Nothing that is easy for you to give," said the hunter.

"Your Majesty, there are people in this kingdom who are eating all the food and who are not sharing it with those who do the work in the field to make the food grow. As a result, there are people who are always hungry. This dog feels the hunger of every person in this kingdom who does not have enough food to eat. As long as even one person is hungry, this dog will be hungry and keep barking."

On hearing the hunter say this, the king was even more frightened than ever. It had never entered his thoughts that he had been doing anything wrong. He had thought that the people of his kingdom were simply supposed to always do exactly what he wanted. It had never occurred to him that a king should think of the happiness of anyone except himself.

He was now angry from his head to his feet, inside and outside. Either he would go mad hearing the continuous barking of that enormous dog, or else something would have to be done and that very quickly. So he called his wise advisors together and said: "What shall I do?"

The wise ones bowed their heads and walked off to think over the question together. (Leader — You may wish to pause here, and ask the children what the king should do.) But try as hard as they could, the advisors could see only two possible solutions. Either the enormous dog must be killed, or else every hungry person in the kingdom must be fed. No one was willing to kill the dog. So that meant there was only one thing left to do. Everybody in the kingdom must somehow be fed. The wise advisors were very clear in their minds about it. They returned to the king and told him plainly what had to be done. They had to shout, of course, because the enormous dog was still barking. The king hesitated no longer.

"Put all the servants on the palace grounds to work at once!" he commanded. "Go to the storerooms and get all the bags of rice you can find. Pile them high on carts.

Take also meat from my cupboards and gather vegetables and fruits from my gardens. Send servants out with these loaded carts into all the towns and villages in my kingdom. Command the servants to find all the people who are hungry. Give them generously of these foods, and keep on giving food until not a single person in the land is hungry."

The advisors hurried away to do as their king commanded. Soon there was shouting and laughing, hustling and bustling all over the palace. In fact, the royal servants made so much noise that they could hardly hear the barking of the enormous dog. Presently a long line of carts, piled high with bags and baskets of food, rolled out through the palace gate. All day long, and day after day, the carts kept going until they had gone to every village in the land and until food was taken to every house where somebody was hungry.

At last the day came when the enormous dog really stopped barking and lay down quietly beside the king's chair. The dog was satisfied. All the people inside the palace ground were happy and at peace in their minds. Everywhere in the land, the people were contented.

For the next few years the enormous dog stayed by the king's side to be sure the king never reverted to his old ways. A few times the dog barked to remind the king about justice, and each time the king remembered the important lesson he had learned.

Finally the dog was convinced the king truly understood the meaning of justice. One morning, the dog simply got up, walked out of the palace, and went to bark for justice in a new land.

# MORAL TALES: SESSION 13:

## LEADER RESOURCE 1: LIVING SIMPLY CEREMONY

### Materials for Activity

- Medium-sized white or light gray stones, one per participant
- A large decorative vase or glass bowl
- A small table or altar
- Decorative cloths for the table or altar
- Magic markers
- Tables and chairs
- List of suggested items or activities that the kids made during the Living Simply that Others May Simply Live Introduction (see above.)
- Chime or other gentle sound maker
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* or copies of Reading 594 or "Love Will Guide Us," Hymn 131

### Preparation for Activity

- Tables and chairs
- Schedule and publicize this activity for a time other than regular religious education class time, such as an evening or weekend activity, or as an intergenerational worship service.
- Completion of the steps necessary for the Living Simply That Others Might Simply Live Introduction, as above.
- Wash the stones if necessary
- Set stones, markers and/or paints on the tables
- Plan who will lead which aspects of the ceremony and recruit folks to help lead the music and the responsive reading

### Description of Activity

This is a multigenerational activity designed to include adults without children as well as entire families. NOTE: It is the same activity suggested on the parent handout as a family ritual.

Generally speaking, people in the United States have a much higher standard of living than people in many other parts of the world. Many every-day items that most folks in the U.S. take for granted are actually luxuries. This activity is meant to encourage the spiritual practice of simplicity while also making the connection between patterns of consumption and justice. It brings justice from a conceptual realm to the concrete world of everyday actions.

To lead this ceremony, gather participants in a circle and explain that the purpose of the activity is to work for fairness and justice in this world by giving up something that is valued but not necessary in order to raise money to support your organization. There are two parts to this activity: giving something up, and saving the money you would have spent on it in order to donate it to the cause of justice. Briefly talk about the organization which has been selected and how donations will be used.

Have the children read aloud the lists they made during the session of possible items or activities to give up. For a few minutes, have the whole group brainstorm other ideas and write these on the list as well. Possibilities should include activities and items which cost money and are valued, but are not necessary for general wellbeing and health, such as chocolate, potato chips, going out to the movies, going out to a restaurant, cable TV, desserts, or take-out coffee. You might make comparisons to Lent, when many Christians give up something during the time before Easter, or Ramadan, when Muslims fast during the daytime hours for a month, in part to increase empathy for those who are hungry.

Form small, mixed-age groups, preferably keeping families in the same groups. Explain that groups have a few minutes to talk together about what they would like to give up. Family members can each give up different things or decide on

something they would like to give up as a family. This is a time for each participant to make an initial commitment to give something up for the duration of a month.

After a few minutes, ring the chime. Invite each person to select a rock to represent the item or activity they will give up and decorate the rock with markers. Allow 15 to 30 minutes; participants can make a picture, color the rock, or write a word or phrase related to the activity or item they plan to give up.

Ring the chime when the time is up. Gather everyone in a circle, with their rocks, around the small table or altar. Say something like:

As long as there are people in the world who do not have enough food to eat, clean water to drink, a home to live in, and access to education and medicine, all people must work for justice. In small ways we can change our lives so that others can create better lives.

Invite participants to take turns putting their stones into the decorative vase or bowl, stating "I will live simply that others may simply live. I promise to give up \_\_\_\_\_ for one month." If time and attention spans allow, participants can also share briefly about why they have chosen that particular item or activity. You may wish to place this bowl or vase in a visible location in your congregation, such as a sanctuary chancel table or altar, as a reminder of the commitments that participants have made.

When all have shared their commitments, encourage everyone to support and challenge one another to keep the commitments they have made. Suggest that households keep a jar or piggy bank in a visible place at home where they can regularly add the money that they are saving by giving up their activity or item. In this way the money will collect over the course of the month, which may be easier than paying it in one lump sum.

Invite the group to read together Reading 594 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. And/or, close the ceremony by singing "Love Will Guide Us," Hymn 131 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

### **Including All Participants**

It is important to remember with this activity that there is likely to be economic disparity within the congregation, with the possibility of extreme disparity such as a particularly wealthy family alongside individuals who live below the poverty line. Be careful to avoid language that assumes one financial situation for all participants, such as "in our town we all have lots of food to eat." That said, except in extreme cases, every person in the congregation is likely to have something they can give up for a month's time.

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 13: LEADER RESOURCE 2: UNFAIR SCENARIOS**

Scenario 1 (two, plus watchdog):

Person A:

You have a really big piece of chocolate cake. It's your favorite desert and you don't want to share any.

Person B:

You don't have any cake and you would like some.

Scenario 2 (three, plus watchdog):

Person A:

You are the teacher's favorite student because you always do your work and you usually know the answers to the teacher's questions. You always raise your hand to answer questions and the teacher often picks you.

Person B:

You are a teacher. You ask a lot of questions and you especially like to call on Person A because Person A is your favorite student. You think of Person C as a troublemaker.

Person C:

The teacher thinks of you as a troublemaker. You did your homework and you are raising your hand to try to answer questions, but the teacher isn't calling on you.

Scenario 3 (three, plus watchdog) :

Person A: You are a bit of a bully sometimes. You are at the playground with Person B.

Person B is your best friend and you love to play together. Person C is also at the playground and wants to play with you. They are new in town and you aren't sure that you really like them.

Person B:

You are at the playground with your best friend, Person A. Even though Person A can be a bully sometimes, you aren't.

Person C is also at the playground and wants to play with you. Person C is new in town.

Person C:

You are new in town and you haven't made any friends yet. You are at the playground and you see Person A and Person B who are in your class in school. You would like to play with them.

Scenario 4 (two, plus watchdog):

Person A:

You are making up a game to play with Person B. You get to make all the rules and Person B has to follow them, even if they are unfair. You get to decide everything — like what game to play and what names you will use. You can always win.

Person B:

You are playing with Person A. They get to make up all the rules and you have to follow them, even if they are unfair.

## FIND OUT MORE

Learn about the make-up of our world with this picture book that makes population numbers more concrete and is informative for people of all ages:

- *If the World Were a Village: A Book About the World's People* by David J. Smith (Kids Can Press, 2002)

Learn about the global distribution of wealth with these books which use respectful photographs from around the world to visually demonstrate levels of wealth as displayed in material possessions and differing food habits and expenditures:

- *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* by Peter Menzel; text by Charles C. Mann (Sierra Club Books, 1994)
- *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio; (Ten Speed Press, 2005)

Learn about classism at the website: [www.classism.org](http://www.classism.org) (at [www.classism.org](http://www.classism.org))

Learn about ways to reduce world poverty through the global free market system at the website [www.globalenvision.org](http://www.globalenvision.org) (at [www.globalenvision.org](http://www.globalenvision.org)).



# SESSION 14: COURAGE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest. — Maya Angelou

This session introduces and encourages the virtue of courage, and defines it as the ability to stand up for what we believe is right despite our fears. It also relates to the sixth Unitarian Universalist Principle — the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all — as it calls the children to find the courage to work toward this goal. An African folk tale introduces the children to a young woman who finds the courage to stand up to a hungry lion to save her cousin. The children will then be guided to remember times when they have found the courage to do something risky. Through a kinesthetic game the children will be introduced to assertiveness techniques to feel more empowered to express themselves when conscience calls. They will end by expressing, by drawing, a situation in which they would like to see themselves being more courageous. "Courage" will be added to the Moral Compass.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Give participants an opportunity to share acts of goodness that they have done (or witnessed)
- Provide a forum for children to hear peers share stories about courage and articulate their own
- Encourage participants to imagine themselves feeling more courageous in a situation that they are concerned about
- Help participants understand courage as an act of goodness
- Guide participants' understanding of the role of conscience and compassion in inspiring one to act with courage.
- Strengthen participants' connection to and sense of responsibility to their faith community.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Participate in an adaptation of the Gems of Goodness exercise with an optional focus on courage

- Engage with a story in which a character takes a risk when compelled by conscience and compassion
- Practice feeling and acting more assertive and courageous
- Imagine and express themselves acting with courage, in a drawing to share with the group
- Experience co-operative clean-up and opening and closing rituals.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming & Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story – The Lion on the Path	10
Activity 4: The Courage Workout	15
Activity 5: Courage Pictures Art Activity	18
Activity 6: Clean-up	2
Faith in Action: Courage Stickers – Long-term	15
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: Courage Tag	10
Alternate Activity 3: The Bully on the Path – Assertiveness Skills Practice	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

To prepare for this session, read the story, "The Lion on the Path," and run it through your imagination so that the setting and characters are vivid. Then take some time with a trusted friend or family member, to recall times when you took a risk to act in the face of injustice, or when conscience called.

Maybe you stood up to a bully, or someone making racist or sexist remarks. Perhaps you participated in a

protest or a civil disobedience. Maybe you made a speech about something that was important to you, despite stage fright. Maybe you spoke honestly to a friend about something they were doing that was hurting you. Your experiences of courage may be about times when you did something new for the first time, such as traveling alone, applying for a job, becoming a parent or reaching out to make a new friend.

Talk and think about these experiences. Try to identify the qualities you found in yourself that allowed you to

carry these experiences through. Using your own experiences, come up with your own definition of courage.

Give some thought to the kind of courage you need to lead Moral Tales, and give yourself credit for finding it when you need it. You may even wish to set some goals for new ways you could act with courage in situations in your life that you care about.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately two by three inches, for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies for newcomers of the story you have prepared using Session 2, Leader Resource, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of ten minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2, Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2, Introducing the "Moral Compass") and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness. You may wish to tell the children that today's topic is courage, and ask them if they may have done anything related to goodness this week that took courage.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.

- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling, or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.

- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "The Lion on the Path," such as a mbira (finger piano), or a stuffed lion or rabbit
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. For this session, you may want to use the mbira or another African percussion instrument as your centering sound instrument.
- Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next

to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.

- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket today."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the story basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate West Africa and South Africa. Elements of this folk tale come from traditions in both of these regions of Africa.

If you have included a mbira (or another small instrument that can make a rhythmic sound) in the story basket, then the children will want to pass it around and playing it. Once the children have had a turn touching the object from the basket, you will want to teach them the song that goes with the story, and any movements that you want them to do. Teaching the participation in advance can help you build children's anticipation and improve their attention.

As the items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the sound instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime, the mbira or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY – THE LION ON THE PATH (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Lion on the Path](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud.

- Think about how you might use items from the story basket as props. If you have an mbira or other finger piano or other similar instrument but do not feel confident to play a tune on it, practice a simple one, two, three pluck to do before each chorus.
- Arrange the children's seating for this story to give them room to participate by standing, as they are able, to dance.
- Be ready with a story of your own about a time when you took a risk and did something that was scary, because you believed it was the right thing to do. You may wish to share a personal story to help children think of their own examples, during the discussion after the story.

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity you will tell the story, "The Lion on the Path." Suggestions are embedded in the text of story for leading active participation, including some dance. The goal of this activity is to give the children an example of a character (two, actually) who act with courage, moved by compassion, and are rewarded with justice. By having the children participate in the story actively you are engaging them kinesthetically which will help some make a stronger connection to the story and the concepts and feelings it embodies. By using this story you are helping the children to have a vicarious experience of the emotions associated with fear, caring and courage.

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Read or tell the story.

Ring the chime (or pluck the mbira) to indicate that the story is over.

When you have finished the story, take some time to help the children shape a definition of courage by examining the feelings and actions of the characters in the story. In this discussion, you can also guide them to think of and tell about times when they, themselves, took a risk even though it was scary, because it was the right thing to do.

Begin with questions about the story:

- Who do you think showed courage in this story?
- Why did Nosa risk her life for Tobi?
- Why did Rabbit risk his life?
- Do you think what Nosa did was foolish? (It is important to remind the children that sometimes it is best not to act if it would mean putting ourselves in real danger.)

- What made Nosa courageous?
- Was Rabbit courageous? Why or why not?
- What does it mean to you to be courageous? (Affirm ideas that go toward this definition: Courageous means doing something scary because you know it is the right thing to do, whether out of love, caring or conscience.)

Then switch gears. Ask the children: Have you ever done something that was scary, but you did it anyway because you knew it was the right thing to do? If the children don't respond right away, tell them a personal story about a time when you took a risk because it was the right thing to do. Let the children each share a story if they have one. Make sure that you put a time limit on each child and give each child a chance to speak.

### Including All Participants

Participation in this story can be adapted to fit the abilities of any child. For instance, dancing can be done in the chair with simple movements, or gentle swaying from side to side.

If you have children in the group who may find it difficult to sit still while listening to even a participatory story, you may wish to make fidget objects available to them. Fidget objects are fully described in the Leader Resources section; they can provide a non-disruptive outlet for a child who needs to move.

## ACTIVITY 4: THE COURAGE WORKOUT (15 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- You will need a large, open floor space.

### Description of Activity

In this activity you are pretending to be in an exercise class.

Help the children arrange themselves in lines, as if in an exercise class. Make sure there is some space between them.

You might like to tell the group:

In the story Nosa used her mbira to distract the lion. We don't carry around mbiras but we can use our voices, our breath and our bodies to help us to feel braver. The more we practice feeling courageous, the more ready we will be to act when we see someone who needs us to stick up for them.

Today class we are going to exercise our courage muscles. I am your exercise or gym class teacher. We will start with the strong body

posture or stance. Show me what you think it would look like to stand or sit strongly.

Encourage them to stretch themselves tall, with chest out and perhaps hands on hips. Gently adjust their postures as needed.

Now take a deep breath. Pretend you are breathing in confidence, along with air. It fills you up like a balloon. As you breathe in say, "I can do this." As you breathe out say, "I feel good".

Lead the children to repeating this a few times. Then say:

Now we will use our eyes to tell people that we are serious. Which way of looking feels stronger to you?

Demonstrate looking at the ground and saying, "stop," and then look each one in the eye and say, "stop." Say:

Now I am going to look right at each one of you. When I look at you, you look me in the eye and silently tell me to stop. Say "stop" with your eyes.

As you look at each child, respond to what they are doing. You might say, "Good eye contact, Ian. Good eye contact, Sarah," etc. Then say:

Now we will exercise our voice muscles. Which feels stronger?

Say, "Stop it" in a mousey high voice. Then say it again in a deep strong voice. Tell the children that they can get a bigger, deeper voice by taking their "confidence breath" deep into their bellies and letting it out while they send their words out like a powerful jet of water.

Have them practice taking a deep breath into their stomachs first just to center and relax themselves, and then while saying, "Stop it." Or "That is mean." Or "Quit it", in loud and strong voices. Let them know that not all children can get a loud deep voice, especially if they are small. Compliment each child for practicing being louder than usual, this is what counts.

For a final time, have them put all three together and say "Stop it," with a strong body stance, good eye contact and a strong deep voice. If you want to give the children more opportunities to practice these skills in a role play scenario, use Alternate Activity 3: The Bully on the Path – Assertiveness Skills Practice, in which the children pretend to confront a bully and use their assertiveness skills to stand up to them.

### Including All Participants

Modify to accommodate children with limitations. The exercises can be done sitting down.

## ACTIVITY 5: COURAGE PICTURES (18 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Crayons and/or color markers
- Blank paper with "I See Myself as Courageous," printed on top for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Make several examples of drawings using stick figures, and cartoon dialogue such as, "Stop it!" or "I can do this!" in which they are facing a challenge with confidence.

### Description of Activity

Have each child take a place at a work table. Put the crayons and/or markers on work tables. Distribute the paper with, "I See Myself as Courageous," to all participants.

In this hands-on art activity you are inviting the children to envision themselves using their assertiveness skills to act with courage in a situation that they care about. This could be standing up to someone who is treating others unjustly. It could be trying something new that is frightening such as traveling to a country where you don't speak the language well. The goal of this activity is for the children to think about situations in which they would like to have more courage to do what is right, and then to picture themselves doing it. It does not matter whether they produce beautiful works of art. You can emphasize this in words and by the examples of your pictures that you show the group.

As the children work on their pictures, go around and ask them individually what their picture is about one at a time, or can. If you wish you can write what they tell you the picture is about. One reason to write what the picture is about for them is that they may not finish the picture during this session and this may help their parents to talk with them about it at home.

If you have time, invite volunteers to share about the picture they have drawn.

### Including All Participants

If there are children in the group who lack confidence about art activities, encourage them to use stick figure drawings. If there are children who have challenges that prevent them from being able to draw, either write down the child's ideas for them or stick figure draw their ideas for them to see and take home. There is also a great variation in writing ability at this age and some of the children will be more comfortable dictating any words they want included in their picture to you. Make it clear

that children can simply draw and not worry about writing any words at all.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano, or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find some suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. It is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it during the Closing.
- Write "Courage" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Courage" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.



## Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions. If we are going to do what our inner voices and our hearts tell us is right, then we must learn to have courage.

Write or post the word "Courage" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to try using courage and the other virtues you have posted on the Moral Compass poster as they look for ways to act for goodness or justice.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these. Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – COURAGE STICKERS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Heart-shaped stickers
- Copies of Leader Resource 1, [Courage Stickers Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) to distribute

## Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will buy or make heart-shaped stickers. If you plan to make them, decide whether you will make them in advance or provide materials for the children to make their own stickers.
- Optional: To make heart-shaped stickers, you will need white or red label sheets with labels at least two by three inches (available in most office supply stores), red markers and crayons, scissors, and glue.
- Optional: Use some heavy card stock, a pencil and scissors to make and cut out heart templates to help the children draw their own hearts on the label sticker paper.
- Optional: Obtain sparkle or other decorations for the hearts.
- Be sure to include information for parents about this activity in this session's Taking It Home handout or in a separate letter or email.
- Place the art supplies on the table where all the children can reach them.
- Make a few examples of what a hand-made "courage" sticker could look like using a variety of coloring techniques.

## Description of Activity

In the first part of this two-part Faith in Action activity the children prepare heart-shaped "courage stickers" to give to others and to themselves. Use store-bought stickers to save time or have the children make the stickers themselves. If they are making the stickers themselves, they will have time to talk about who they might give them to and how they might earn some themselves.

Invite the children to take some courage stickers with them when they leave today to give to people in their family, friends at school, and others they know who have done an act of courage. Encourage them to ask people to tell about a time that they did something that took courage, and especially a time when they used courage to stand up for something that they believed in. Once the person has told the story, the child may give them a courage sticker to put on their chest. The children can also put stickers on themselves if they feel that they have done something that took courage.

To complete this project, the next time you meet have the children share the stories others have told them, as well as their own courage experiences.

You may wish to invite parents or others to join the group to share their own stories about courage in the

face of injustice. If you wish to invite parents, extend the invitation in your letter describing this Faith in Action activity or in the Taking It Home section for this session.

### **Including All Participants**

If some children may need parents to help them report on their courage stickers, make sure you invite the parents to join the group to complete this activity. You may also invite parents to write what the child wishes to share, as they may be doing in the Gems of Goodness project.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of the children in this group? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?

- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## **TAKING IT HOME**

*One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest. — Maya Angelou*

### **DURING TODAY'S SESSION ...**

We focused on the virtue of courage, and how it is connected to love, caring and conscience. We heard a folk tale from South Africa about a young woman who found the courage to stand up to a hungry lion to save her cousin. We shared our own stories of courage and participated in an assertiveness training exercise. The children drew pictures of themselves acting with courage in a situation where they felt concerned or compassionate and felt the need to act, although that felt scary or risky.

As part of our Faith in Action project, Courage Stickers, children will be looking this week for opportunities to be courageous in performing an act of goodness or justice. They will also be looking for opportunities to reward others with a heart sticker who show the courage of their convictions. Next time we meet, the children will share about how they used their "courage stickers."

### **EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER: TALK ABOUT...**

You can explore this topic together by reading stories of other people young and old who have acted with courage to do what they felt was right. You can also talk about your favorite examples of "heroes" and "heroines" who have acted with courage in the face of danger.

### **EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER: TRY...**

Extend the children's experience in this session where they pictured themselves acting with courage in a situation that concerned them. Make a list of situations in which each family member would like to act more courageously. Report to one another on how you are doing, and give one another credit for small steps.

### **A FAMILY RITUAL**

Once a week at meal time share stories of things you have each done during the week that were new for you and that took courage. This helps to put value on (appropriate) risk-taking, and to encourage awareness of it in our everyday lives. These acts of courage and risk taking can be small things such as learning something new that you thought you couldn't do, asking

for help, reaching out to a new friend, sharing something that you really wanted for yourself.

## **A FAMILY GAME**

Play a cooperative game together called, "Monster Freeze Tag." In this game there is one monster, and everyone else is a "runner". Everyone wears a bean bag on their head and moves about a large open space. There is a designated "safe space" for the runners and a "home base" for the monster on opposite ends of the open space. If the monster grabs your bean bag or if it falls off, you are frozen. The risk taking comes in when teammates risk losing their own bean bags and being tagged as they run to the frozen people and put their bean bags back on their heads to unfreeze them. The monster can also lose its bean bag but just has to stop and put it back on. People can also try to steal the monster's golden egg (any object you designate, set near its home space.) Adding this element makes it easier for people to move about and free frozen teammates when the monster is guarding its egg. The more people the merrier. Also — when the monster is in its "home" the people must be out of their safe space. Adapt as necessary for the size of the group.

## **FAMILY DISCOVERY**

Try something new as a family that feels like a challenge at least to the children. This could be anything from trying a new sport, to volunteering in a soup kitchen. Talk together about how to prepare in a way that addresses fears and encourages courage.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

### **Description of Activity**

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### **Including All Participants**

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: COURAGE TAG (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Bean bags in two sizes, larger and smaller
- A sound instrument to start and stop the action
- Masking tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- If you have time to include this activity, decide where in the session to use it. It may give a helpful relief from sedentary activities for some of the children. You also may like to use the experience of this game to enrich some of the discussions you will lead in other activities — so, plan to do this activity first.
- You will need one, two or three larger-size bean bags for the chasers and smaller bean bags for all the children who will be runners. The smaller bean bags should be about as wide as a small adult's fist and the larger ones as wide as a large adult's. You can make the bean bags by pouring beans or lentils or rice into cut off old socks or nylon stockings that you then tie off at the top. You can also purchase them at larger

sports stores and toy stores. Check [online sources](#) (at [www.sportsauthority.com/](http://www.sportsauthority.com/)).

- Secure a fairly large open space for this activity. Move furniture to the side. On the floor at one end of the room, use the masking tape to tape off a "safety zone," an area big enough to hold all of the children standing together. At the other end of the room, tape off a much smaller "home base" for the chasers (not usually more than two or three children) to stand.

### Description of Activity

This is a cooperative game that promotes risk-taking to help others, and allows the children to feel a small, safe amount of fear which they then try to overcome. The game is played by having all but one child begin as a runner. Invite one child to be the first chaser.

Tell the children:

All you runners are living in a dangerous place where there is a monster that can capture you and freeze you. The object of the game for the monster is to try to freeze all the other children by either making their bean bags fall, or grabbing the bean bags off of their heads. If the monster loses its bean bag, it just has to stop to put it back on again.

The only way to get unfrozen is for another child, who is not frozen, to put your bean bag back on your head for you. You may stay in the safety zone and be safe from the monster, but you must also try to rescue the people who have been frozen.

Here's another rule. If the monster goes to home base, everyone in the safety zone must leave the safety zone immediately.

The monster (chaser) wears a large bean bag on his/her head which stays on more easily than the runners' bean bags, which are small. The goal for the runners is to free each other from being frozen by coming out of the safety zone and putting the bean bags back on the frozen kids' heads at the risk of being frozen themselves.

As the children play, you will probably need to remind them of the rules.

Hopefully during this game all of the participants will have a chance to rescue others. If there do not seem to be enough children getting frozen, add more "monsters" to the mix — as many as you have large bean bags. If all of the runners become frozen, take away a monster and that person becomes a runner who can save people. You can also limit the time that each child can spend in the safety zone.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: THE BULLY ON THE PATH – ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS PRACTICE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Sound maker
- Stuffed animal or doll

### Preparation for Activity

- Plan to use this activity after Activity 4: The Courage Workout, as it offers a chance to apply skills children will learn in that activity.
- Make an open space in the room where you can designate a "path" or area for the bully and target to stand, and where the children can make a single file line. This way you will physically recreate the scene from the story, "The Lion on the Path." The line should wind around the room so that the children can see what the one who is "up" is doing.

### Description of Activity

This activity gives the children a chance to practice the assertiveness skills they used in Activity 4: The Courage Workout in a context that requires courage to act from conscience or knowing what is the right thing to do — even when they may feel scared. Instead of a lion, you will pretend to be a bully bothering someone on a path. The stuffed animal or doll, or another adult, should role play the target.

The bully can have a standard line to say such as, "Give me your lunch money or else," or "Your hair cut makes you look like a Martian." (Take care to pick something that will not personally offend anyone).

Invite the children to line up one behind the other at the other end of the path from where you will meet them each as the "bully" who is bothering a target (the stuffed animal, doll, or co-leader). Tell them, when it is their turn, they will step up and use the assertiveness skills they practiced in Activity 4: The Courage Workout. They may say "Quit it," "Stop it" or "That's not nice" to the bully. As the bully, allow their actions to stop your bullying.

If time allows you may wish to ask them to create another role play scenario. Here are two options you can introduce. For each, take the time to clarify as needed the complicated nature of courage.

- A friend of yours is being mean to someone else. You know it is wrong and want to tell your friend to stop. How do you do this?

- You feel that it would be the right thing to do to invite an unpopular child to join you at lunch, at recess or at a birthday party, but you are afraid other children may be mad or laugh at you. How

do you explain to your friends that it is the right thing to do?

You may wish to let the children come up with their own scenarios of social situations that they find frightening.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 14: STORY 1: THE LION ON THE PATH

*Compiled from a variety of West African and South African folk tales.*

Once upon a time two cousins lived side by side in a village. They worked together in the fields each day and returned home each night to share a meal and some fun in the evening. The young woman cousin's name was Nosa. She loved to play the mbira and to sing. The young man cousin's name was Tobi. He loved to dance and tell great stories. One day Tobi said to Nosa, "I have to go on a journey to the village of my future wife. I must go and meet her parents."

"Oh, I will worry about you," said Nosa. "You know that you must take the long path that leads over the hills and through the swamp lands. It is not as easy as the meadow path which is shorter, but that is the way people go, because a lion has often been seen on the meadow path."

"Of course my cousin, I will take the long path." He said. "I do not wish to meet any lions. I will be back before you know it."

Nosa said "goodbye" to her cousin, and as she was waving she called out, "Remember, when you get to the fork in the road, go left to the long path." He waved back and headed down the path.

All morning the Nosa worried. She loved her cousin, but he could be a bit dreamy. Sometimes he would be thinking of a story or making up a new dance step, and would forget where he was going or what time it was. The more she thought about him alone on the path, the more she worried. Finally she started to get a baaaaaad feeling. She felt right down to her bones that something was not right. She could almost picture her cousin taking the wrong path. So, she grabbed her mbira, and ran off down the trail as fast as she could. Soon she came to the fork in the trail. Sure enough, when she got down close to the ground she could see Tobi's footprints heading down the wrong trail, right straight into the meadow.

She ran as quickly as she could and it wasn't long before she came to a bend in the path. She hid behind a tree and peered out. There she saw her cousin standing right in the middle of the path. There, facing him was a full grown lion swishing its tail and getting ready to pounce.

"What can I do?" she cried to herself. "I don't have any weapons. I would throw a rock, but there are no big

rocks to be seen. I could throw my mbira, but it is hollow and would not hurt the lion at all."

Then she thought. "Maybe I can play my mbira and distract the lion so that Tobi can get away." Just then, Lion growled. She was so afraid that he was going to pounce on Tobi that she jumped out in front of the tree and began to sing and play a song. (Sung to the tune of "My Bonny Lies over the Ocean." Leader — You may wish to stop here and teach the children to sing this song with you, repeating it together until they know it.)

My mbira plays music so pretty  
My mbira plays music so sweet  
My mbira plays music so pretty  
Oh dance to my music with me.

Lion was distracted. He turned to see who was singing and when he did, Tobi ran off through the woods and all the way back home. Nosa played and sang and danced again. (Leader — Sing the refrain, or lead the children in singing it with you.)

My mbira plays music so pretty  
My mbira plays music so sweet  
My mbira plays music so pretty  
Oh dance to my music with me.

To Nosa's surprise and delight, Lion began to dance just as she was dancing. He seemed to have forgotten completely about his prey and was dancing and singing as if under a magic spell. (Leader — You can invite the children to sing again, and dance as if they were the lion under a spell.)

Nosa wanted to get away too, so she tried to back up as she swayed and danced, but when she backed up the lion couldn't hear the music anymore and he stopped dancing and looked around and said. "Where is that man I was going to eat? That was my dinner." So poor Nosa stepped bravely forward again, and began to play and sing. (Leader — Sing the refrain again, or lead the children in singing it with you.)

My mbira plays music so pretty  
My mbira plays music so sweet  
My mbira plays music so pretty  
Oh dance to my music with me.

That lion began to dance again, and to sing as if under an enchantment. (Leader — Invite the children to sing and dance again.) Again Nosa tried to move away toward home, but each time she did, Lion would stop and look around for Tobi. This went on for a very long time until finally she was getting so tired, she could barely play any longer. Her fingers ached and her arms

and hands were so tired, her throat was so sore. (Leader — Let the listeners see and hear how tired she was.) But she knew that if she stopped, Lion would eat her! So she kept on playing, playing until she thought she was going to die. (Leader: Sing again, as if very tired. Invite the children to dance and sing along with you.)

My mbira plays music so pretty  
My mbira plays music so sweet  
My mbira plays music so pretty  
Oh dance to my music with me.

Finally, just as Nosa was about to collapse a little rabbit popped its head out from behind a rock. "Hey, you look like you need help!"

"Boy, do I ever," said she. "If I stop playing Lion will eat me, but I am so tired I think I am about to drop dead anyway."

"Let me play," said Rabbit. "He hopped over to Nosa and began tapping his foot, just so that he wouldn't miss a beat. And just like that she tossed him the mbira and he started playing, and singing and dancing in his little rabbit voice. (Leader — Sing in a high, squeaky voice and invite the children to join you.)

My mbira plays music so pretty  
My mbira plays music so sweet  
My mbira plays music so pretty  
Oh dance to my music with me.

Rabbit kept on playing and Lion kept on dancing and singing while Nosa ran safely home. Meanwhile Rabbit began to get tired. But he had a secret. Just behind the tree a few feet down the path was his home. So carefully, inch by inch by inch, he danced closer to the hole. Lion followed him, still dancing as if under a spell. Finally Rabbit dropped the mbira and dove into his hole safe and sound.

There was Lion left on the path with no people to eat and a confused expression on his face. "Gee," he said. "I could have sworn there was a young man on the path, then a young woman playing the mbira, but now there's just an mbira on the path and I think I just saw a rabbit jump down that hole. What a strange day."

So the two cousins got home safely. They celebrated together and Tobi thanked his cousin for saving his life. He even made her a new mbira from a gourd he had grown. A few days later when Tobi ventured out again to that other village he took the left fork, as Nosa had told him to do, and carried Nosa's new mbira with him, just in case!

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 14: LEADER RESOURCE 1: COURAGE STICKERS LETTER TO PARENTS**

Dear Parents,

As part of our exploration of the virtue of courage your children have begun a two-part Faith in Action project, "Courage" stickers. Today they made heart-shaped stickers. (Courage comes from the French word, "coeur," which means heart.)

The goal of this project is for the children to ask other people to tell them about times when they have found the courage to do difficult things that they felt were right to do. The children will reward them with a sticker. The children will also reward themselves with stickers when they think they have done something that took courage.

When the children next return to Moral Tales, on (day, date), they will have a chance to share their stories about what they have done with their courage stickers. If they like, they can invite one person to come and tell a story of courage to the Moral Tales group.

We thank you for supporting your child in this project. We would also love to have you visit the group next time, if you would like to share a story of a time when you did something that felt risky, but that you felt was the right thing to do. Please let us know if you will be coming, so we can plan accordingly.

Thanks again. It is a pleasure to have your child in our Moral Tales group.

In faith,

(Co-leaders / contact information)



## FIND OUT MORE

### Courage

A book for older children, in which the phrase "exercise your courage muscles" is found, is the *Kid's Guide to Working Out Conflicts* by Naomi Drew (Free Spirit Publishing, 2004).

Picture books for children about courage include *Rainbow Crow*, by Nancy Van Lann (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). In this Lenape Indian legend a beautiful colorful crow finds the sun and brings it back to warm the dying earth that has a never-ending winter. It loses its colors in the process, but is never hunted by man again.

*The Monster That Grew Small* by Joan Grant Marshall (New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1987). This Egyptian folk tale tells the story of a boy who is afraid of everything. With the help of a rabbit he goes on a journey to meet the "fear monster" and learns to face his fears directly, and to find courage.

The story, "Androcles and the Lion," found in most Aesop's collections, involves a runaway slave who helps a lion with a thorn in its paw, and makes a friend for life.

*How Guinea Fowl Got Her Spots* by Barbara Knutson (Cambridge: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1990) is an African folk tale, retold, about a small guinea hen that leads her flock in taking on a lion that is threatening her friend, the cow.

*The Banza* by Diana Wolkstein (New York: Dial Press, 1981) tells a Haitian folk tale about a small goat that plays his guitar and sings a song to keep up his courage and outsmart a hungry tiger.

In non-fiction books, *Say Something* by Peggy Moss (Gardener, ME: Tisbury House, 2004) addresses the

importance of bystanders sticking up for those who are the targets of bullying.

*Teammates* by Peter Golenbock (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990). The story of Jackie Robinson and the racial prejudice he received when he was the first African-American player in Major League baseball, and how his teammate Pee-Wee Reese stood up for him during a game despite the prejudice of many of the fans and players.

*The story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles (Scholastic, 1995) is the true story of Ruby Bridges the first African-American girl to integrate an all white school in New Orleans in the early 1960s, and how she found the strength to walk to school each day past groups of angry white adults.

*Molly's Pilgrim* by Barbara Cohen (Bantam Books, 1983.) This is the true story of the author's grandmother when she first came from Russia to North America and was teased at school for her appearance and her accent. At Thanksgiving time Molly's mother helps to teach the class that modern-day immigrants are pilgrims too, and should be treated with the respect.

Biographies for children that touch upon courage include:

*The Barefoot Book of Heroic Children* by Rebecca Hazel (Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books, 2000) offers short, biographical stories told in first person by young people who achieved greatness against tremendous odds.

*I Can Make a Difference: A Treasury to Inspire Our Children* edited by Marion Wright Edelman (New York: HarperCollins, 2005) is a collection of world folk tales, stories, poems and songs to inspire young people to see that even seemingly small acts of courage make a big difference to others and the world.

# SESSION 15: COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

God has not called on me to be successful. He has called on me to be faithful. — Mother Teresa

This session emphasizes the virtues of courage and perseverance. To act out of goodness and for justice often requires courage, determination and the will to keep going despite many challenges.

In this session we will hear a Jataka story from the Buddhist tradition about a parrot that carries drops of water in its feathers back and forth from the river in order to save the animals of a burning forest. The Devas (the Gods) initially laugh at what they think is a fruitless effort, but later one Deva is moved by the love and courage of the little parrot. The Deva's tears add to the parrot's drops and the fire is extinguished. We too may act alone, and against all odds, but when we are compelled by conscience and love, our continued efforts can catch the attention of others and cause something greater to happen spiritually and in the world.

In our culture of "everything now," our children need more than ever to learn the value of perseverance when most products and information can now be had with the press of a button or the exchange of money, and there are fewer opportunities to work hard for something. Yet, perseverance is one important key to success in utilizing all other virtues. As Unitarian Universalists we seek to bring our faith to action. Helping our young people gain the skills and confidence to persist for what they believe in will help them to become leaders and people of moral action.

In this session the children will also hear stories about everyday people, children and adults, who have persisted against great odds for what they believed. They will do an art activity inspired by these stories. The Faith in Action project offers the children a chance to emulate the brave little parrot with an effort to gather coins, one by one, to fill a jar and donate the funds for a cause of their choosing. The activities in this session also inspire us to understand the Unitarian Universalist Principles, particularly the inherent worth and dignity of every person and respect for the interdependent web of all existence. "Perseverance" will be added to the Moral Compass poster.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Foster participants' pride in sharing acts of goodness and justice that they have done (or witnessed)
- Create a forum for participants to share with one another about acts of goodness and justice
- Deepen participants' understanding of what it means to persevere when acting from conscience and compassion
- Help participants identify situations in which they have worked hard for something that was important to them
- Introduce stories about real people who have worked hard for what they believed in
- Give participants the opportunity to experience a song which symbolizes the courage and perseverance that fueled the Civil Rights Movement
- Strengthen participants' connection to and sense of responsibility to their Moral Tales group.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Participate in the Gems of Goodness exercise
- Hear a story that illustrates courage and perseverance when one is compelled by conscience and compassion.
- Discuss perseverance and share stories of times when they have worked hard for something important.
- Learn about a variety of real children and adults who worked hard for what they believed in
- Engage in visual or verbal expression by creating a comic strip or book about a real-life hero who worked hard for something they believed in.

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming & Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	5
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	5
Activity 3: Story – The Brave Little Parrot	10
Activity 4: "Hi, My Name's Joe"	5
Activity 5: Heroes and Heroines of Perseverance and Courage	10
Activity 6: Making Hero Comic Books.	15
Activity 7: Clean-up	3
Faith in Action: Courage Stickers – Long-term	10
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## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read over the story of "The Brave Little Parrot" and try to put yourself in the parrot's shoes. Have you ever felt so passionate about something that you worked for it even when no one else would take a stand? Try to remember how that felt to you spiritually.

What do you feel most passionate or concerned about now? Take a moment to close your eyes and feel the passion and compassion that lives in your heart. On a more practical level, have you persevered toward a goal in life such as a career, or a cause, or with a challenging relationship or illness? Give yourself credit for the patience and diligence you found to carry on despite the challenges. Is there a short personal story that you could share with your Moral Tales group today? In this session we move from listening to a folktale to looking at true life stories. Take some time to think about people whose courage, faith and diligence has particularly inspired you. Perhaps there is a story that you could share.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If you wish, help focus the children on generosity. Ask if any participants were generous or experienced generosity.

If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately 2"x3", for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth
- Moral Compass poster

## Preparation for Activity

- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2, Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Session 2, Introduction and Session 2, Activity 2: Introducing the Moral Compass) and instructions for making it (Session 2, Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to

three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If you are planning to do so, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal. If the group is approaching the goal, you may wish to brainstorm with them about the celebration. Suggestions might include having a special treat for a snack, or ending early to do physical games outside.

Whatever way you choose to mark the jar being filled, once it has been filled you may empty it and start over again.

### **Including All Participants**

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite a participant to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story, "The Brave Little Parrot," such as a stuffed parrot, a stuffed eagle, a toy fire extinguisher or a statue or picture of the Buddha or a Deva
- Optional: You may want to include in the story basket a copy of the picture book, *The Brave Little Parrot*, retold by Rafe Martin (Putnam and Sons, 1998), if you plan to read it to the group or show them the pictures.
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Place the story-related items, the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next

to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.

- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resources for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket today."

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children. Tell the group that the items will be placed on this altar or table after the children have passed them around the circle.

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Briefly name the various objects. Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them the group can talk more about the items after the story. Make sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate India. You can tell the children that this story is a Buddhist tale from India.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY – THE BRAVE LITTLE PARROT (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Brave Little Parrot](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: A copy of the picture book, *The Brave Little Parrot*, retold by Rafe Martin (Putnam and Sons, 1998)

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try imagining you are the parrot, the Deva, and the creatures endangered by the fire.

### **Description of Activity**

This story can be simply told without participation or props. As children hear it, they will experience both how difficult and how powerful it can be for one small being

to act out of conscience and love, and not to give up, despite the odds. The children will also gain a clearer understanding of what courage and perseverance mean.

You may wish to clarify some elements in the story. The story begins with "Long ago the Buddha was born as a little parrot." You may, instead, begin the story, "Once there was a little parrot." Or, you may tell the group as much as you like of the following:

This story is a Jataka tale. It is one of hundreds of tales that the Buddha told. He was raised as a Hindu, and the Hindu religion believes that we each are reborn many times, as different animals and people. When we die, we come back as another person or animal.

All of the Jataka tales are about the Buddha in one of his former lives.

Later on, the story mentions "Gods of a happy realm... floating high overhead in their cloud palaces..." The idea of multiple gods living up above and looking down on Earth is also from the Hindu tradition.

Before you begin, look around the room and make eye contact with each person. Read or tell the story.

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over.

Follow the story with a discussion to deepen children's understanding that when we act from our hearts and don't give up, we can help to make change and inspire other people to work with us. In the discussion, you will also aim to help children to understand how working hard for something that we believe in can strengthen us spiritually. Not only do we feel true to ourselves when we persevere, but our sense of connection to others is strengthened as well. Use these questions:

- Why do you think the little parrot turned around and flew back into the fire when she was safely free? (You hope they will talk about how she wanted to help the other animals and how she knew that she would not be happy if they were not safe.)
- Why do think the little parrot continued to try to put out the fire when it was clear that her little drops were not enough? (Here you hope children will talk about doing something because it feels right, not because it is easy.)
- Why do you think the God who changed into an eagle decided to help the little parrot? (Here you hope that the children can talk about how he was moved by the love and dedication of the parrot and wished to be like her. When we act from our hearts, we are inspiring to others.)

- How do you think the little parrot was changed by this experience? (You are hoping that they will be able to identify that she felt stronger, a sense of achievement in helping others, and more connected with the other animals.)

After this discussion about the story, switch gears. Ask the children about their own experiences with working hard and not giving up. If you have already covered this adequately in Activity 1: Gems of Goodness, briefly mention one or two examples from stories the children shared earlier.

Children's examples of perseverance are very concrete, at this age. Share some of your own experiences of working toward a goal. Examples: working and saving money to buy a bike, practicing a musical instrument or a sport when other friends were going out to play, helping to tend a garden or take care of a pet. Another example of perseverance that they might have experienced would be making something that takes a lot of time such as a sand castle, a snow person, a tree fort, something complicated with Legos, or a sewing or knitting project. Allow some children to share. Then say:

See, you already know how to work hard for something, if it is important to you.

Later, they can draw on this memory to work hard when love and conscience call.

#### **Including All Participants**

This story is a listening story, with less opportunity for participation than some, but it is full of action and drama. If you have some children who will probably not be able to attend to a listening story, invite them to use fidget objects. Fidget objects, described in Leader Resources, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for children who need to move.

### **ACTIVITY 4: "HI, MY NAME'S JOE" (5 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Leader Resource 1, "[Hi, My Name's Joe" Script](#) (included in this document)

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Make sure you have enough open floor space for this movement activity.
- Read and practice the Leader Resource, "Hi, My Name is Joe" Script several times to get comfortable with leading the combined words and movements.

#### **Description of Activity**

Have the children stand as they are able, in a semi-circle with space between them so they will not bump. Arrange for the leader who will lead this activity to stand in front of the children where all can see his/her movements.

This is "a get your wiggles out" stretch activity in which the children mimic everything that the teacher says and does. It is a cumulative activity in which the children end up moving so many body parts at once that they can't go on and stay standing. This activity provides a fun, kinesthetic break between sedentary activities. They are also pretending to be a character that works as long and as hard as he can before saying, "Enough!"

Tell the children that you will lead a movement activity in which they will copy exactly what you say and do. To give them a practice example, you may say, "Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_ (your name)," and wave at the same time. Repeat until they all get the idea.

Use the Leader Resource, "Hi, My Name's Joe" Script.

#### **Including All Participants**

This activity can be modified to be done from a chair. If some children will be seated, lead the activity from a seated position, even if other children will be standing.

### **ACTIVITY 5: HEROES AND HEROINES OF PERSEVERANCE AND COURAGE (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Optional: A copy of Story 1, "[Giraffe Hero Stories](#), (included in this document) " and/or printed-out or live web [stories of individuals](#) (at [www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org)) who have been recognized by the Giraffe Heroes Project
- Optional: A copy of Story 3, "[Olympia Brown – A Voice and a Vote](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: One or more storybooks from the suggested list in Leader Resources, and post-its
- Optional: Computer with internet access

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Visit the [Giraffe Heroes Project](#) (at [www.giraffe.org/](http://www.giraffe.org/)) website and browse stories of dozens of individuals of all ages who were nominated for recognition because they "stuck their necks out" and made a difference. Four Giraffe Hero stories are provided in Story 1, Giraffe Hero Stories. Read Story 3, Olympia Brown – A Voice and a Vote, about a 19th-



century Unitarian woman who persevered and persisted for women's rights and other issues. And, explore the storybook choices about heroes and heroines who persevered provided in the Leader Resources section. Choose one or more of these resources to use in this activity.

- To use the Giraffe Heroes website in this activity, arrange for a computer with internet access. Set up the meeting space — or find another meeting space — where all the children can see the monitor when you go online. Before the session, identify the specific stories you plan to share and make a note of the exact URL for each one.
- If you have chosen a picture book to show the group, read it several times to become familiar with the contents. Use post-its to mark pages to share.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in close so that they can hear the stories you will share to inspire and guide them to act with courage and perseverance. Say, in your own words:

There are people of all ages, including Unitarian Universalists, who have worked really hard for something they believed in. Many, many people have at times acted just like the brave little parrot. These are people who do whatever it takes to change something that they are concerned about. Even though they are just one person, often their perseverance and persistence inspire other people to help. That is how change can happen in the world and in the hearts of the people involved.

Ask the children to try to picture the people and their stories in their imaginations as you tell about them. Share the stories you have chosen.

### Including All Participants

If some children may have difficulty sitting still to listen to these stories, provide fidget objects. Described in Leader Resources, fidget objects can provide a non-disruptive outlet for children who learn kinesthetically or simply need to move.

## ACTIVITY 6: MAKING HERO COMIC BOOKS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Construction paper, preferably the large "legal" size, for all participants
- Crayons, color markers, pens and pencils

- Scissors (including left-handed scissors) and a stapler

### Preparation for Activity

- Fold each piece of construction paper into three roughly equal, horizontal strips by holding it lengthwise ("landscape" format) and folding one flap down and another up.
- Make a sample comic strip and a sample book for the children to see. Use stick figure characters and minimal detail so that the children see that they do not have to be artistically talented to successfully complete the project.

### Description of Activity

Distribute materials to children at work tables. Tell them that they can now make a book or a comic strip about one of the real people whose perseverance they have just heard about.

Show the children the samples you have made. In the comic strip, show them how each of the three panels represents a part of the story you have chosen.

Instruct them:

- On the first panel, draw the problem that the person wanted to change. (Examples: Draw a picture of Kaneesha noticing the two separate groups of kids on the playground; Olympia Brown near a sign that says "no voting.")
- On the second panel, draw the person doing something about the problem. (Examples: Show Kaneesha helping an Asian child with homework, Olympia Brown writing letters).
- In the third panel show what changed. (Examples: Show Kaneesha's schoolmates all playing together, Olympia as an old woman voting).

Tell the children they may add balloons to show people speaking, but this is not necessary. This is a completed comic strip once the child has put a title on it.

To make a book, cut the three pages apart so that they are separate. Next you will put another piece of paper the same size as the other three on top of the other to make a cover page with a title. Then staple them together at the top corner or on both left hand corners.

Encourage the children to use stick figures so that the drawings will not take too much time. If they do not finish, invite them to finish them at home. Either way they should take them home to show to their families.

As the children work, ask them to tell why they chose the hero they chose. You may also ask them if there are problems that really concern them, and if they can imagine what action they might take to make change when they are older.

If you have time, add Alternate Activity 2: Whipping Cream. One child at a time can stop work on his/her comic strip or book, and take a turn at manually whipping cream, which requires perseverance and yields a nice reward. At the end of the whipping cream activity there will naturally be a small feast!

### **Including All Participants**

The artistic confidence of children this age can be quite variable, so, encourage everyone to use simple stick figures to show the action and not worry about detailed drawings. If there are children who are not able to draw independently, a co-leader can sit with them and ask for their ideas and draw for them.

## **ACTIVITY 7: CLEAN-UP (3 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials.
- Waste basket lined with a bag.
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers.

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity the children are asked to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it and to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that

a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### **Including All Participants**

All children should assist as able.

## **CLOSING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.
- If you prefer, choose an alternate song for your closing ritual. Find some suggestions in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings. It is recommended that you use the same Closing song in every session.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and place it where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Write the word "Forgiveness" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Forgiveness" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

## Description of Activity

This activity helps the children get used to practicing a closing ritual as a way of affirming their part in the faith community.

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session. Tell them something you liked about the way they worked together as a community.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our compass shows us ways to make good decisions and how to be fair. If we are going to do what our inner voices and our hearts tell us is right, then we must learn to have courage and not give up at working for what we believe in, even if it takes a long time.

Ask them what the word is for keeping going even when something is hard? Affirm "perseverance."

Acknowledge the group for the ways in which they took part in and stuck with the activities of the day even when they were hard. Tell them that you are going to add "Perseverance," to the Moral Compass poster.

Write or post the word "Perseverance" on the Moral Compass poster.

Remind the children that the next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. Encourage them to write down the acts of goodness and justice they do (or witness). If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. You may wish to encourage them to try using perseverance as well as the other virtues you have posted on the Moral Compass poster.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." If the hymn is unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The song's lyrics are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
Love give light to every face;  
May the kindness which we learn  
Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If new participants need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these. Thank the children, tell them you look forward to seeing them next time, and dismiss the group.

## FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM – COURAGE STICKERS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Courage stickers (made or distributed in Session 14, Faith in Action: Courage Stickers)

### Preparation for Activity

- Confer with the director of religious education and worship leaders, if you wish to have the children present their courage stickers and tell their courage stories during worship or coffee hour.
- Have some extra courage stickers on hand for children who forgot to bring them back or to wear them and for those who think of courageous things they did that they had not thought of previously.

### Description of Activity

If the group began the Faith in Action, Courage Stickers project in Session 14, today the children will report back to the group on what they have done and learned.

You may like to have children share during Activity 1, Gems of Goodness. Or, if you have time during your session for Faith in Action, the sharing can take place then.

Whether the sharing occurs in your meeting space or during worship, in front of the congregation, invite children to stand up and show the courage stickers they are wearing or tell about someone they gave a sticker to and what that person had done that was courageous. For either scenario, have some extra "courage" stickers on hand for those who forgot to bring them back or to wear them and for those who think of courageous things they did that they had not thought of previously. You might allow the children to invite a parent to visit your session today to share a particularly good story about the child's, or their own, courage in the face of injustice.

### Including All Participants

This is an out-of-session activity that some children will be more likely to complete than others. It has to be a voluntary activity.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team teachers and your director of religious education.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?
- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of our students? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## TAKING IT HOME

*God has not called on me to be successful. He has called on me to be faithful. — Mother Teresa*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We talked about perseverance. We heard a story about a brave little parrot that persevered in the face of impossibility to save some animals from a forest fire. Its actions attracted the attention of one of the Gods who was so moved that his tears put out the fire. Children also heard real life stories about men and women who persevered, often alone, to pursue a solution that they were passionate about. Children heard several examples of how perseverance attracted the attention of others and thus effected a positive change. The children made books and comic strips of these stories to bring home to share with you.

## EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TALK ABOUT...

We hope that you will continue this conversation at home about working hard for things that you believe. Maybe you have a favorite heroic character that you would like to tell your child about. Take a trip to the children's room at your local library. There are many excellent picture books about people of all ages who stood up for what they believed in and brought about change. The book [A Lamp in Every Corner](#): Our Unitarian Universalist Storybook by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004) has a number of age-appropriate stories about Unitarian Universalist ancestors who worked hard for what they believed in. You can also visit the [Giraffe Heroes Project](#) (at [www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org)) website to read about regular people who stuck their necks out for change.

## EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...

Brainstorm together about a project to work hard at, as a family, such as getting the neighbors to join in a clean-up day by initiating it yourselves, or knitting hats or scarves for needy people, or saving change to send to a good cause.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

Once a week at meal time, share stories of things you have had to work hard at, either during the week or in the past.

### A FAMILY GAME

Find a puzzle or a Lego or model-building project that you can work on together and ask every family member to commit to seeing it through.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.
- Put the candles in the basket.

## Description of Activity

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: WHIPPING CREAM (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A fairly narrow bowl with high sides
- A manually operated egg-beater
- One to two pints of whipping cream
- Sugar to taste
- Pieces of cake or cut-up fresh fruit for all participants

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 15: STORY 1: GIRAFFE HERO STORIES

### John Holland McCowan

John Holland-McCowan was five years old when he first announced that he wanted to help kids who were in need. He saved up his allowance and bought some toys for kids who were living in a shelter. When he dropped off the toys he said that he thought the kids would like to

- Several aprons
- Paper plates, plastic forks and napkins for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare or buy whipping cream and cake or fruit that can be topped with whipped cream.
- Identify a clean table space, low enough for children this age to stand in front of while whipping cream.

### Description of Activity

Taking a turn at whipping cream with a manually operated egg-beater provides a tangible, edible lesson in perseverance. Whipping cream by hand is not easy for second- or third-grade children and individuals will tire quickly. After they persevere at a difficult challenge together, they will receive a delicious reward for their efforts.

Allow each child to don an apron and take a turn at using the egg-beater. When the cream is whipped, serve it on cake, gingerbread, or cut-up fresh fruit.

The whipping part of this activity does not require that all the children stand around waiting for their turn. If you wish, engage children in whipping the cream simultaneously with their work on Activity 6: Making Hero Comic Books.

### Including All Participants

Some children may be lactose intolerant, have diabetes or have another reason they cannot eat the snack you have planned. Check with parents and your director of religious education and parents to ascertain any allergies or other limitations. Parents of lactose-intolerant children can sometimes pre-medicate a child if they know about this activity in advance. Or, children can eat the cake or fruit without the whipped cream. If there is a diabetic child in the group, consult their parents as to what they can eat. Perhaps they could eat some whipped cream that has no sugar added.

have friends to play with too, but the shelter rules said that he couldn't play with the kids. He didn't think that this was right so he got his parents to help him to speak to the people in charge and they changed the rules. Then John thought that other kids would like to play with kids in shelters and hospitals, and so when he was seven he started a group called Kids Cheering Kids. He asked other kids at his school to come and play with kids in shelters and hospitals but many of them were afraid. "They are just sad kids who need cheering up," he told them. After three years his organization had over

300 volunteers between the ages of 5 and 23. John said, "I knew we could do it because kids are strong and kids can help other kids."

### **Granny D**

Doris Haddock was 89 years old and had arthritis which made it hard to walk and emphysema which made it hard to breathe. There was a problem that Doris was very worried about. She didn't think that it was right that the people who were trying to get elected to be in charge of the government were receiving large amounts of money from big corporations to help with their campaigns. She thought this was wrong because by taking this money the politicians felt that they had to do what the big corporations said and not what the people wanted them to do. Granny had written letters to the government over and over again but it didn't seem to change anything. Granny felt so strongly that this was not the way that democracy was supposed to be that she had to do something drastic to let more people know about it. She decided to walk across the country to meet as many people as she could and to tell them about this problem. Wearing a backpack with 25 lbs. in it and walking 10 miles a day she got herself into shape despite her illnesses and age. She ended up walking from California to Washington, DC. She spoke with many, many people along the way who often joined her on her walk, and who became involved in her campaign. She got hypothermia in the cold and dehydrated in the desert but she kept on going. Several of the states she walked through have already made changes in the system of how much money a corporation can give to a person running for office, and many more people are now working to change this problem.

### **Kaneesha Sonee Johnson**

Kaneesha was an African American girl growing up in California. When she was in the fifth grade she noticed that there were two groups of kids in her school, those of African American ethnicity and Asian ethnicity, and that they didn't talk to each other or play together during recess. She also noticed that some of the African American kids were bullying the Asian kids. She decided that this was wrong because she had been bullied and she knew how it felt. She also didn't see why the two groups couldn't be friends. She began to make friends with the Asian kids by helping the ones that didn't speak English to do their homework, and telling the bullies to leave them alone. The bullies got mad and, "tormented" her for this, and she cried at home, but she held her ground at school. Eventually she got the two groups to work together in class, seeing each other as "real people" and she got them to be on each other's teams during recess.

### **Julia Butterfly Hill**

Julia Butterfly Hill is a young woman who learned that many trees in a Redwood forest were being cut down for lumber. These trees were more than a thousand years old. She decided that the only way to get people to pay attention and to protect the trees was to climb up into one of them and to stay there for as long as it took. She lived in a tree that she named "Luna" for more than two years to keep the chainsaws away. Julia said, "I climbed into Luna's branches knowing only that it was horribly wrong to turn beautiful forests into clear cuts and mudslides.... I was determined not to let my feet touch the ground until I had done everything in my power to protect Luna and make the world aware of the plight of our ancient forests." Julia lived in Luna's branches on a plywood platform approximately 6'x8' and as high as an 18-story building, a tarp as her only protection against the elements. Friends brought her food and supplies that she hauled up by rope and she bathed with a bucket. While she was there she used a cell phone to carry on a daily campaign to educate the world about the destruction of ancient forests.

She stayed in the tree despite 90-mph winds during two intense winters. She endured harassment from a helicopter that nearly blew her out of her perch and she felt tremendous sorrow as she witnessed many of the redwoods surrounding Luna crash to the ground.

Julia's determination not to give up helped to get the lumber company that was cutting the trees to negotiate with environment groups. The company agreed to spare Luna and to create a protective buffer zone around it. Julia felt that this was just the beginning. She is no longer living in the tree, but she has started an organization called [Circle of Life Foundation](http://www.circleoflifefoundation.org/) (at [www.circleoflifefoundation.org/](http://www.circleoflifefoundation.org/)) which helps people through "education and inspiration and connection" to live in a way that honors the diversity and interdependence of all life.

"It is not an issue of whether or not we can make a difference," says Julia Hill. "The truth is that we do make a difference."

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 15: STORY 2: THE BRAVE LITTLE PARROT**

A Jataka Tale from India. Martin, Rafe. *The Hungry Tigress: Buddhist Myths, Legends, and Jataka Tales* (Somerville, MA: Yellow Moon Press, 1999). Reprinted with the permission of the author. [www.rafermartin.com](http://www.rafermartin.com)

Once, long ago, the Buddha was born as a little parrot. One day, a storm broke upon her forest home. Lightning flashed, thunder crashed, and a dead tree, struck by lightning, burst into flames. Sparks leapt on the wind and soon the forest was ablaze. Terrified animals ran wildly in every direction, seeking safety from the flames and smoke.

"Fire! Fire!" cried the little parrot. "Run! Run to the river!" Flapping her wings, she flung herself out into the fury of the storm, and, rising higher, flew towards the safety of the river. But as she flew she could see that many animals were trapped, surrounded by the flames below, with no chance of escape.

Suddenly, a desperate idea, a way to save them, came to her.

She darted to the river, dipped herself in the water, and flew back over the now raging fire.

The heat rising up from the burning forest was like the heat of an oven. The thick smoke made breathing almost unbearable. A wall of flames shot up now on one side, now on the other. Crackling flames leapt and danced before her. Twisting and turning through the mad maze of fire, the little parrot flew bravely on. At last, over the center of the forest, she shook her wings and released the few drops of water which still clung to her feathers. The tiny drops tumbled like jewels down in the heart of the blaze and vanished with a hsssssssss.

Then the little parrot once more flew back through the flames and smoke to the river, dipped herself in the cool water, and flew back again over the burning forest. Back and forth she flew, time and time again, from the river to the forest, from the burning forest to the river. Her feathers were charred. Her feet were scorched. Her lungs ached. Her eyes, stung by smoke, burned red as coals. Her mind spun as dizzily as the spinning sparks. But still the little parrot flew on.

At this time, some of the Devas, gods of a happy realm, were floating high overhead in their cloud palaces of ivory and gold. They happened to look down and they saw the little parrot flying through the flames. They pointed at her with perfect hands. Between mouthfuls of honeyed foods they exclaimed, "Look at that foolish bird!" She's trying to put out a raging forest fire with a few sprinkles of water! How ridiculous! How absurd!" And they laughed.

But one of those Gods did not laugh. Strangely moved, he changed himself into a golden eagle and flew down, down towards the little parrot's fiery path.

The little parrot was just nearing the flames again when the great eagle, with eyes like molten gold appeared at her side. "Go back, little bird!" said the eagle in a solemn

and majestic voice. "Your task is hopeless! A few drops of water can't put out a forest fire! Cease now and save yourself — before it's too late."

But the little parrot only continued to fly on through the smoke and flames. She could hear the great eagle flying above her as the heat grew fiercer, calling out, "Stop, foolish little parrot! Save yourself! Save yourself!"

"I don't need a great, shining eagle" coughed the little parrot, "to give me advice like that. My own mother, the dear bird, might have told me such things long ago. Advice! (cough, cough) I don't need advice. I just (cough) need someone to help"

And the god who was that great eagle, seeing the little parrot flying through the flames, thought suddenly of his own privileged kind. He could see them floating high up above. Yes, there they were, the carefree gods, still laughing and talking while many animals cried out in pain and fear from among the flames below. Seeing that, he grew ashamed, and a single desire was kindled in his heart. God though he was, he just wanted to be like that brave little parrot and to help.

"I will help!" he exclaimed, and flushed with these new feelings, he began to weep. Stream after stream of sparkling tears poured from his eyes. Wave upon wave they washed down like the cooling rain upon the fire, upon the forest, upon the animals, and upon the little parrot herself.

Where those tears fell, the flames died down, and the smoke began to clear. The little parrot, washed and bright, rocketed about the sky laughing for joy. "Now that's more like it!" she exclaimed.

The eagle's tears dripped from burned branches and soaked into the scorched earth. Where those tears glistened, new life pushed quickly forth—shoots, stems, and leaves. Buds unfurled and blossoms opened. Green grass pushed up from among still-glowing cinders.

All the animals looked at one another in amazement. Washed by those tears they were whole and well. Not one had been harmed. Up above, in the clear blue sky, they could see their friend, the little parrot, looping and soaring in delight. When hope was gone, somehow she had saved them. "Hurray!" they cried. "Hurray for the brave little parrot, and for this sudden, miraculous rain!"

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 15: STORY 3: OLYMPIA BROWN – A VOICE AND A VOTE

Reprinted from *A Lamp in Every Corner: Our Unitarian Universalist Storybook* by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004).

When Olympia Brown was little, girls weren't supposed to whistle. Girls weren't supposed to climb trees or run fast or catch frogs. But Olympia did; she did all those things, all those things and more. "You can do whatever a boy can do," her mother and her father told her, and Olympia knew it was true. She climbed trees and ran fast and caught frogs, and when she was in school, she answered the teacher's questions loud and clear.

"Little girls ought to be quiet," Said one lady in town. "Little girls ought not to make themselves heard." But Olympia did. She had a voice, and she was going to use it, every day.

When Olympia Brown was a teenager, young women weren't supposed to go to college. Young women weren't supposed to leave home to go off and learn complicated things. But Olympia did; she did all those things and more. Olympia left home and went to Antioch College. She went to class and studied and learned all kinds of complicated things.

"Young women ought not to be in college," said one professor at that school. "But since they are here, they must read their reports. Young women ought not to give speeches from memory, like the men." But Olympia did. When it was her turn to present her report, she rolled up the papers in her hand and said each and every word, loud and clear. Olympia Brown had a voice, and she was going to use it, every day.

When Olympia Brown was in college, women weren't supposed to wear pants. Women weren't supposed to wear anything except very long dresses that came all the way down to their toes. But Olympia did. She wore dresses that came down only past her knees, and under them, she dared to wear pants! "Bloomers" the pants were called, after Amelia Bloomer, the woman who had created them a few years before.

"Women ought not to show their ankles in public!" exclaimed some of the men. "And women certainly ought not to wear pants!" But Olympia did. She wore her bloomers every day, no matter how much the men sneered.

When Olympia was finished with college, women weren't supposed to be ministers. Women never stood up in front of a congregation and talked about God. But Olympia did; she did all those things and more. Olympia graduated from the Theological School at St. Lawrence University in 1863, and she was ordained as a Universalist minister in June of that year, the second woman ever to be officially ordained by that church. She became the Reverend Olympia Brown.

"Women ought not to speak in public," said a minister at that time. "Women ought not to take the pulpit or discuss the nature of God." But the Reverend Olympia Brown did. During the next thirty-five years, she was a minister in five different congregations, and she visited other congregations, too. She took the pulpit in every single one, and she spoke on the nature of God and love, and she did an excellent job. Olympia Brown had a voice, and she used it, every day.

When Olympia Brown was born, women weren't allowed to vote. Women weren't allowed to have any say in who was elected president or senator or mayor of the town. But Olympia had something to say about that. Olympia had a lot to say about that.

She traveled all over the state of Kansas in a horse and buggy, giving speeches to convince people that women deserved the right to vote. She wrote hundreds of letters. She spoke to the representatives and senators in Congress. She marched in parades. Olympia and her friends worked hard to get women the right to vote. Olympia Brown had a voice, and she used it every day... every day for over fifty years.

And finally, when Olympia Brown was old, women were allowed to vote. In November of 1920, when Olympia was eighty-five years old, she voted for the very first time.

Olympia had always had a voice, and she'd used it to make sure that she--and all the other women in the United States --had a vote as well.



## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 15: LEADER RESOURCE 1: HI, MY NAME'S JOE SCRIPT**

Leader: "Hi, my name's Joe." (Wave one hand and continue waving.)

Participants: (Repeat words and keep the movement going.)

Leader: "I've got a wife and three kids and I work in a button factory." (Continue movement.)

Participants: (Repeat words and keep the movement going.)

Leader: "Hi. My name's Joe. I've got a wife and three kids and I work in a button factory. One day my boss came in and said, 'Joe, can you do this?' (Move your other hand as if turning a dial. Keep both movements going.) "I said, 'Sure.'"

Participants: (Repeat words and add new movements.)

Leader: "Hi. My name's Joe. I have a wife and three kids and I work in a button factory. One day the boss came in and said, 'Joe can you do this?' (Add a movement with swirling hips around as if with a hula hoop.) "I said, 'Sure.'"

Participants: (Repeat words and add movement.)

Leader: "Hi. My name's Joe. I have a wife and three kids and I work in a button factory. One day the boss came in and said, 'Joe can you do this?' (Add movement of tapping one foot.) "I said, 'Sure.'"

Participants: (Repeat words and add new movements.)

Leader: "Hi. My name's Joe. I have a wife and three kids and I work in a button factory. One day the boss came in and said, 'Joe, can you do this?' (Add shaking head up and down as if to say yes.) "I said, 'Sure.'"

Participants: (Repeat and add new movement.)

Leader: "Hi. My name's Joe. I have a wife and three kids and I work in a button factory. One day the boss came in and said, 'Joe, can you do this?' (Bend knees as you do the other movements). "I said, 'Sure.'"

Participants: (Repeat words and movements.)

Leader: Hi. My name's Joe. I have a wife and three kids and I work in a button factory. One day the boss came in and he said, 'Joe, can you do anything else?' And I said, 'NOOOOOOOO!' (Throw up hands and collapse in a squat or sitting position on the floor.)

Participants: (Repeat words and movement.)

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 15: LEADER RESOURCE 2: MORAL TALES SESSION CONCEPTS**

Session Title	Concept as Noted on Moral Compass Poster
1 We Are All One	Interdependence
2 Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice	Inner voice
3 Faith, Hope and Prayer	Faith
4 In Another's Shoes	Empathy
5 Forgiveness	Forgiveness
6 Welcome One and All	Welcoming
7 Seeing Others with Awe	Respect
8 Do Unto Others	Golden Rule
9 Generosity: Give and Ye Shall Receive	Generosity
10 Footprints: Treading Softly on Earth	Balance
11 Do No Harm	Non-violence
12 Making a Difference	Responsibility
13 Justice for All	Fairness
14 Acting When Conscience Calls	Courage
15 Courage and Perseverance	Perseverance
16 Working Together	Cooperation

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 15: LEADER RESOURCE 3: PARROTS FOR PENNIES LETTER TO PARENTS**

Dear Parents,

As part of our session on Perseverance, the children started a new Faith in Action project today.

Faith in Action projects help us to practice the skills and virtues we are learning about. The children heard a story about a small parrot that kept flying back and forth to a river and then over a forest fire, shaking the water from its wings over the flames, until it caught the attention of a greater creature that was so moved by the parrot's determination that its tears put out the fire.

This project is called Parrots for Pennies. This project involves working together to raise money by helping to get a large plastic jug filled with coins to give to a cause that the children have chosen. It is not expected that each child will add many coins to the jug, but that they will all keep working to inspire others to help until the jar is full.

The children thought of various ways to help fill the jar. Ask your child to share some of these ideas with you. Perhaps your family could put a cup on the table and fill it with pocket change all week. Maybe you can brainstorm some creative ways to raise money to add to the jar.

The children may wish to hold a bake sale on (day, date) to raise money to fill the Parrots for Pennies jar. If you would like to participate by providing baked goods the children can sell at coffee hour, please let us know what you will bring, and deliver your baked goods to the congregation's coffee hour room before worship on that day.

This is a volunteer activity and you and your children are under no pressure to contribute or participate. If you have any questions please feel free to contact one of us.

Yours in Faith,

(Co-leader names and contact information)

## FIND OUT MORE

The game, "Hi, My Name's Joe" was adapted, with permission, from *Crazy Gibberish and other story hour stretches from a storyteller's bag of tricks* by Naomi Baltuck (Hamden, CT: Linnet Books, 1993).

### **Storybooks about Persevering, Courageous Heroes and Heroines**

*Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* by Carole Boston Weatherford (New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2005) takes the point of view of a young girl who watches her older brother and sister participate in the sit-ins that helped to desegregate lunch counters in the South.

*Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005) is a Caldecott Honor book that tells the story of how Rosa Parks' bravery and perseverance inspired others to take up the cause of desegregation and brought about the Supreme Court ruling that segregation was illegal in the United States.

*Nobody Going to Turn Me 'Round: Stories and songs of the civil rights movement* by Doreen Rappaport (Cambridge, MA : Candlewick Press, 2006) tells the

stories of many people who worked hard to bring about change during the Civil Rights Movement.

*Black Whiteness: Admiral Byrd Alone in the Antarctic* by Robert Burleigh, illustrated by Walter Lyon Krudop (Atheneum: 1998).

*Mary Anning and Sea Dragon* by Jeannine Atkins (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999) is the true story of an 11-year-old girl who, inspired by her dead father's advice to, "Don't ever stop looking," painstakingly uncovered the first Pleisosaur to be found in England.

*With Courage: Seven Women who Changed America* by Lynea Bowdish (New York: Mondo Publishing, 2004) includes stories about Rachel Carson, Dolores Huerta, Maya Lin, Wilma Mankiller and others. Not really a picture book, this book would need your interpretation to share with this age group.

*Voices of Hope: Heroes' Stories for Challenging Times* by [The Giraffe Project](http://www.giraffe.org/) (at [www.giraffe.org/](http://www.giraffe.org/)). has over 40 stories of people of all ages who made a difference and suggestions for how young people can move toward empowerment to take action.

# SESSION 16: WORKING TOGETHER

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Drops that gather one by one finally form a sea. — Persian proverb*

This session emphasizes the idea of strengthening community and working cooperatively with other people. While Unitarian Universalists value individual action, we also know that together we are stronger than the sum of our individual parts. Cooperation is a necessary skill for solving problems peacefully and equitably, and is a part of accepting and supporting one another. The value of cooperation is integrated within the Unitarian Universalist Principles, particularly the Principles of the inherent worth and dignity of every person, acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth, the goal of world community, and respect for the interdependent web of all existence.

In this session the children will hear and act out an Aesop's fable that uses a bundle of sticks to demonstrate the practical and spiritual strength gained by sticking together. They will also engage in a problem-solving role play, "What Would UU Do?" in which they seek cooperative solutions to dilemmas that they might encounter in their own young lives. Finally, there is a simple art activity in which they each make a bundle of sticks to take home. Each stick in the bundle represents a child in the group, and each child's strengths will be honored as part of the whole, as in the story.

Because this is the final session of Moral Tales, you may like to do one or more of the program culminating activities which are offered as alternate activities. One is a team game version of "What Would UU Do?" which uses the Moral Compass poster. If you have not used the Moral Compass poster in your program, you can still do this culminating activity; see Leader Resource, List of Moral Tales Session Topics. The game will remind the children about the virtues they have explored in Moral Tales and reinforce the idea that to act from goodness and justice, one may need to use all of these traits, and more!

Another suggested culminating activity is for the children to make small, take-home replicas of the Moral Compass. There is also an option to end with a Gems of Goodness party, in which you will honor all of the acts of goodness and justice that children have been part of and shared about during the program. (Make sure you are ready to mention an act of goodness that involves each child in the group.) If you will have a Gems of

Goodness celebration, you should skip the Gems of Goodness core activity (Activity 1).

The Faith in Action project, Parrots for Pennies, introduced in Session 15 continues in this session, with options for follow-up activities after Moral Tales ends.

"Cooperation" will be added to the Moral Compass poster.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Increase participants' understanding of our Unitarian Universalist Principles, particularly the inherent worth and dignity of every person, acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth, the goal of world community, and respect for the interdependent web of all existence
- Create a forum for children to share with one another about acts of goodness and justice
- Foster participants' pride in sharing acts of goodness and justice that they have done (or witnessed)
- Demonstrate that individuals gain strength by pooling their strengths with others, and sticking together
- Help participants articulate and appreciate situations in which they have experienced cooperation
- Present opportunities for cooperative problem-solving
- Strengthen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity by demonstrating the connection between the choices we make in our lives and the beliefs and attitudes we hold as Unitarian Universalists, including the Principles and Sources
- Strengthen participants' connection to and sense of responsibility to their Moral Tales group
- Optional: Give participants opportunities to review and apply learning from previous Moral Tales sessions
- Optional: Model the rightness of celebrating a collective accumulation of acts of goodness

performed (or witnessed) by members of the group.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Participate in the "Gems of Goodness" exercise.
- Hear a story that demonstrates the value of individuals banding together
- Share and hear stories of times when they have found strength in numbers
- Experience solving problems cooperatively
- Recognize how their unique strengths contribute to the strength and betterment of the group
- Make a bundle of sticks representing and honoring each child in the group
- Participate in an Opening, a Closing, and a cooperative clean-up with their peers
- Optional: Experience closure of their time in Moral Tales with a culminating closing ritual
- Optional: Revisit virtues on the Moral Compass poster in a problem-solving role play game and/or by making a small, take-home moral compass
- Optional: Celebrate their collective accumulation of acts of goodness performed (or witnessed) by members of the group.

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	2
Activity 1: Gems of Goodness	10
Activity 2: Story Basket and Centering	3
Activity 3: Story – A Bundle of Sticks	10
Activity 4: What Would UU Do?	15
Activity 5: Making a Bundle Together	15

Activity 6: Clean up	2
Faith in Action	15
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Candles of Joys and Sorrows	10
Alternate Activity 2: What Would UU Do? Moral Compass Game	30
Alternate Activity 3: Take-Home Mini-Compasses	10
Alternate Activity 4: Gems of Goodness Party	20
Alternate Activity 5: Cooperative Hula Hoop Game	10

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a few moments to sit quietly with this story, picturing it as it unfolds in your imagination. Perhaps it reminds you of your own family dynamics and the benefits and challenges of working together and relying on others. Here are some memory prompts to think about or talk about to connect you spiritually with the session theme.

- Remember times in your life when you have relied on others, and they on you.
- Remember times when you worked together with others to solve a problem or build something, and how that effort benefited from the individual and diverse strengths of everyone involved.
- Take a moment to think about this Moral Tales group and times when everyone has worked cooperatively.
- Take a moment to think about each individual child in the group. See if you can think of one special thing about each child, and how that quality contributes to the overall group.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Mosaic gemstones, at least three per participant
- A colorful cloth
- A small notebook, approximately two by three inches, and a marker for each child who is new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Optional: Stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project

#### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the first time you will lead the Gems of Goodness project, or the first time some children will participate in it, review Session 2, Activity 8, Introduction to the Gems of Goodness project.
- If this is the last time Moral Tales will meet, consider whether you would like to celebrate the accumulation of children's acts of goodness in Gems of Goodness project. You may like to use Alternate Activity 4, Gems of Goodness Party in place of this one.
- For any children who have not yet participated in this project, have ready a small notebook, a marker for writing their names, and stick-on gems, stickers, or other decorations. Write the words, "My Acts of Goodness," on each notebook.
- Make sure you have a parent handout (Session 2, Leader Resource, Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents) for each new child.
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.

#### Description of Activity

As children enter, greet them and direct them to the table with the gemstones.

Ask the children to choose one, two, or three gemstones to represent acts of goodness that they did or witnessed since the last time they came to Moral Tales. If any children are participating for the first time in the Gems of Goodness project, invite them to choose a notebook, write their name on it, and decorate it as they wish. Tell

them they may also pick three gemstones to bring into the circle.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the provided opening words, an adaptation of Reading 418 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or other opening words. Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Openings, offers several suggestions. It is recommended that you use the same opening words for each session.
- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather for the Opening.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Light the chalice.

If some or all of the children are unfamiliar with the reading, teach it line by line. Then recite together:

Come into the circle of love and friendship.

Come into the community of justice and goodness.

Come and you shall know peace and joy.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: GEMS OF GOODNESS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar or vase
- Small notebooks, approximately 2"x 3", for any newcomers
- Markers and stick-on gems or other stickers for children who are new to the Gems of Goodness project
- Copies of the Session 2, Leader Resource 2, [Gems of Goodness Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A colorful cloth

- Moral Compass poster
- Optional: Stick-on gems, a handful for each child, and sealable sandwich bags

### Preparation for Activity

- If this is the final Moral Tales session, you may wish to prepare a small, sealable sandwich bag with a handful of stick-on gems for each child to take home with their Gems of Goodness notebooks. Consider, too, whether you would like to have a Gems of Goodness party (Alternate Activity 4) instead of doing this activity.
- If this is the last session, it might be a good time to invite parents to briefly join the group for the Gems of Goodness activity. Encourage parents to share for their children, when they feel a child did something particularly challenging or remarkable. Invite them in advance, by email or in person as they drop off their children.
- If you are introducing the Gems of Goodness activity for the first time, review Session 2, Activity 8: Introduction to the Gems of Goodness Project. Note: The introduction to this activity has an estimated time of 10 minutes.
- Post the Moral Compass poster where you can reach it and children can see it. If you are introducing the Moral Compass poster in this session, see Session 2 for an explanation of how to use the poster as a teaching tool (Introduction; Activity 2: Introducing the Moral Compass) and instructions for making it (Leader Resource, Moral Compass Poster).
- Place the colorful cloth on a table where all the children can see and reach it at one time.
- Spread out the mosaic gemstones on the cloth.
- Place the clear glass jar or vase on the cloth.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children around the table where you have placed the cloth, the jar or vase, and the gemstones. Ask who remembered to keep track of acts of goodness in their notebooks.

Invite volunteers to stand up, and tell the group about an act of goodness they engaged in (or witnessed, if you have offered this option), and place the gem in the glass jar or vase.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster. Mention the virtues that the group has explored in previous sessions. Suggest that the children try to think of some acts of

goodness related to these virtues, as they share their gems of goodness.

Encourage newcomers to join the sharing once they've had a chance to see what the other children are doing.

Use these guidelines to organize the sharing:

- One gem per act of goodness. However, anyone can put in more than one gem to represent more than one act of goodness.
- To stay within the allotted time frame for this activity, encourage children to share their act of goodness in one or two brief sentences. On occasion a child can seek permission to tell a longer story.
- If children are putting multiple gems in the jar and the activity is taking too much time, you might want to tell them to add a gem for up to three acts of goodness, but choose only one of the actions to share with the group.

It is very important to avoid judging participants, either with criticism or praise. Avoid phrases like, "Great job!" or "You're fantastic!" which might encourage the children to compete to share the "best" act of goodness or to perceive that different acts of goodness have greater or lesser value.

Instead, listen carefully to what the children tell you. Help them identify the virtues their acts of goodness represent. When appropriate, indicate a word or phrase on the Moral Compass poster that fits the act of goodness. This will help the children learn to recognize a variety of virtues in a variety of forms.

After each sharing, you may say something like, "Thank you for sharing," followed by a summarizing sentence such as:

- It sounds like that took courage.
- Sharing with a friend is generosity.
- Sounds like you worked really hard on that. That's called persistence.
- Telling the truth is being honest.

Your specific responses to the acts of goodness children share will help them feel pride, a sense of accomplishment, and their own empowerment as agents of justice and goodness.

If children are not volunteering, call out various types of acts of goodness, and invite children to come up if they experienced that particular kind of goodness. You may call out:

- Helping someone.



- Sharing with someone.
- Standing up for someone who was being treated meanly.
- Telling the truth when it would have been easier not to.
- Including someone rather than leaving them out.
- Being patient with a sibling or another younger child.
- Recycling.
- Taking care of a pet.
- Working really hard at something.
- Thanking an adult or another child who helped me.
- Cleaning up a mess I made.

When the sharing is finished, remind the children to take home their notebooks and continue to keep track of their acts of goodness.

If this session is the group's last one in Moral Tales, suggest they take their Gems of Goodness notebooks home. You may want to give each child a small, sealable sandwich bag with a handful of stick-on gems. Tell them to paste these in their notebooks when they write down future acts of goodness. You may say:

I know you have learned so much about different kinds of acts of goodness, and different ways of doing justice. I know you will keep doing (and noticing) acts of goodness. Take your notebook home today, with these gems to decorate it with, and keep writing about your gems of goodness.

If you are planning to do so at a later session, remind the children that they may mark their achievement with a special celebration when the group has filled the glass jar or otherwise reached an established goal.

### Including All Participants

If any participants are not mobile, you or another child can accommodate by passing the jar. If a child is not verbal, you may wish to invite him/her to choose another child, or a co-leader, to read their acts of goodness from their notebook and place a gemstone in the jar.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY BASKET AND CENTERING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A large basket
- Craft sticks

- A large rubber band
- Copy of the story, "[The Bundle of Sticks](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a cloth cover
- Optional: A globe or a world map

### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain wooden craft sticks (popsicle sticks). You will need two for each person in the storytelling circle, and extra to make a strong bundle if the group is small. Find craft sticks in arts and crafts stores and many stores that carry children's toys and activities. Colored sticks tend to be weaker than natural ones and won't work well for the art activity.
- Place the story-related items (including the craft sticks and rubber band), the altar cloth if you have one, and the chime, rain stick or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated for Moral Tales.
- If you will make an altar as a focal point for story objects, set up the box or table you will use next to your storytelling area. Do not put the cloth on it yet. It is not necessary to ritualize the altar as a sacred place. It can simply serve as a focal point where objects related to the story will be visible while you tell the story.

### Description of Activity

In this activity you are preparing the children to hear the story, "The Bundle of Sticks." Gather the children in a circle in your storytelling area. Show them the story basket, in which you have placed the craft sticks and rubber band you will use when you tell the story.

If you are using an altar as a focal point, take the cloth cover from the basket and drape it over the box or small table. If the cloth cover has a special story, such as who made it, where it comes from, or the meaning of any symbols on it, briefly share the story with the children.

Show the group the craft sticks and rubber band and place them on your altar table or in front of you. Pass around any other story-related objects you have brought.

Children may ask questions about some of the items, begin to tell stories about similar things they have seen, or wonder aloud why an object is included. Tell them they can talk more about the items after the story. Make

sure you invite them to do so once you have finished the story and follow-up discussion.

If you have a globe or a world map, indicate Greece. You can tell the children that this story is one of Aesop's fables, and that Aesop was a storyteller who lived long ago in Ancient Greece.

As items come back to you, place them on the altar. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the altar. Display the items for children to look at as they listen to the story.

Now remove the chime, rain stick or other instrument from the story basket. Tell the children that every time you tell a story in Moral Tales, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen.

Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening.

In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

Now you are ready to listen. When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story.

### **Including All Participants**

If anyone in the group is unable to hold or pass items, or cannot see the items, make sure you or a child in the group offers the person a chance to see and touch each object, as needed.

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any children resist, respect their resistance and suggest that they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the fidget object basket available during this activity. For a full description of fidget objects and guidance on using them, see Leader Resources.

## **ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE BUNDLE OF STICKS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of the story, "[The Bundle of Sticks](#)" (included in this document)
- A chime, a rain stick, or another calming sound instrument
- Craft sticks and large rubber band
- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read the story a few times. Get ready to use the craft sticks and rubber band as props during the telling; directions are provided in the story text.
- Consider telling the story rather than reading it. Practice telling it aloud. Try to use a special voice for the old woman, not stereotypical, but reflecting her failing health and her sadness.
- Count the number of children in the group before you begin. You will use that number in telling the story.
- Prepare to tell the children about an experience you had working cooperatively with others, to spark their own sharing of experiences.
- Optional: Post newsprint where you will be able to write on it and children can see it.

### **Description of Activity**

If you like, you can tell the children, in your own words:

The story you will hear was first told by Aesop who was a Greek slave under the Roman Empire hundreds of years ago. Because he was such a good storyteller, Aesop was freed from hard labor to entertain the rulers. He was a wise man, and probably when he told this story he was thinking not just of how children in a family or a school group sometimes fight, but about adults, too — people in different countries, everyone in the world — and how much better the world would be if we all agreed to work together.

Before you begin, make sure the story text, the craft sticks and the rubber band are nearby. Take a deep calming breath, and tell the story.

Ring the chime (use other sound instrument) to indicate that the story is over.

When the story is concluded, ask children to help you gather broken craft sticks and return them to the story basket. Then resettle the group in a circle and lead a discussion to help children explore and apply the idea that we can do more, and be stronger in many ways, when we act together. This discussion provides, also, a way to model that cooperation means appreciating what each person contributes to a group. You may want to point that out, during the discussion.

If you like, use two pages of newsprint to capture children's ideas about (1) types of activities that are more easily done by a group and (2) actual experiences children have had working together in a group.

Begin by drawing out children's responses to the story. Then you will ask them to brainstorm together things that they have done that were easier with a group of people:

- I wonder why the old woman thought that her children wouldn't be able to keep the farm after she had died. (Prompt children to recall that the children couldn't get along well enough to work together and take care of the farm.)
- I'm wondering what the old woman meant when she said that if her children didn't work together, they could be easily broken like the sticks. (Prompt answers such as, "The children would have to solve their problems all by themselves / lack support / be alone / lack love.")
- Why did she think they would be like the sticks in a bundle if they stuck together? (Prompt for answers about being stronger together and helping one another.)

Next, lead the brainstorming. Ask children to think of activities they have done with other people that were made easier by people doing them together. Some examples might be cleaning their bedrooms; cleaning the house or their school classroom; baking cookies; making up a dance or a song; building something such as a Lego house or a snow person; acting in a play or singing in a chorus; shoveling snow or watering a garden; or completing a project for school.)

Next, invite them to share short personal experiences of times when they worked together with others, or felt supported by others. You may need to lead off with a story about an experience you had working cooperatively with others.

### **Including All Participants**

This is a highly participatory story and most children will be able to engage. When the story is concluded and children need to focus on a discussion about the story,

you may want to make fidget objects available. See Leader Resources for a full discussion of fidget objects.

## **ACTIVITY 4: WHAT WOULD UU DO? (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Consider incorporating role-playing into the second dilemma presented in this activity.
- This activity can be done with the children sitting in a circle on the floor or around a single table. If you plan to include role-play, form a semi-circle to leave an open area where children can enact roles.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it.
- Post one or two blank pieces of newsprint where you can write on it and children can see it.
- Write the word "Cooperation" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Cooperation" directly on the poster.

### **Description of Activity**

In this activity you are helping the children to think about how they can each contribute to solving a problem by using both their individual strengths and their strengths as a group. Children will consider two dilemmas. Their solutions to the dilemmas will demonstrate that each one of us makes a group stronger and that together we can accomplish more than when we act alone.

Tell the children the activity is called "What Would UU Do?" and explain that as Unitarian Universalists, we try to act with goodness and justice. You may add:

Cooperation is one of the tools we can use to do what our inner voices and our hearts tell us is right. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe it is important to learn how to work together with others.

Write or post the word "Cooperation" on the Moral Compass poster.

Say, in your own words:

Let's pretend that I am your classroom teacher and I am coming to you to ask for your help with a problem. There is a new child coming to our school and our class starting tomorrow. (You can tell them that they can each decide individually if it is a boy or girl.)

This child isn't going to know anyone or anything about this school or our community. How could each one of you help in your own special way to make the child feel welcome and at home in our school and our community? Just like the children in the story, "A Bundle of Sticks," you each have special gifts to bring to this class. I want you to think about what you most like to do, in and out of school. How could you volunteer to show, teach or do something with this new child? Together we will help to make this child at home. Together we can do much more than if just one or two of us made an effort.

Now I am going to write down a list of all the things you can do to help this new child to feel welcome.

Going in a circle or by asking for volunteers, invite each child to name something specific that they would do. Examples might be helping the new child find their locker, inviting the new child to play at recess, inviting the new child to after-school or weekend sports activities, telling the child about a favorite ice cream shop in your community, or helping the new child in the school cafeteria and asking them to sit with you and your friends. Write each child's contribution on the newsprint, with their name.

When they run out of ideas, ask the children what they could do together, as a group, to help make the new child feel welcome in the classroom. You may need to help them suggest things like drawing a big welcome sign, making nametags for everyone, playing getting-to-know-you games or whole class games to include the new child at recess.

Reflect back on your list and ask them how they were acting and thinking as a bundle of sticks.

Now tell them they will consider another situation. Say:

Even though we teachers try to stop all bullying at school, sometimes it happens when we aren't looking. Let's pretend again that I am your classroom teacher at school. Let's pretend there is a small group of children that are making fun of one child who has recently moved here from another country and is just learning to speak English. These children keep surrounding the child at recess, and in the hall, and in the cafeteria, and pretending to talk like the new child.

Pause for a moment. Children may be relating this story to real events in their lives. Now say:

First let's think about how the child feels who is new. What would they wish to do about this problem? What might be hard for the child to do about it, on their own?

Take a few responses. A child may suggest "fighting." You may say that the new child might indeed feel like fighting, and might feel even more like it with some friends to help, but violence would not solve the problem.

Say:

Now let's think like a bundle of sticks. How could you help that child as a group?

Prompt for suggestions such as standing with the child, walking together with the child through places where the bullies are waiting, and including the child in their games and activities. Try to draw out, but if necessary, state the idea that it can be easier for a group to say, "Stop!" to the bullies. You may use these questions:

- How can you protect this child?
- What could you say to the bullies?
- Would it feel easier to do this in a group? Why?

This dilemma would be good to set up and act out as a role play as the children will benefit from experiencing working together to solve this problem kinesthetically.

### **Including All Participants**

All children will probably be able to participate in this activity. If there are children who cannot tolerate sitting for any length of time, you may want to provide them with fidget objects.

## **ACTIVITY 5: MAKING A BUNDLE TOGETHER (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Color markers
- Craft sticks, enough for each child's bundle of craft sticks to include one for each child in the group
- Optional: Extra sticks for children to do this activity with their families at home
- Rubber bands

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Obtain craft sticks (popsicle sticks), enough to provide each child with the number of sticks

equal to the number of participants in Moral Tales. For example, if there are ten children in the group, each child will need ten sticks.

### Description of Activity

Distribute the craft sticks and markers. Tell the children:

We are going to make bundles of sticks, with each bundle containing a stick for every child in the group.

In this activity, you will acknowledge something special about each child in the group and then engage them in a hands-on project that demonstrates how together they make a strong "bundle."

Go around the room, with either yourself, volunteers in the group, or the child himself/herself saying some positive things that each child enjoys or does well. Examples: Sarah has a warm smile, Darren plays with everyone, Joe draws beautiful pictures, and Nadia is a good leader. After each child has spoken, or been spoken about, ask everyone to write that child's name on one of their craft sticks. (You may need to spell some names aloud.) Then, children can draw a smiling face and add some features, such as hair or something the person is wearing.

After the children have each decorated a stick for every participant, give them each a rubber band and invite them to make a bundle of sticks, as was mentioned in the story. Allow the children to take their bundles of sticks home as a reminder of the people in the group and of the story.

When the children all have their bundles, say in your own words:

These bundles remind us that we are all stronger when we stick together, caring for one another and respecting each other and sharing our strengths.

If you send the children home with ten extra sticks they will be able to demonstrate the story for their families, which is suggested in the Taking it Home section.

## ACTIVITY 6: CLEAN-UP (2 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Plastic tubs or baskets to store markers, pens, stickers and other art materials.
- Waste basket lined with a bag.
- Bag(s) for recycling paper products and/or empty plastic containers.

### Preparation for Activity

- Find out whether your congregational building has a recycling program and, if so, how you can organize clean-up to participate in it.

### Description of Activity

In this activity the children are asked to return the meeting space to being as neat and clean as they found it and to put away the materials used in the session. Remind the children that other people may use the space, and should be able to find it clean and ready to use.

Engage the children in thinking about materials that can be recycled. Specifically identify and assign any clean-up task that will help the children understand and accept their own responsibility as users of the meeting space. Use the clean-up activity to help children think about how their actions affect others and gain good feelings from participating in a group effort.

If your congregation has a recycling system, ask a child or pair of children to take the recycled materials to the bins. If your congregation does not have a recycling system, this may be a good Moral Tales project to initiate! In the meantime you might want to suggest that a different child each week take home a bag of recyclables. First, ask parents if they wish to participate in this project.

### Including All Participants

All children should assist as able.

## CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Moral Compass poster
- A bold marker, or a piece of card stock and tape or a stapler
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music CD or tape, and music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Look at Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place," and make sure you can lead the group in singing it. If it is unfamiliar, you might ask your music director to teach it to you before this session.

- If this is the final session of Moral Tales, you may wish to choose a special closing to punctuate this ending. You may invite the children to "pass the peace" or lead them in singing "Go Now in Peace." Find these in Session 1, Leader Resource, Alternate Closings.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, you can invite a musical volunteer to do it for you. Or, ask your music director to record the song, and use the recording to lead the group. You might even like to record the congregation's choir singing it.
- If this is your last session with this group of children, you may wish to incorporate words that indicate you have enjoyed working with these children. You may like to describe some things you have learned from your time with them.
- Write the words of the closing song on newsprint and post where the children will be able to see it during the Closing.
- Place the Moral Compass poster where all of the children can see it during the Closing.
- If you have not done so earlier in this session, write the word "Cooperation" on a piece of card stock to attach to the Moral Compass poster. Or, if you prefer, plan to write the word "Cooperation" directly on the poster.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle. Thank the children for participating and sharing their stories and ideas in this session.

Point out the Moral Compass poster. Say, in your own words:

Our Moral Compass shows us ways to do good things and make good decisions. Today we heard a story about a family who discovered what an important tool working together can be. Working together can help us do acts of goodness and justice.

Ask the group what the word is for working with others. Affirm "cooperation." If the word is already on the Moral Compass poster, indicate it.

If you have not added "Cooperation" to the Moral Compass poster earlier in this session (Activity 4: What Would UU Do?), say:

If we are going to do what our inner voices and our hearts tell us is right, then we must learn how to work together with others. Let's put "Cooperation" on our Moral Compass.

Write or post "Cooperation" on the Moral Compass poster.

Acknowledge the group for the ways in which they worked cooperatively today. If this is your final session with these children, now would be a good time to tell the group that you have enjoyed working with them and to mention some things you have learned in your time with them in Moral Tales.

If this is the final session and you have not done cumulative activities, use the Moral Compass poster to refresh the group about the other virtues they have explored together with you in Moral Tales. Remind them that these are just a few of the directions that can help us find ways to act with goodness and for justice.

If there will be another Moral Tales session, remind the children that next time they meet they will have a chance to add more gems to the Gems of Goodness jar. If appropriate, remind them that when the jar is full of gemstones, you will have a special celebration. Encourage them to try using cooperation in the acts of goodness and justice they may do.

Lead the children in singing Hymn 414 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "As We Leave This Friendly Place." Or, lead the group in another closing song, reading, or activity you have chosen for this session. If the words are unfamiliar to some of the children, teach it line by line and then sing it once through together.

The lyrics to "As We Leave This Friendly Place" are:

As we leave this friendly place,  
 Love give light to every face;  
 May the kindness which we learn  
 Light our hearts till we return.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. If any children need to take home a Gems of Goodness notebook and parent handout, make sure they have these. Thank the children and dismiss the group. If this is the final session of Moral Tales, take special care to say each child's name and make eye contact when you say goodbye.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: LONG-TERM — PARROTS FOR PENNIES (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- List of ideas for generating pennies, created in previous session
- Large clear plastic jar for fundraising and/or money collection tin for bake sale
- Small change for bake sale
- Optional: Small clear plastic jars for each child
- Optional: Poster board and markers for bake sale posters
- Tables for bake sale
- Table cloths for bake sale
- Napkins and paper plates
- Index cards and markers or pens to make signs for bake sale prices
- Optional: Parrots for Pennies Letter to Parents

### **Preparation for Activity**

#### **BAKE SALE FOR PARROTS FOR PENNIES**

- Put an announcement in the newsletter informing parishioners of the date of the sale.
- Ask the minister to announce the bake sale to the congregation one week in advance and on the day of the sale.
- Ask the refreshments committee if you can have a table during refreshments following the service on the date you choose.
- Have the children make posters using the construction paper and markers in class.
- Put up the posters announcing the bake sale at least one week prior
- Customize Leader Resource, Parrots for Pennies Letter to Parents to request help in baking goods for the bake sale and bringing the items to the bake sale table before worship.
- Arrive early enough to set up bake sale table with table cloth and to put out signs, paper plates and napkins.
- Cover all bake sale items brought before church.
- Make a sign(s) with prices of baked goods.

- Enlist the children to stand behind the baked goods table to take money and talk about their project.

#### **PARROTS FOR PENNIES ANNOUNCEMENT WITH CHILDREN DURING WORSHIP**

- Inform the minister and director of religious education that you would like to do this activity during announcements or at another part of the worship service.
- Ask them for the best place to put the plastic jar following the service, and on following worship days. (You may want to secure the jar at other times.)
- Remind parents that the children are invited to participate in the announcement during worship. Give any instructions for where and when you would like the children to meet before worship to "rehearse."

### **Description of Activity**

This Faith in Action project began in Session 15, where you will also find Leader Resource, Parrots for Pennies Letter to Parents. You will already have chosen the recipient(s) and set a timetable or other goal(s) for your fundraising in this project. If the group began planning a bake sale or other Parrots for Pennies congregational activities, in this session you will implement these activities.

If this is the last session of Moral Tales and you wish to close out this Faith in Action project, invite the children to add their contributions to the jar and give them an opportunity to talk about ways in which they were (or were not) able to gather pennies or coins. The goals of this activity are to reinforce their understanding of the power of perseverance and to give them an opportunity to share how it felt to work hard to advance goodness and justice (in the form of helping the recipient of the pennies that the children had chosen).

You can also give the children an opportunity to continue the experience of persevering beyond the life of the Moral Tales program. Give each child a small clear plastic jar for pennies and spend time now helping the children decorate these to take home. Encourage them to work on their own and with their families to fill the jar in the best ways they can find. In your Taking It Home message to parents for this session, mention the continuation of this Faith in Action project about perseverance. Offer families the option of donating the money they collect to a cause of their choice or bringing it back to you when religious education programs resume, to add to the larger jar for a common cause.

If this Faith in Action project can continue after this session, use today's time to plan further actions to fill the group's Parrots for Pennies container. If the children chose a bake sale in the last session, plan this with them today. In this session, children can make signs announcing the bake sale. If they have chosen to ask the congregation to donate coins to the jar, plan a small Parrots for Pennies presentation for the children to make during worship, during coffee hour, or at another time.

To help the children ask the congregation for money toward their cause, you may suggest to them that they think like the "Brave Little Parrot." She wanted to help her friends in the forest and she didn't give up. One idea would be for you to stand up during the announcements in congregational worship, holding the microphone, and briefly describe the story and the children's Faith in Action project, Parrots for Pennies. Have the children "fly" from their seats around the congregation, dropping a penny in the jar and taking a turn at the microphone asking for help. If the children like this idea, then practice it first in your meeting space. Setting a place for the jar as you will in the worship space, use a prop for the microphone, and have the children "fly" from various places around the room, each dropping a penny (that you provide) in the jar and saying, "Please help," into the microphone.

If the group chooses this project, be ready to tell the congregation at the end of the activity where they can find the jar after the service and how long you will be collecting pennies.

### **Including All Participants**

If you find that you do not have enough children from the group at worship on the day you plan to announce Parrots for Pennies fundraising, you can ask other children in the sanctuary if they would like to join in on the flying and dropping pennies in the jar.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. If this is the final session, you may wish to write some suggestions to future leaders of Moral Tales and/or leaders who will work next with this group of children. Make note of any particular activities and approaches you found most /least effective with this particular group and any information about group dynamics that may be helpful to them.

You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Which activities worked well? What didn't work so well?

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How well did the activities match the learning styles of these children? What could we do differently to better accommodate for learning styles in future sessions?
- How well did the session balance physically active with sedentary activities?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- What connections did children make with the activities and/or central ideas? How did we know that was occurring?
- What connections did children make with each other? What connections did we make with the children? When was that most evident?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our director of religious education?

## **TAKING IT HOME**

*Drops that gather one by one finally form a sea.*  
— Persian proverb

### **IN TODAY'S SESSION...**

We focused on the theme of cooperation. The children acted out an Aesop's fable about an old woman who taught her children that they would be stronger in life if they worked together and appreciated one another. The story used the metaphor that while one stick can easily break, a bundle of sticks is strong. Your child made a bundle of sticks, with one stick representing each child in the Moral Tales group. Children will also bring home some loose sticks that you can use to retell the story together.

As this was the final session of Moral Tales, we did some special culminating activities to remember all that we have learned and to honor the contributions of every individual in the group. You will want to ask your child about this. If they brought home a mini-version of our



Moral Compass poster, use it to talk with your child about what they have learned.

Keep the Moral Compass somewhere visible. When a difficult problem arises, you can point to the compass and ask, "What ways of being are written on this compass that could help us solve this problem with goodness and fairness?"

### **EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.**

Let your child retell the story, "The Bundle of Sticks," to the family using the craft sticks. Talk about ways in which each individual in your family makes the family bundle stronger. Make note of all the ways that your family already works cooperatively, and brainstorm together some ways that you could be more cooperative. You may wish to adopt the question, "Are we acting like a bundle of sticks or individual sticks right now?"

### **EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. TRY...**

As you go about your week practice including everyone in discussions of how to solve problems. You can introduce this in the form of a game called Cooperative Musical Chairs. This game is played like regular Musical Chairs, except that when you take away chairs, no one is out and everyone tries to find a way for all the people to fit on the remaining chairs. To make it more cooperative make sure everyone has a chance to suggest ways to best arrange the people. Gently make note of when you are working cooperatively and when not.

See other cooperative games in *The Cooperative Sports and Games Book* by Terry Orlick (New York: Pantheon, 1987) or *The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book* by Terry Orlick (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLES OF JOYS AND SORROWS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Large container, such as ceramic or metal bowl
- Play sand (can be found at local hardware store) or unscented cat litter
- Large number of candles
- Basket for candles
- Matches or lighter

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Fill your container with the play sand or cat litter.

- Put the candles in the basket.

### **Description of Activity**

Determine if your room and building policies allow for open flames. If not, consider doing this activity with a felt board and felt candles or with beads in a jar.

Begin by lighting a "starter" candle. Invite the children to come forward one at a time and light a candle of joy and sorrow from the starter candle and push it into the sand. The child should then face the group and tell them what the candle is for. Translate the language so they understand that we are talking about things that have made them very happy or sad.

Candles of joy and sorrow offer the opportunity for children to experience what is a weekly ritual in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. This activity can deepen sense of community in the Moral Tales group. It gives participants a chance to name those things which they carry in their hearts, encourages listening to others, and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not leave burning candles unattended. When all who wish to participate have done so, blow the candles out and put the matches away in a safe place.

### **Including All Participants**

If a child is physically unable to light a candle and stand to address the group, ask the child to invite another child to light a candle for them or offer to do it yourself. Allow the child to speak joys and sorrows from where they are sitting.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: WHAT WOULD UU DO? MORAL COMPASS GAME (30 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Moral Compass poster
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Several copies of Leader Resource 2, [What Would UU Do?](#) (included in this document) Dilemma Slips, and scissors
- Sound maker

### **Preparation for Activity**

- If you are leading Moral Tales on your own, invite your director of religious education, another leader, or a parent volunteer to join you in leading this activity.
- Get the Moral Compass poster ready for children to spin the needle so it will land on a

specific word or phrase. If you have not used the Moral Compass poster, or yours does not have a working "spinner," you will need to write, on a piece of newsprint, the virtues children can use to solve their dilemmas. See Leader Resource 3, List of Moral Tales Session Concepts for a list of words and short phrases you can write and post.

- If the group has six or fewer children, have them do this as a whole-group activity and working on each dilemma together. If you have seven or more, decide how you will make two or three teams so that each team includes children who tend to be articulate and engaged. If the group is large, make as many teams as you have adults to help them.
- Print out several copies of Leader Resource, What Would UU Do? Dilemma Slips. Cut apart the dilemma slips. Dilemmas are designed to pull in all of the ways to get to goodness and justice (virtues) the Moral Tales curriculum presents. You may wish to pull out five or six favorites for the game that particularly apply to concepts your Moral Tales program has covered.
- Prepare an area where the teams can sit on either side (or in three different locations) and the role plays can happen in the middle.
- Post a piece of newsprint for keeping track of teams' points.

### **Description of Activity**

In this culminating activity for the Moral Tales curriculum the group reviews the concepts they have learned across all of the session by playing a team role-playing game. By using the title of "What would UU do?" you are reinforcing their identity as Unitarian Universalists and reminding them about principles and qualities that we value.

Indicate the Moral Compass poster or the newsprint where you have listed the concepts the group has explored in Moral Tales. Guide the children to remember each session and its central story. For instance, you may point to "Interdependence" and remind the children about the story, "We Are All One."

You may need to briefly define the concepts on the Moral Compass or newsprint list for the group. Do not spend more than five minutes revisiting past Moral Tales sessions.

Now invite the children to play a game called, "What Would UU Do?" (If you want to excite them, pretend to

be a TV game host and say it very dramatically.) Tell them:

In this game you will use all of the wisdom you have about what is good and what is fair and how we can act for goodness and justice, no matter what problems you face. "UU" in this game stands for Unitarian Universalist. As Unitarian Universalists, we share common beliefs about how to be a good and fair person.

This game will look similar to "Family Feud," in that it is played between two teams and the players on each team work together.

Form two teams. Be sure that both teams have children who take leadership roles, children who are comfortable with self-expression, and children whom you think understand and can articulate the concepts the group has learned.

Describe the game:

Each team will sit on opposite sides of the room or open space. Choose one person to close their eyes and spin the Moral Compass. The person will have to spin it until the needle lands on specific words. Do not let the other team see which words you landed on!

As children arrange themselves in teams and choose the child who will spin, be ready with dilemma slips. Visit teams, one at a time. Help the spinner spin the Moral Compass or, if you do not have a spinnable Moral Compass, help the child close his/her eyes and randomly put his/her finger on one of the words or phrases you have written on newsprint to represent sessions of Moral Tales.

When the needle lands on a word or phrase, say (quietly) to the team:

Using this trait, what could you do to solve this problem... ?

And read the team the dilemma you have chosen for them.

If you have two adults, have an adult work with each team to make sure they grasp the meaning of the virtue they are to use, the nature of the dilemma they are to solve, and the task at hand.

Let the children in both groups brainstorm actions that they could take. If the challenge and the trait are not a good fit, allow the team to choose another virtue from the Moral Compass or the list on newsprint. Use leading questions such as; "How could we use the Golden Rule to solve this problem?", "Would it take courage to solve this problem?" or "How would it help to have faith if you had a problem like this?"

Allow teams about five minutes to choose a response to the dilemma that uses a specific virtue. Then, help each team craft a role play. Determine how many parts are needed and add parts to be sure that everyone is included. Quickly practice acting out the scenario, making sure to include the trait.

An example of what this might look like would be if they worked with Dilemma #1 and the concept of "Inner voice". One child could pretend to be a child with a broken leg using crutches. The other children could talk to themselves out loud, saying things like, "I wonder what it is like having crutches?" "I would need help carrying things." "The right thing to do would be to help her with her lunchbox and backpack."

When teams are ready, ask them to each perform their role play for the other team. When the first team is done, invite the children on the other team to confer to guess what the dilemma was and what direction on the Moral Compass was used to solve it. Teams get 10 points for identifying the main trait and 1 point for each additional trait they think was shown in the role play. (This way there are no wrong answers!)

Give the other team only one or two minutes to write down the traits they saw and to have a spokesperson share them. Each time they name a virtue that was used, you may wish to sound the loud sound maker for effect and add a point to their side of the newsprint scoreboard. If it seems that children are simply looking at the Moral Compass poster and shouting out words, slow them down and ask for an example of how that trait was used.

When the team is done guessing look back at the list of compass traits and ask both groups if anything is missing from this list. "What other virtues were involved in solving this problem that are not on our list?" If words such as "compassion," "helpfulness" or "thoughtfulness" are mentioned, and they are not on your Moral Compass poster, you may like to add them.

Next, reverse roles so that the other team shares their role play and the opposite team guesses which traits were used. If you have time, give each team another chance to spin and another dilemma to solve.

Add the points at the end. You may mention:

In this game of What Would UU Do? the more points your team has, the better job the other team did of acting out their dilemma and their ideas for solving it. Good job, everyone!

To close this activity, bring children's attention back to the Moral Compass or newsprint list of virtues. Say, in your own words:

Isn't it wonderful to know that there are so many ways that we can learn to be good and fair people in this world?

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: TAKE-HOME MINI-COMASSES (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Copies of handout, Take-Home Mini-Compass for all participants (three-page story)
- A sample, finished compass
- Brass fasteners for all participants, scissors (including left-handed scissors), tape or glue, and markers, pencils or pens
- Optional: Hole-puncher

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Print out enough copies of the two-page handout, Take-Home Mini-Compass, for all participants plus several extra. Use as thick paper as possible, preferably card stock. The thicker the paper you use, the more useful you will find a hole-puncher.
- Make one or two paper compasses to show the children.
- Cut out the circles and arrows in advance, or plan for the children to do this as part of the activity.

### **Description of Activity**

Making take-home mini-compasses reinforces the cumulative learning of Moral Tales. This activity will work nicely following Alternate Activity 2: What Would UU Do? – Moral Compass.

Show the children the sample compass(es) you have made. Distribute two-page handout to each child at work tables, along with child-safe scissors and markers, pencils, and pens. Invite children to cut out the circle and the arrow from their handouts, if you have not done so for them. Tell them they may also color the face of their compass or color their arrow.

Visit each child and help them insert a brass fastener through the middle of their circle and arrow to join the two pieces together. If you are using a hole-puncher, you will need to fold the compass circle in half to punch a hole in the circle's center. Then place the brass fastener through the holes and flatten the ends so that it holds the arrow in place.

Give the children time to work individually to assemble their compasses. Older children can also help younger ones. The goal of this activity is to give the children a chance to work with materials making something that symbolizes the moral compass. Encourage them to take pride in making the compass and in decorating it in a way that is pleasing to them.

### **Including All Participants**

If you are concerned that some children may be unable to complete the assembly process, have several compasses pre-made. Invite the child(ren) to decorate with markers, stickers or whatever materials they can manipulate.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: GEMS OF GOODNESS PARTY (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A special snack and drink
- Paper plates, paper cups and plastic utensils as needed
- Gems of Goodness jar
- Bowl of extra gems of goodness, several for each child
- Sound instrument
- Optional: Moral Compass poster

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Set out all of the materials for the celebration at the table(s) where the children will be sitting.
- Set the Gems of Goodness Jar on a table where everyone can see it, with the bowl of extra gems.
- Take some time with your co-leader to remember the different Gems of Goodness stories and acts that each child shared. Remember also acts of goodness and justice that happened during Moral Tales sessions or Faith in Action projects. Make a list if this is helpful to you, and so that you will have a memory for each child.

### **Description of Activity**

In this culminating activity you are celebrating the many acts of goodness that have taken place in and out of the Moral Tales sessions, with a special feast.

This is an alternative culminating activity to Alternate Activity 2, What Would UU Do? Moral Compass Game. Both activities offer children a chance to revisit, apply, and reflect on the concepts learned over the term.

If you have been doing the Gems of Goodness project for a few sessions, then the group may have already filled the jar and had a celebration. Or this may be the first time you are celebrating. Either way, the goal of this activity is to honor the learning from the Moral Compass curriculum and recognize ways the children have acted from goodness and fairness in their everyday lives and during these sessions.

Invite the children to be seated at the table(s). Allow everyone to begin their snacks. Then, use the sound instrument to bring them to quiet.

Tell them that you are going to honor each one of them for the acts of goodness and fairness that they shared during the Moral Tales program. Begin with one child and tell the story of an act of goodness or fairness that they either shared in the Gems of Goodness activity or did or mentioned in some other aspect of the program. Then, give the child a gem to take home for this remembrance and invite the others to give a group cheer: "Yaaaaay, \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name)!"

Go around the circle until you have shared a story for each child. If you wish, you may ask the children after each child's story to identify which virtues on the Moral Compass that child used in their act of goodness. Or, return to the Moral Compass poster after you have awarded gems to every child. Ask them to think of one more act of goodness that they, or someone else in the group did that involved using each specific virtue. For example, you might point to "Golden Rule" and ask them to think about an act of fairness or goodness that they or someone else did that involved using the Golden Rule. Try to see how many of the virtues on the Moral Compass you can cover with their own stories.

### **Including All Participants**

With leader preparation, everyone can be included in this activity.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: COOPERATIVE HULA HOOP GAME (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- One large hula hoop
- Optional: A second large hula hoop
- Sound instrument

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Move to an open area or clear the chairs and tables to make space for everyone to stand in a wide circle.

## Description of Activity

The goal of this activity is to teach the children how to work cooperatively together, and how to speak to each other in a supportive manner. A secondary goal is to give the children a kinesthetic activity in which their bodies and minds are engaged and they can get their wiggles out before and after more sedentary activities.

Invite the children to stand together in a circle and hold hands. Tell them:

The objective of this game is for you to successfully pass a hula hoop around the whole circle, without letting go of hands at any time. After I put the hula hoop on the circle, you must not let go at all, until the hula hoop goes all the way around the circle, back to where I start it.

Ask the children what they could do if they need to scratch their nose or pull up their socks during this game. Let them respond. Tell them:

If you need to scratch your nose, you can do it while still holding hands. You just have to ask

the person next to you, nicely, so you do not pull on them.

Explain that while they are holding hands they can help each other pass the hula hoop as each child climbs in and out of it. Tell them they will have to all work together to complete this task, and they must speak to each other supportively as they each step in and out of the hula hoop with the help of their neighbors. Say:

If I notice that people are yelling at each other or expressing impatience, not being supportive, I will use the sound instrument. Then everyone will quiet down, and we'll look at the problem together.

The children should eventually figure out that they will be able to pass the hula hoop around the circle by each taking a turn passing it over the head of the person next to them, who then steps out of it, and passes it along the next child's arm, until it has gone around the circle. Even when they are holding hands they will be able to grab and nudge the hula hoop along. If they figure the problem out too quickly, add a second hula hoop going the opposite direction.

## MORAL TALES: SESSION 16: STORY 1: THE BUNDLE OF STICKS

*Adapted from an Aesop's fable.*

Once upon a time, an old woman lived on a beautiful farm in the country. From her window, she could see pasture land, fields of grain, barns filled with animals, orchards and forests beyond. The farm was special to the old woman because it had been in her family for many generations. She had lived there her whole life, and grew up to be a mother, and raised her family of \_\_\_\_ (Leader — Count the number of children in your class). Now her husband was dead, and she too was in the last days of her life.

The old woman should have been content after such a fortunate life, but she was not. She lay on her bed worrying about her grown children. They could not seem to get along. She heard them quarreling day and night. Even though some of them were good at farming, and some at working with the animals, some at carpentry, and others at cooking or preserving the food they grew, they each thought their job was the most important and that the others didn't work hard enough. They were all grown-ups now, but they held grudges against each other from things in the past, and they were jealous of each other's good fortune.

The old woman tried talking to her children about living in peace, yet they seemed to grow increasingly bitter by the day. She felt sure that they would not be able to keep the family farm after she had died, because they could not seem to work together or appreciate each other's gifts.

Then one day as her strength waned, she had an idea. She called her children to her bedside. "I have one last favor to ask of you," she said. "I would like each one of you to go to the forest and find two sticks. Bring them here tomorrow and I will explain."

The children did as she asked and came to her room the next day, with two sticks each. (Leader — At this point, hand each child two craft sticks.)

"Thank you children," the old woman said. "Please put one of your sticks down, and see if you can break the other one in half." The children easily broke their sticks in half. (Leader — Invite the children to try to break one stick in half with their hands.)

Then the old woman asked the children to pass her the remaining whole sticks.

"Let us gather the remaining sticks into a bundle," she said. (Leader — Gather the remaining sticks from the children and wrap the rubber band around them. Make sure there are at least seven sticks in the bundle, or add more to represent missing children, co-leaders, guests who have visited Moral Tales, etc. to make the bundle thicker.)

Then the old woman passed the bundle back to her children and said, "Please pass this bundle of sticks amongst you and tell me — is it as easy to break the bundle as it was the single stick?" (Pass the bundle to the child nearest you and allow them to try to break it. Tell them to only use their hands. Some children will try to use feet or even to take the bundle apart. Wait until all of the children have had a turn trying to break the bundle with their hands.)

The children passed the bundle amongst them but, just like you, none of them could break the bundle of sticks.

"You my children, are like these sticks," the old woman said. "If you go your separate ways, quarrelling, and holding resentments toward one another, you will each be alone like the individual sticks. The difficulties of life will easily hurt you. But if you work together, appreciate each other's strengths, cherish what you share in common, and care for each other, you will be strong like the bundle of sticks, and nothing in life can break you. Find strength and joy in one another's company, and you will live well and accomplish much."

The children took their mother's lesson to heart, letting go of past grudges, focusing on what they shared in common, appreciating each other's strengths, and working together. The old woman died peacefully, and the farm remained in the family for many generations.

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 16: LEADER RESOURCE 1: PARROTS FOR PENNIES LETTER TO PARENTS**

Dear Parents,

As part of our session on Perseverance, the children started a new Faith in Action project today.

Faith in Action projects help us to practice the skills and virtues we are learning about. The children heard a story about a small parrot that kept flying back and forth to a river and then over a forest fire, shaking the water from its wings over the flames, until it caught the attention of a greater creature that was so moved by the parrot's determination that its tears put out the fire.

This project is called Parrots for Pennies. This project involves working together to raise money by helping to get a large plastic jug filled with coins to give to a cause that the children have chosen. It is not expected that each child will add many coins to the jug, but that they will all keep working to inspire others to help until the jar is full.

The children thought of various ways to help fill the jar. Ask your child to share some of these ideas with you. Perhaps your family could put a cup on the table and fill it with pocket change all week. Maybe you can brainstorm some creative ways to raise money to add to the jar.

The children may wish to hold a bake sale on (day, date) to raise money to fill the Parrots for Pennies jar. If you would like to participate by providing baked goods the children can sell at coffee hour, please let us know what you will bring, and deliver your baked goods to the congregation's coffee hour room before worship on that day.

This is a volunteer activity and you and your children are under no pressure to contribute or participate. If you have any questions please feel free to contact one of us.

Yours in Faith,

(Co-leader names and contact information)

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 16: LEADER RESOURCE 2: WHAT WOULD UU DO? DILEMMA SLIPS**

There are more than 15 dilemmas suggested to use for the activity. All of the session concepts (Moral Compass directions) taught in the Moral Tales program can be used to resolve at least one dilemma.

Download this Leader Resource into a word processing document on your computer. Use your word processing program to delete the dilemmas you won't use and add dilemmas you think of. Print this copy as a reference for co-leaders to use during the activity.

Then, make a copy of the document. On this version, delete the references to words and phrases from the Moral Compass. Put page breaks in between the dilemmas. Print out two copies, and cut the dilemmas into slips to give the teams.

### **Dilemma #1**

(Empathy, Generosity, Inner Voice, Interdependence, Responsibility, Golden Rule, Welcoming, Non-Violence, Cooperation, Respect)

A girl at school has broken her leg and is on crutches. She needs help carrying her books and belongings around the school. She is new to the school and doesn't have any good friends yet. How could you help her? What other traits would you also draw on? (You are hoping they will talk about how it must feel to be in her shoes, and what they could do to help her individually and together.)

### **Dilemma #2A**

(Generosity, Inner Voice, Interdependence, Responsibility, Fairness, Golden Rule, Welcoming, Non-Violence, Cooperation, Empathy)

A kid at school forgot his lunch. How could you help him individually? How could you get others kids to help too? (You hope they will talk about sharing individually and collectively.)

### **Dilemma #2B**

(Generosity, Empathy, Balance, Fairness, Inner voice)

You have more than 100 toys. You have learned that there are children who only have one or two toys. What can you do?

### **Dilemma #3**

(Courage, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Empathy, Inner voice, Interdependence, Golden Rule, Welcoming, Non-Violence, Forgiveness, Courage, Perseverance, Cooperation)

There is a new child in your school who has recently moved from another country. There is a small group of kids who are making fun of them because they have a strong accent. They keep surrounding them at recess and in the hall and pretending to talk like them. How can you help? (You hope they will talk about standing up to bullies even if it is scary.)

### **Dilemma #4**

(Forgiveness, Empathy, Golden Rule, Generosity).

A friend of yours borrowed one of your favorite toys and broke it. What can you do to keep being friends with them?

### **Dilemma #5**

(Non-violence, Cooperation, Forgiveness, Golden Rule)

Your brother or sister gets mad at you because they think that you got something special and they didn't. They throw something at you as are walking away from them. You feel like throwing something back at them. What do you do?

### **Dilemma #6**

(Perseverance, Empathy, Generosity, Interdependence, Golden Rule, Respect)



A family in town has a flood in their house and all of their possessions are going to be ruined if they don't get them out of the house quickly. How could you help and how much time would you give them? (To emphasize perseverance you hope they will talk about how they will have to work for as long as it takes to help move the family's belongings.)

**Dilemma # 7A**

(Faith, Empathy, Golden Rule)

Someone that you care about is sick and you are lying in bed or sitting in school worrying about them. What can help you to feel better? (You hope they will think about praying for them, trusting that it will be ok no matter what, doing things to help that person, or show them that they care.)

**Dilemma # 7B**

(Faith, Courage, Perseverance, Inner voice)

You aren't chosen for the part in the school play that you wanted or for the sports team you wanted to be on. How do you help yourself to feel better? (You hope they can talk about asking for help from others to feel better, having faith that everything will be ok for them in the long run, having the courage and perseverance not to give up trying, using their inner voice to comfort self.)

**Dilemma #7C**

(Faith (in friendship, in the highest good), Inner voice, Responsibility, Courage)

Your best friend has gone to play in the river even though you have both been forbidden by your parents to play in the river without adult supervision. Your friend has threatened never to talk to you again if you tell your parents. What would you do?

**Dilemma # 8**

(Fairness, Empathy, Inner voice, Golden Rule, Generosity, Welcoming)

On Valentines' Day you notice that some kids get a ton of valentines and candy and some got none or almost none. How could this holiday be made fairer for all kids?

**Dilemma # 9**

(Balance, Non-Violence, Respect)

You are helping your grandparents in the garden when your little brother or sister sees a worm and wants to squish it. Your grandmother tells you both that worms make tunnels and eat the soil to make more oxygen and nutrients for the plants. Can you make up a story that helps your little brother or sister see that worms are important? The teacher can start it by saying, "One day the Mayor of Garden land thought that worms looked yucky and ordered that they be taken out of every garden in the land. What would happen to Garden land?" (You are hoping to talk with them about balance, though nonviolence is obviously important. You hope they will talk about how the plants wouldn't grow and the birds wouldn't have any food and would stop singing, etc.)

**Dilemma #10**

(Respect, Golden Rule, Empathy, Welcoming, Cooperation, Forgiveness, Courage, Balance)

There is a boy in your class who gets teased because he likes to draw unicorns more than anything. What traits would you use to remind yourself and others that everyone has a right to be who they are and do what they want to do?

**Dilemma #11**

(Inner Voice, Empathy, Responsibility, Non-violence, Respect)

You find a month's worth of lunch tickets on the floor in the bathroom. How do you decide whether to keep them or turn it in to the teacher? (You hope they will talk about listening to their conscience or inner voice to let them know that they would not be being honest if they kept them and that someone else would suffer as a result of it.)

**Dilemma #12**

(Responsibility, Golden Rule, Respect, Interdependence, Inner voice, Non-violence)

Some kids at recess are whispering a mean story about someone else. They tell you the story and say, "Pass it on." What should you do, and why? (You hope they will talk about how even if they didn't start it, it is their responsibility for not passing it on and for telling the other kids that it is a mean way to act.)

**Dilemma #13**

(Interdependence, Generosity, Empathy, Golden Rule)

You hear that many trees are being cut down in the Amazon Rain Forest to make more grazing ground for cattle so that people can eat more meat. What idea helps you to question how it will hurt the earth, animals and people to cut down so many trees? (You hope they will talk about how we are dependent on the trees because they make oxygen, and are homes for animals.)

**Dilemma #14**

(Welcoming, Cooperation, Golden Rule, Empathy, Generosity)

A new child is coming to your class in a few days and your teacher asks you to think of ways to help the child feel welcomed and comfortable. What can you do by yourself? What could you do as a group? (You hope they will think about making and doing things that help the child to feel welcomed and accepted. Examples could be welcome posters, volunteering to show them around or be their buddy for a day or to eat with you at lunch.)

**Dilemma #15**

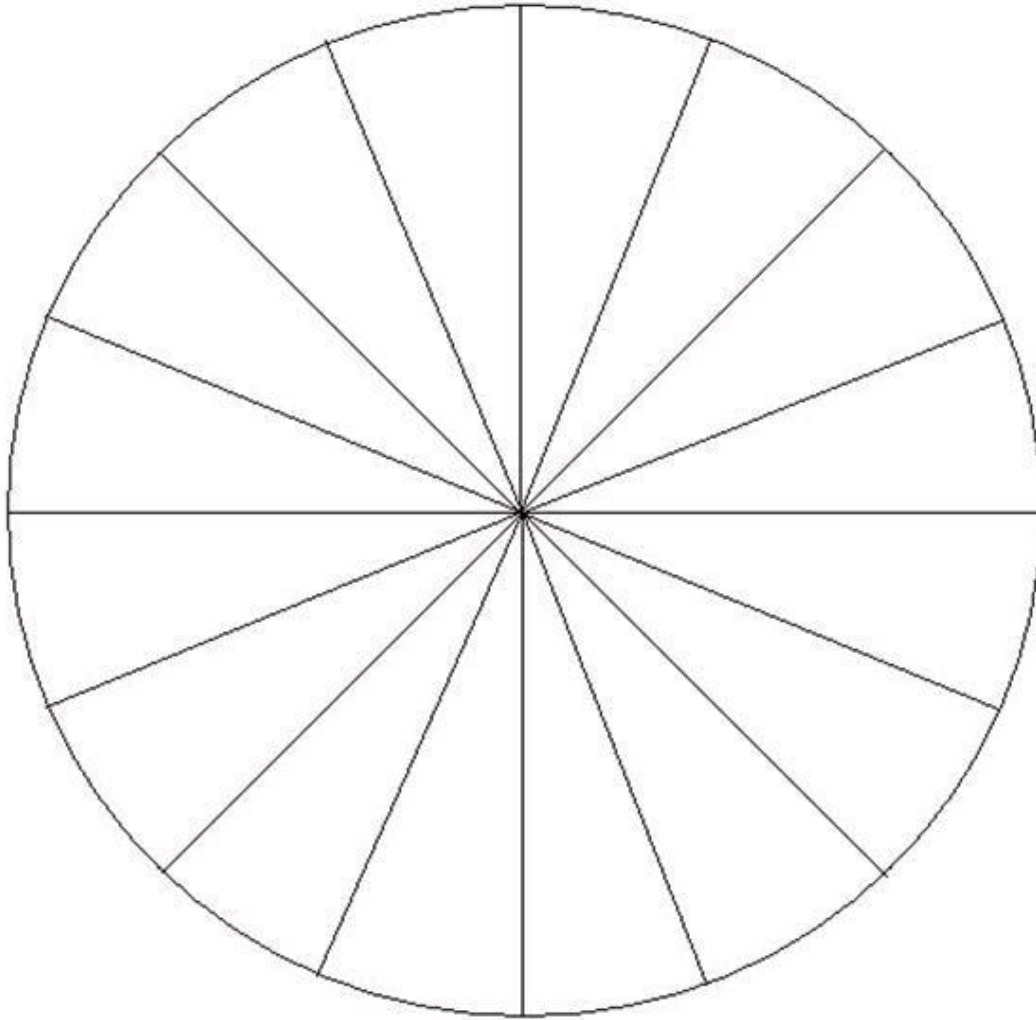
(Cooperation, Golden Rule, Respect)

You and your friends are trying to decide what game to play at recess, but people can't agree. It seems that everyone is talking at once and no one is listening. What can you do to help make it so that everyone feels that they get a turn to choose the game? (You hope they will talk about and demonstrate cooperation in which people take turns deciding and listening to one another.)

## **MORAL TALES: SESSION 16: LEADER RESOURCE 3: LIST OF MORAL TALES SESSION CONCEPTS**

<b>Session Title</b>	<b>Concept as Noted on Moral Compass Poster</b>
1 We Are All One	Interdependence
2 Conscience: Hearing the Inner Voice	Inner voice
3 Faith, Hope and Prayer	Faith
4 In Another's Shoes	Empathy
5 Forgiveness	Forgiveness
6 Welcome One and All	Welcoming
7 Seeing Others with Awe	Respect
8 Do Unto Others	Golden Rule
9 Generosity: Give And Ye Shall Receive	Generosity
10 Footprints: Treading Softly on Earth	Balance
11 Do No Harm	Non-violence
12 Making a Difference	Responsibility
13 Justice for All	Fairness
14 Acting When Conscience Calls	Courage
15 Courage and Perseverance	Perseverance
16 Working Together	Cooperation

**MORAL TALES: SESSION 16:  
LEADER RESOURCE 4: TAKE-HOME MORAL COMPASS TEMPLATE**



## FIND OUT MORE

*Discovery Time for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution* by Sarah Pirtle (Nyack, NY: The Children's Creative Response to Conflict Program, 1998). This is a wonderful resource for any teacher who wishes to promote a sense of community, cooperation and conflict resolution in the classroom. There are many fun activities and games included.

### **Fidget Objects**

The idea of having a basket of "fidget objects" available during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader and advocate for children with special needs. It is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, koosh balls, and other soft, quiet, manipulatable objects.

When you introduce the fidget object basket to the group, begin by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may wish to use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children that the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the basket available for the duration of the session, or bring the basket out only during activities, such as hearing a story told, that require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.