

**WONDERFUL WELCOME**  
**A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children**  
**K-1**



**BY AISHA HAUSER AND SUSAN LAWRENCE**

© Copyright 2008 Unitarian Universalist Association.

This program and additional resources are available on the UUA.org web site at [www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith](http://www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS .....	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	3
THE PROGRAM.....	4
SESSION 1: THE GIFT OF LOVE.....	14
SESSION 2: THE GIFT OF COVENANT.....	25
SESSION 3: THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS.....	36
SESSION 4: THE GIFT OF KINDNESS.....	46
SESSION 5: THE GIFT OF INVITATION .....	55
SESSION 6: THE GIFT OF FRIENDS .....	65
SESSION 7: THE GIFT OF HELPING.....	81
SESSION 8: THE GIFT OF FAMILIES .....	94
SESSION 9: THE GIFT OF MUTUAL CARING .....	104
SESSION 10: THE GIFT OF PROTECTION.....	119
SESSION 11: THE GIFT OF STEWARDSHIP.....	129
SESSION 12: THE GIFT OF ACCEPTANCE.....	138
SESSION 13: THE GIFT OF LEARNING TOGETHER .....	147
SESSION 14: THE GIFT OF SPIRIT .....	159
SESSION 15: THE GIFT OF OURSELVES.....	171
SESSION 16: THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY.....	181

Note: If you add or delete text in this program, you may change the accuracy of the Table of Contents. The Table of Contents is an auto-generated list; if you change content and want an accurate representation of the page numbers listed in the TOC, click the table and click "Update Field." Then, click "Update page numbers only." Click OK.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Aisha Khadr Hauser** is the children and families program director for the Lifespan Faith Development staff group of the Unitarian Universalist Association. She was born in Alexandria, Egypt, and came to the United States as a toddler. She grew up in New Jersey and holds a master's degree in social work from Hunter College in New York City and a bachelor's degree in journalism with a minor in anthropology from Rutgers University. She worked as a child and family therapist at a mental health clinic before having her own two children, Leila and Luke. She is a Credentialed Associate Level religious educator who has served the Fourth Universalist Church in Manhattan and the First UU Church of Essex County, NJ. Aisha has held leadership positions on the Board of LREDA and was chair of the LREDA Integrity Team.

**Susan Lawrence** is the managing editor of the Tapestry of Faith series published by the Lifespan Faith Development staff group of the Unitarian Universalist Association. She holds a master's degree in teaching from Tufts University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut. Susan taught high school social studies and has taught writing, video and television production, media literacy, nonprofit program evaluation and other communications-related topics to learners of all ages. Susan is also an award-winning television producer, a produced playwright, and a freelance writer. A member of First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Malden, Massachusetts, Susan is a co-founder of the congregation's Worship and Music Committee. She also serves on the school council of her daughter Tihun's elementary school and is co-chair of a local arts council.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With appreciation to Gaia Brown for her contributions to the initial concept of this program.

With gratitude to Adrienne Ross for streamlining our work with exceptional project management.

To Wayne, Leila and Luke, with appreciation for your unconditional love. — A.H.

To my daughter, Tihun, whose wonderful welcome never ends. — S.L.

### **Tapestry of Faith Core Team**

#### **The following UUA staff brought Tapestry to fruition:**

Judith A. Frediani, Curriculum Director, Tapestry Project Director

Adrienne Ross, Project Manager

Susan Dana Lawrence, Managing Editor

Jessica York, Youth Programs Director

Gail Forsyth-Vail, Adult Programs Director

Pat Kahn, Children and Family Programs Director

Alicia LeBlanc, Administrative and Editorial Assistant

We are grateful to these former UUA staff members who contributed to the conceptualization and launch of Tapestry of Faith:

Tracy L. Hurd

Sarah Gibb Millsbaugh

Aisha Hauser

Pat Hoerl

Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

## THE PROGRAM

*The fragrance always stays in the hand that gives the rose.*

— Hada Bejar, 17th-century British poet and playwright

We must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body.

— John Winthrop, 17th-century governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony

Welcome. Welcome in love. Welcome in friendship. Welcome in faith. The Wonderful Welcome curriculum engages and challenges leaders and children alike to explore how and why we are willing to welcome others into our lives. We welcome not only strangers, but family, our peers, our neighbors and even entities that are not people such as our animal friends and nature itself.

How do we welcome? We welcome by sharing intangible gifts, those positive qualities which we all have inside us such as kindness, love, invitation, covenant and empathy. In this program, children learn to articulate and express a variety of intangible gifts, empowering them to share these gifts with others.

The intangible gifts explored in Wonderful Welcome are all components of welcoming itself, a core Unitarian Universalist value. This program helps children understand and practice other values central to Unitarian Universalism such as friendship, hospitality, and fairness. It offers children safe, positive and intentional ways to relate to one another, the people in their families, and the world around them as they investigate how they use gifts they can't see or touch to welcome others into their lives. Children will think about the intangible gifts they bring into the world, and the intangible gifts they receive. When and how do they get love from others? When and how do they show empathy? Who has given them the gift of friendship? How do they show that they want to be someone's friend? What does "helping" look like?

Each session begins with a Wonder Box that contains a symbol of the session's theme. The Wonder Box engages the children's curiosity and encourages a spirit of inquiry and reflection. In the first session, the box is empty to introduce the concept of "intangible." Throughout the program, a Wonder Box poster serves as a continual reminder of the gifts explored in each session.

## GOALS

Wonderful Welcome will:

- Expand children's understanding of their relationships with others, including people they know, people they will meet and all life that shares our planet
- Create opportunities for children to identify and practice a wide variety of welcoming behaviors; activate children's capacity to welcome many manifestations of the interconnected web of life, including people, animals and the natural environment
- Teach children the concept of "intangible gifts," qualities that can be shared but cannot be seen or held
- Teach the importance of welcoming as an act of Unitarian Universalist faith and as an expression of our Unitarian Universalist Principles
- Develop and enrich children's sense of belonging to their religious education peer community, their congregational community and the larger Unitarian Universalist faith community
- Introduce practices of stewardship
- Help children create a shared atmosphere that encourages a sense of reverence, awe, gratitude and wonder.

## LEADERS

A leader's role is to facilitate religious growth and exploration in the children while sharing their journey as seekers.

A team of two or more adults should lead Wonderful Welcome. The [Unitarian Universalist Association's Safe Congregations Handbook](#) notes that programs with two leaders present at all times helps assure child safety. If co-leaders cannot be present at every session, enlist parent volunteers to join with the leader to ensure that two adults are present. Ideally, co-leaders will be individuals who consider the congregation their own faith home. Several sessions call for the group to participate in the life of the congregation, for example, through worship or outreach programs. At least one leader should be a congregational member familiar with the committees, policies, culture and rituals of the congregation.

## PARTICIPANTS

The Wonderful Welcome program is designed for children in Kindergarten and first grade. You may find it useful to think about the range of developmental norms

for this age group. In [Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook](#) (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D. writes that five- and six-year-old children are generally able to:

- Coordinate gross motor skills through sports and games
- Draw, write, and use tools with beginning skill
- Think about more than one thing at a time; show the start of logical thinking
- Enjoy pretend play, but also begin to distinguish fantasy from reality
- Show interest in facts, numbers, letters, and words
- Learn rules, authority, and routines; may try to apply rules across different settings, such as using school rules at home
- Enjoy being correct, may apply rules too broadly or literally
- Use self as a reference point
- Learn through social interaction as well as through their individual actions
- Make rigid and/or binary statements about gender and racial identifications
- Are receptive to antiracist intervention and multicultural experiences
- Form first reciprocal friendships
- Develop increased altruism
- Are evolving from fascination with stories of wonder to a keen interest in learning and performing the concrete expressions of religion
- Start developing a sense of belonging to a faith community through the imitation of practices of adults by whom they feel accepted

Hurd offers a variety of strategies that speak to these developmental considerations and may help leaders shape sessions effectively for this age group. Some of these include:

- Provide outlets for physical activity, room for movement during quiet activities, new physical challenges in games.
- Include small-motor challenges, such as drawing, writing, painting, or using tools such as scissors.
- Create and sustain routines to give children a sense of control and opportunities to be "correct."

- Notice and talk about children's similarities and differences.
- Present complexities that help push children's thinking beyond simple dualisms; gently challenge children's natural moral rigidities.
- Provide opportunities for group work and group problem-solving.
- Respect children's desire to categorize.
- Support children in their beginning friendships to help them build an emotional base for future relationships.
- Welcome the whole child and respect the child as an individual, a member of the religious education group, and a member of the faith community.
- Provide encouragement and love.

## INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

A group can include children with a range of physical and cognitive abilities and learning styles, food allergies, and other sensitivities or limitations. Adapt activities or use alternate activities to ensure that every session is inclusive of all participants. In *Wonderful Welcome*, some activities suggest specific adaptations under the heading "Including All Participants." For example, for an activity in which participants are invited to make a life-size self portrait you will find an adaptation for the whole group to fully include a child who uses a wheel chair. 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.

As you plan your *Wonderful Welcome* sessions, be aware of activities that might pose difficulties for children who are differently abled. All spaces, indoor and outdoor, should be accessible to everyone 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 allergies, particularly to food, and make appropriate adaptations. Let your understanding of the different learning styles in the group guide your selection of activities for each session.

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). Patton explains how working to integrate all participants helps us practice our own faith:

Ministering to children with differences helps us be more creative in our ministry to all children and reaffirm our beliefs. Lessons of compassion,

caring, and acceptance benefit us all, young and old alike... We deepen our faith when we embrace and fight for the vision of an inclusive community.

Patton continues:

(We) ... have much to learn from these people about compassion and forgiveness, persistence and courage, and most importantly, the wholeness of their spirit and the gifts they offer if we allow them to flourish. Listening to children's stories encourages us to see each child's uniqueness rather than their limitations... Parenting, loving, befriending, and ministering to children with special needs changes people. How we handle the change will either mire us in the prevalent belief system about disability and limitations, or it will set us free and alter our ideas about who we are and why we are here.

Patton's book provides inspiration and strategies for congregations to institutionalize an inclusive faith community and internalize a spirit of justice. Consider reading this book and sharing it with congregational leadership.

## **FAMILIES**

The loving family unit is the primary source of spiritual nurture and religious education in a child's life. To engage parents and caregivers with their children's experience in Wonderful Welcome, it is vital to share with them the themes of the program. Each session includes a Taking It Home section for leaders to download, customize and share with families as a handout or email. Taking It Home summarizes the session's content and provides questions and suggestions to stimulate family conversations and activities at home. Taking It Home gives parents enough information to ask an engaging question such as: "What was in the Wonder Box today?" or, "What was it like to weave wool?" In this way, parents and children may learn together.

## **PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

All Wonderful Welcome sessions follow the same structure. Between an Opening and a Closing, activities guide participants to explore and experience an intangible gift and how we, as Unitarian Universalists, share that gift with others. The Wonder Box directly follows each Opening, and the Wonder Box Poster is used during each Closing. These rituals reinforce the theme of each session.

Each session also offers a Faith in Action activity, which is not included in the core 60-minute schedule. Nevertheless, Faith in Action is an important element of Tapestry of Faith curricula. You can incorporate Faith in Action into regular sessions if you have time, create

additional sessions to conduct Faith in Action activities, or offer multigenerational Faith in Action opportunities to the whole congregation at alternative times. . The time commitment for these activities varies greatly. Before you commit to a long-term Faith in Action project, be sure to obtain the support of congregational leadership and the children's families.

Every session has at least one alternate activity. You may add these to a session, or substitute one for a core activity if the alternate better fits your group or the time available. Feel free to use alternate activities outside of the Wonderful Welcome program for gatherings such as family retreats or intergenerational dinners when some interesting, thematic, child-friendly programming is needed.

### **Quote**

A quote introduces the theme of each session. You may 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 usually geared to children of this age. Co-leaders may like to reflect on a quote together to feel grounded in the session's ideas. Quotes are included in the Taking It Home section for families to consider.

### **Introduction**

The Introduction names the intangible gift and overall concepts of the session. It explains how the activities engage participants in exploring the session's ideas and indicates what to aim for and watch out for in planning and leading the session.

### **Goals**

The Goals section provides general 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 development, spiritual development, Unitarian Universalist identity development and faith development.

### **Learning Objectives**

The Learning Objectives specify intended outcomes for participants. As you plan a session, apply your knowledge of the group, the time available, your congregation's mission, and your own strengths as a leader to identify the most important and achievable learning objectives for the session. Then choose the activities that will best serve those aims.

### **Session-at-a-Glance**

The Session-at-a-Glance table lists the session's core activities in a suggested order for a 60-minute session and provides an estimated time for completing each activity. Note that you will need additional time to include a Faith in Action activity. The table also lists alternate

activities with their estimated times. Alternate activities can be substituted for core activities, added to the core session if time allows, or used in alternative settings.

### **Spiritual Preparation**

A short exercise focuses you on the session's intangible gift and helps connect the theme to your own life and Unitarian Universalist faith. Five or ten minutes of reflection on the session's purpose will deepen its meaning for you and free you to be present with the children in an authentic way. Recalling your own experiences, beliefs and spirituality will help you provide the best possible learning experience for the children while nurturing your own faith development.

### **Session Plan**

The session plan presents every element of the session in detail in the sequence established in the Session-at-a-Glance table. The session plan includes a Taking It Home section for families. The Resources section includes all the stories, handouts, and other resources that support the session activities. The Find Out More section suggests additional sources to help leaders and families further explore the session topics. It can be useful to scan Find Out More before leading a session.

If you are reading Wonderful Welcome online, you can move among each session's elements — Opening, Closing, Faith in Action, Activity 4, Story, and so on — as each element occupies its own web page. You can click on "Print this Page" at any time.

If you click on "Download Entire Program" or "Download Workshop" you will have a user-friendly document on your computer that you can customize using your own word processing program. Once you decide which activities you will use, you can format and print only the materials you need.

**Welcoming and Entering:** This section provides suggestions for greeting, orienting and engaging children as they arrive individually. If the group arrives together — for example, from worship — the Welcoming and Entering suggestions may be unnecessary or may be incorporated into the Opening.

**Opening:** Each session begins with a chalice-lighting and opening words to center the group. Shape this ritual to reflect the culture and practices of your congregation. To ensure safety, use an LED/battery-operated flaming chalice or a symbolic chalice.

**Activities:** The sequence of activities is designed to activate prior knowledge, pique interest, engage children in experiential learning and help them integrate and apply their observations and new knowledge. The variety of core and alternate activities addresses different learning styles. Choose activities according to the learning styles, developmental readiness, energy level and other aspects of the group.

**Materials for Activity:** This checklist identifies the supplies you will need.

**Preparation for Activity:** Review the list for each activity at least one week before leading a session as it may contain advance work that cannot be done at the last minute, such as securing parental permissions, downloading leader resources, or practicing telling a story aloud.

**Description of Activity:** This section provides detailed directions for implementing the activity. Read the activity descriptions carefully during your planning process so that you understand each activity and its purpose. When you are leading the group, use the description as step-by-step instructions.

**Including All Participants:** Adapting to include all participants should always be part of your planning process. For some activities, this section provides 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 an opportunity to live out their Unitarian Universalist faith and values in the world. By design, Faith in Action activities can engage leaders, children, their families, other congregants, and sometimes members of the wider community, often outside the group's regular meeting time and place. As multigenerational opportunities, they provide a way for children to work and bond with, inspire and be inspired by, other members of the congregation. Take advantage of the expertise and interests of members of your congregation, and the opportunities for service and education in your community and through the Internet.

**Taking It Home:** This resource is designed to help families extend their children's religious education experiences. Taking It Home may include games, conversation topics, ideas for incorporating Unitarian Universalist rituals in the home, and book or online sources to explore session themes. Customize Taking It Home to reflect what the children experienced in the session. Print and photocopy it for the children to bring home, or send it to all parents/caregivers as a group email.

**Alternate Activities:** Most sessions offer alternate activities. You can substitute these for core session activities or add them to the core activities. Some alternate activities are simpler versions of a core activity; some require more time than a core activity; some are particularly suited to be inclusive of children with developmental or ability differences.

**Resources:** The Resources section includes the stories, handouts and other resources needed for the session.

Story includes the full text of the session's central story and any other stories needed for session activities. Handouts are pages to print out and photocopy for participants to use in the session. Leader Resources include additional components to conduct session activities, such as a recipe, a template for a puzzle, or an illustration to show the group. Find Out More includes resources to explore the session topics further. These might include book or DVD titles, website URLs, audio links to music suggested for the session, or biographical information about Unitarians, Universalists or Unitarian Universalists. Review this section before leading the session.

## LEADER GUIDELINES

Wonderful Welcome provides a standard opening and closing ritual to use in each session. Keep Openings and Closings simple so participants can remember them from session to session. Use the ritual to provide continuity for participants with discontinuous attendance. If you can display it for the duration of the program, the Wonder Box poster provides a visual reminder of the session themes and intangible gifts.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Be aware of the flow of each session and maximize time for "teachable moments" as group interest allows. A session isn't a race, and shouldn't feel like one. On the other hand, participants need to feel excited about attending and being part of the group. By meeting their need for challenge, physical activity and enjoyable moments, you build a sense of community that will draw children into the program. If a group is reluctant to engage in reflection and discussion, expand the games or the artistic or musical expression activities and gradually increase time for shared reflection and insight.

When scheduling this program, leave room for your congregational traditions around holidays. Participating in the life of the congregation is as important for children as participating in religious education programming with their peers. Don't miss intergenerational services, such as Flower Communion, and multi-age opportunities such as winter holidays, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King Day or Valentine's Day.

The Wonderful Welcome program lends itself well to many aspects of congregational life. For example, Session 11, The Gift of Stewardship, can be used in conjunction with the congregation's pledge campaign. If your congregation is launching a capital campaign and/or a long-range plan to improve the congregational facilities, Session 16, The Gift of Community, talks about the rural American tradition of barn-raising. Consider

using elements of the session to involve the children, and perhaps a broader group, in the congregation's process. If your congregation has a Green Sanctuary Committee, engage its members in Session 10, The Gift of Protection, which focuses on our day-to-day connections with nature and our responsibility to take care of the Earth. A Faith in Action activity can involve the children in the work of the committee. A Social Justice committee may like to interact with the children as part of Session 7, the Gift of Helping; an adult committee or youth group could help the children raise money for a Heifer International donation.

## BEFORE YOU START

For each session, you need a Wonder Box and a poster representing the Wonder Box.

Instructions for both appear in Session 1. See the advance planning chart below to prepare to fill the Wonder Box and add to the Wonder Box poster each time you meet. When you cannot obtain the suggested item or a suitable replacement to put inside the Wonder Box, you can use the icon you plan to attach to the poster.

If you share space with other groups, arrange to store the Wonder Box and poster between sessions. If you do not have wall space to display the poster, obtain a folding easel.

Some sessions require materials to order or collect ahead of time. Some activities involve visits from people and animals. The chart below is intended to help with advance planning, but the best preparation is a careful reading of a session well in advance of leading it.

Note that Sessions 2 and 3 are designed to be done in sequence. The children make a group covenant in Session 2, The Gift of Covenant, and add consequences to it in Session 3, The Gift of Forgiveness.

In Session 9, The Gift of Mutual Caring, children focus on our connections with animals. Two activities suggest bringing live animals into the session. Find out from your director of religious education if animals are welcome in the facility and ask parents if any children have significant animal allergies or fears that would make it advisable to skip the live animal visitors. Make plans well ahead of time if you wish to include Alternate Activity 1, Visit from a Guide Dog, or Activity 4, Blessing of the Animals.

This chart provides a snapshot of Wonderful Welcome for long-range planning:

<b>Session</b>	<b>Wonder Box</b>	<b>Wonder Box Poster</b>	<b>Visitors, additional co-leaders, and long-range preparation needed</b>
----------------	-------------------	--------------------------	---



1 Gift of Love	---	Heart-shaped stickers — purchase	Activity 4, Shadow Play — Obtain equipment to cast shadows on flat, plain surface Faith in Action, Intergenerational Craft Time — Coffee Can Music Invite adult visitors. Collect empty coffee cans with snap-on plastic lids.
2 Gift of Covenant	Copy of the seven <a href="#">Unitarian Universalist Principles in children's language</a>	Paper chain — children make in session	FIA, Adults Covenant, Too! — Invite your minister and/or members of the congregation's board to meet with children. Prepare the adults to talk about their experiences with covenants.
3 Gift of Forgiveness	Dove and olive branch	Picture of dove and olive branch — Leader Resource	---
4 Gift of Kindness	Golden ruler	Golden Rule — Leader Resource	---
5 Gift of Invitation	Drinking goblet	Picture(s) of open doors — Leader Resource	FIA — Arrange with worship or coffee hour coordinators for the children to be ushers or greeters.
6 Gift of Friends	Woven friendship bracelet	Woven friendship bracelet — purchase or make	FIA — Plan session for a date/time when people will visit, such as a "Bring a Friend Sunday," or when your director of religious education can come tell visitors about Unitarian Universalism and the congregation.
7 Gift of Helping	Toy farm animals	Picture of the Earth with people around it — Leader Resource	FIA, Help the Goat Climb the Mountain for Heifer — Use Leader Resources and/or order free materials from Heifer International.
8 Gift of Families	Chinese characters for "kindness"	Chinese characters for "kindness" — Leader Resource	Activity 3, A Picture for Your Kitchen Wall — Find out how to pronounce the Chinese characters "ren" and "ci." FIA — Research ways to create a Chinese New Year celebration to share with the larger congregation.
9 Gift of Mutual Caring	Stuffed dog toy	Picture of guide dog — Leader Resource	A4, Blessing of the Animals — To include live animals, first make sure no children have allergies or fears and confirm that animals are allowed in the facility. FIA — Obtain ingredients to make Vegan Dog Treats. Contact no-kill shelter or guide dog training school to donate treats or funds. AA 1, Visit from a Guide Dog — Confirm no children have fears or allergies that rule out a guide dog visit. Invite a trained guide dog and their owner. Work with the religious educator to arrange for a guide dog and its owner to visit.
10 Gift of Protection	Items from Nature	Picture of Earth — Leader Resource	A2, Nature Inventory — If needed, obtain parents' permission for walk outside. Invite additional adults for supervision and to make the activity multigenerational. FIA — Engage additional adult volunteers to help conduct the energy survey with the children. Find out from an energy company in your community how to conduct an energy survey in your home congregation.

Or, schedule a time for an energy company auditor to lead the group in an energy survey.

11 Gift of Stewardship	Congregational directory, pictures of members and a few pennies	Picture of people at an event at your congregation	---
12 Gift of Acceptance	A toy platypus or picture of a platypus	Picture of platypus — Leader Resource	FIA — Arrange for the children to make a scheduled appearance during worship to present a musical pride parade, perhaps as a "Story for All Ages."
13 Gift of Learning Together	Alarm Clock	Picture of rooster — Leader Resource	FIA — Invite an adult to lead an arts and crafts activity, teach the children how to plant seedlings, or lead a yoga or dance activity. The important thing is that while an adult may demonstrate a skill, the children also have opportunities to help one another learn how to do it.
14 Gift of Spirit	Chalice	Picture of a flaming chalice	FIA — Arrange for the children to sing "This Little Light of Mine" in worship.
15 Gift of Ourselves	Toy embodied heart — purchase	Picture of a heart — Leader Resource	FIA — Arrange for children to present Wonder Boxes which contain the intangible gift of themselves to a gathering of the congregational community.
16 Gift of Community	Toy barn	Piece of cardboard — children make in session	FIA — Determine whether your congregation or community needs a community playground project. Identify stakeholders and invite some to visit and start the project with the children.

## PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

There are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalism (UU) draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

## RESOURCES

[\*Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook\*](#) by Tracey L. Hurd (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005)  
[\*The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children\*](#) by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar Second Edition (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003)

[Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities](#) by Sally Patton (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004)

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2005)

The Outrageous Outdoor Games Book by Bob Greyson (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, Inc., 2001) includes more than 100 group projects, games and activities for outside experience, including activities for a variety of learning styles. All games are easy to play, require little or no preparation and are readily adaptable to a variety of situations and skill levels. Step-by-step instructions are provided.

Junkyard Sports by Bernie DeKoven (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 2005) offers 75 innovative, creative demonstration games using nontraditional

approaches but outlined in the modes of six traditional team sports including soccer, baseball and volleyball. Games are geared to be adapted and modified by the participants across a wide range of ages and abilities. Fosters leadership, compassion and cooperation as participants create and adapt games.

### **Arts and Spirituality**

Scribble Art: Independent Creative Art Experiences for Children by Mary Ann F. Kohl, 2nd revised edition (Bellingham, WA: Bright Ring Publishing, 1994) includes many media: drawing, painting, assemblage, printmaking, collage, sculpture and crafts. It contains open-ended projects that are suitable for almost any age. Each page presents one project and is illustrated with line drawings. Each project is coded to show at a glance how much time and preparation are needed and what age or experience levels are appropriate.

## **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:

Lifespan Faith Development Staff Group  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
24 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, MA 02210-1409  
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:

Resource Development Office  
Ministries and Faith Development  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
24 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, MA 02210-1409  
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: THE GIFT OF LOVE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Love is something like the clouds that were in the sky before the sun came out. You cannot touch the clouds, you know; but you feel the rain and know how glad the flowers and the thirsty earth are to have it after a hot day. You cannot touch love either; but you feel the sweetness that it pours into everything.*

— Annie Sullivan

This session introduces the concept of intangibles, qualities that cannot be seen but exist and have value nonetheless. "Welcome" is itself an intangible gift, and it is through a variety of intangible gifts that welcome is communicated. The Wonderful Welcome program opens with the intangible gift of love.

This session begins with the Wonder Box, a beautiful, gift-wrapped box. Each time the group meets, the children will have a chance to wonder, and then find out, what is inside. In subsequent sessions, the Wonder Box will contain items that represent a central story or an intangible gift, but in this session, the children will find it empty.

However, is it really empty? It does contain the gift of love. As you guide the children to discuss love as a gift, you also introduce the concept of intangible gifts. Your guidance prepares the children to discover more intangible gifts as they explore "welcome" as the umbrella for the other gifts presented in this program.

In the story, *The Real Gift*, a child learns to distinguish between a homemade gift and the love with which it was made. The story demonstrates that although you cannot see or touch love, you can give and receive it by expressing kindness, offering acceptance, and sharing time with others.

Ask the children to think about the intangible gifts they bring to the world, and the intangible gifts they receive. When and how do they receive love from others? When and how do they show empathy? Have others given them the gift of friendship? How do they show that they want to be someone's friend? In this session, children begin a broad investigation of how they use intangible gifts to welcome others into their lives.

If you plan to do the Faith in Action activity, Coffee Can Music, plan ahead to collect coffee cans with snap-on plastic lids. You may wish to engage parents or the entire congregation to help save cans.

### GOALS

- Introduce the concept of gifts that cannot be seen, that is, "intangible gifts"
- Guide participants identify the intangible gifts they bring to and receive from others
- Explore the gift of love and how it can be demonstrated
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism values welcoming others
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Experience giving a gift they cannot see
- Learn that love is an intangible gift that is given and received
- Learn and sing the Christmas song, "Little Drummer Boy," and understand that it is about an intangible gift
- Experience something that is real but not quite there by playing with shadows
- Optional: Experience sharing the intangible gift of love by making a musical instrument with, and giving it to, an older person in the congregation.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: What Is It? Game	10
Activity 3: Story — The Real Gift	10
Activity 4: Shadow Play	10
Activity 5: Singing "Little Drummer Boy"	10
Faith in Action: Intergenerational Craft Time — Coffee Can Music	60
Closing	10

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Every day we have multiple opportunities to be welcoming. As a leader you will model welcoming behavior every time you meet with this group. Reflect on how you recognize the intangible gift of loving welcome.

How you have experienced welcome — as a child and as an adult — may influence how you feel about this session. Think about times when you felt welcomed by the love of strangers. Think about times when you have

had an opportunity to show loving welcome to others. Acknowledge times when you did not feel loving toward others and were not as welcoming as you could have been. Gently let go of the negative experiences.

Take a moment to think about a joyous welcoming experience, such as a time when you welcomed someone who was visibly grateful, or a time when you deeply needed to be welcomed, and someone met your need. Keep this memory with you, and the positive energy it creates, as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Nametags and markers
- Small heart-shaped stickers for nametags

#### Preparation for Activity

- Make a nametag for each child in the group and set these on a work table, with extra nametags, markers and stickers for new children and visitors.

#### Description of Activity

The Welcoming and Entering section is intended for the time before the beginning of a session when participants arrive individually over a period of time (that is, "straggle in"). Your participants may arrive together from worship.

Welcome participants as they arrive. Introduce them to the title of the program. Invite them to find their nametags, place a heart sticker on them and put them on.

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in circle.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Explain that each session starts with a ritual. Ask if anyone knows what a ritual is. You may say:

A ritual is something you do again and again, often at the same time of day. If you have a routine for going to bed, that is a kind of ritual.

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words, line by line.

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box
  - Cardboard box with fitted lid. It should be large enough to hold various items such as stuffed animals, books, etc.
  - Decorative wrapping paper or foil
  - Optional: Ribbons, stickers, glitter and other decorations

#### Preparation for Activity

- Make the Wonder Box by wrapping and decorating the bottom and the lid separately, making sure the lid remains easy to remove and replace. In this session, the Wonder Box remains empty. Prepare to open the box with obvious enthusiasm, because the children will not see anything in it.

#### Description of Activity

Use the Wonder Box to help participants understand the concept of intangible gifts.

With the children still in a circle around the chalice, invite them to guess what could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. After receiving some guesses, open the box with wide eyes and much enthusiasm. You could say something like:

Oh my goodness! This is the best gift that anyone could ever get!

When the children peer into the box, tilt it so that they clearly see there is nothing in it. As they show disappointment or confusion, immediately explain that the box has a precious gift that cannot be touched or seen: the gift of love. Ask, even though we can't really see love, it is very important, isn't it?



## ACTIVITY 2: WHAT IS IT? GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- The Wonder Box (empty)
- Everyone's imagination!

### Description of Activity

This activity involves imagination and interaction that model an important concept: A physical gift doesn't matter nearly as much as the feelings of giving and receiving.

If children seem to need a change from sitting in a circle, invite them to stand in a circle instead. Explain that each child will have the opportunity to give the Wonder Box to the person next to them. The person receiving the gift gets to imagine what the gift is.

A child will turn to the person next to them and give them the box. The person receiving the box will then tell the person what is in the box. For example:

Wow, thank you for the purple pet monkey you gave me!

To show the children how to play this game, leaders can receive the first gift and model an enthusiastic reaction.

When the box has gone around the circle, ask the children what it felt like to receive the Wonder Box. Ask how it felt to give a "gift" that made a friend happy because the friend got to choose what it was. If you have time, invite the children to pass the box again, in the opposite direction.

## ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE REAL GIFT (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [The Real Gift](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print out and read the story. Prepare to read or tell it to the group.

### Description of Activity

The story emphasizes the importance of appreciating gifts we cannot see, such as love, time, and welcome.

Invite the children to make themselves comfortable for listening to the story. Read or tell the story.

After the story, encourage discussion by asking:

- Why was Nelson worried about having his grandmother live with him?

- Why do you think the story is called The Real Gift? What do you think is the real gift? Is there more than one real gift?
- Was Nelson still worried at the end of the story? What happened to Nelson's worried feelings?
- What do you like to do when you spend time with someone you care about?
- If you spend time with someone you love, but you do not make a blanket or something else together, are you still giving each other a gift? What would you call this kind of gift?

## ACTIVITY 4: SHADOW PLAY (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A light source such as a slide projector, a spotlight or a lamp with a high wattage bulb and no shade
- Optional: Large white cloth or paper, and tape, tacks or string to position the material as a screen

### Preparation for Activity

- You need a screen for shadow play. Use a blank wall or hang white paper or cloth as the screen. The screen should reach the floor, and need not be higher than the children's heads. Hang the screen on a movable coat rack, or attach it to the backs of two tall, straight chairs. The light source will be behind the screen, along with the children making shadows. The audience will be in front of the screen. Leave space for children to move safely when they are playing with shadows "backstage."
- Have one adult stay near the light source to make sure children do not get too close to it.
- If you cannot darken the room, find another place for this activity, perhaps a hallway where the light will be dim.

### Description of Activity

- Tell the children they are going to play with something that is real but cannot be held in their hands. Rather than tell them they will be playing with shadows, you might want to pose a riddle:
- What does everyone have on a sunny day, but not when it's raining?
- What goes outside with you, but doesn't come inside?
- What is something you can't run away from?

When the children solve the riddle, ask them what they need to make a shadow (a light source, an object that will cast a shadow, and a surface on which the shadow can be cast.) Explain that we can see shadows, so we know they are there, but we can't feel them. Note that they can change shape, and even disappear!

Tell the children that they will now have a chance to play with shadows. Show them the light source, and explain that they must be careful not to touch it because it is hot and breakable.

With the light source behind the screen, allow one or two children at a time to go behind the screen with an adult watching to make sure they are not too close to the light source. Invite them to make shadows for the other children to watch.

Encourage them to:

- Make their shadows grow and shrink.
- Make shadow letters of the alphabet.
- Think of different body parts they can use to make shadows. It's all right to take shoes off and make shadows with toes!

You might invite two or more children to make a group shadow sculpture. Or, invite the "audience" to make requests: "Make a bunny. Make an angry shape. Make a curvy shape. Make a ball bounce."

Make sure everyone has a chance to make shadows.

If you have time, invite three volunteers to perform a short shadow play, acting out the parts of the grandmother, Nelson, and the lost, crocheted blanket from the story, *The Real Gift*.

Give the children a few minutes' notice before ending the shadow play, and turn off the light source to end the activity.

## **ACTIVITY 5: SINGING "LITTLE DRUMMER BOY" (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of Handout 1, [Little Drummer Boy](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Percussion instruments for all participants

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Make sure you are familiar with the song, "Little Drummer Boy." On [The North Pole website](#) (at [www.the-north-pole.com/index.htm](http://www.the-north-pole.com/index.htm)), listen to the tune of "[Little Drummer Boy](#)" (at [www.the-north-pole.com/carols/drummer.html](http://www.the-north-pole.com/carols/drummer.html)) and see the lyrics published by James Pierpont in 1857. Or,

or view a clip from a 1977 television special of [Bing Crosby and David Bowie](#) (at [www.fanpop.com/spots/christmas/videos/12186](http://www.fanpop.com/spots/christmas/videos/12186)) performing the song as a duet.

- Optional: Invite adult volunteers to play an accompanying instrument or help teach and lead the song.
- Optional: Write the lyrics in large print on newsprint and post.
- Optional: Gather simple percussion instruments for children to use as they sing the song.

### **Description of Activity**

In the song, "Little Drummer Boy," a child gives an intangible gift to one of the most important figures in human history. The little boy has nothing tangible or material to offer the newborn king, only the intangible gift of his song.

Tell the group they will learn and sing a song that demonstrates an intangible gift that is given and received. Say:

In the story, Nelson thought his green blanket was the gift. He was upset when it got lost. But really the present was the time he spent and the love he shared with his Nana Elsa. After we sing "Little Drummer Boy," see if you can tell me what the real gift is in this song.

Teach the children the song, one verse at a time. Then distribute percussion instruments if you have them, or invite children to pat their thighs or stamp their feet to emphasize the "rum pum pum pums" as you sing it through together once or twice.

Suggest they consider the percussive noises they make as a gift of music. You might invite them to demonstrate:

- How a drum might sound if you were playing it for fun.
- How a drum might sound if were playing it as a gift of music.
- Lead the group in singing the song once or twice. Then, ask the children what the real gift is in the song. Allow some comments. You might say something like:

The animals and people who hear the little drummer boy in this song do not receive a present they can see or touch or keep. But they all know they are getting a wonderful, real gift when they hear the drummer boy's music. Even the ox and lamb keep time with him and the baby Jesus smiles. The baby seems to know the boy is giving love in the form of music.

## CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
  - Large sheet of poster board
  - Scissors
  - Optional: Ribbons, markers and other decorating materials
- Heart stickers (or a drawing of a heart, and tape or glue stick)
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare the poster board to resemble a box. You might cut it into a box shape, and/or draw or tie ribbons across the front of the poster so that it looks like a present. In each session's Closing, you will place an icon on the poster to represent a different intangible gift. Display the Wonder Box poster in the meeting space throughout the program. If the children will attach icons to the poster, make sure they can reach it.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants. Alternatively, you might arrange with parents to email the Taking It Home section to them each week if they prefer. One advantage of this plan is that families receive information about the sessions they miss.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle and show them the Wonder Box poster. Explain that it looks like the Wonder Box because it is another place where we will remind ourselves about our intangible gifts. Tell them how very happy you are that you all could spend time together. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together is a way of showing loving welcome to one another. I am going to teach you some words of gratitude to say at our closing each time we meet. "Gratitude" is a word like "grateful" or "thankful."

Invite the children to hold hands and repeat each line after you.

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to

pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom," or the name of this session's intangible gift — Love.

Distribute copies of Taking It Home. Thank participants and say good bye.

## FAITH IN ACTION: INTERGENERATIONAL CRAFT TIME — COFFEE CAN DRUMS (60 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Empty coffee cans with snap-on plastic lids for all participants
- Paper, markers, stickers and other decorations
- Tape and glue sticks
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Dry beans

### Preparation for Activity

- To pair children with adult partners, plan this activity for a time that does not conflict with worship, and invite guests well ahead of time.
- Collect coffee cans with snap-on plastic lids. You may wish to engage parents in saving coffee cans, and/or invite adult guests to bring one with them.
- Set materials on work tables.
- Write some getting-to-know-you questions (see Description of Activity) on newsprint and post.
- Optional: Prepare snacks and beverages for the group.

### Description of Activity

Gather the group. Say, in your own words:

Our group is blessed today with this special time to get to know someone in the congregation better. Each of you will have a chance to make a musical instrument with someone who is a different age than you and is not a member of your family.

Make sure the children understand that their adult partner will take home the coffee can drum they make together. Remind them that they — the children — will

go home with an intangible gift, the time they spent with someone in our community.

Form child/adult pairs to work together and indicate where they may sit at work tables. Try to form non-family pairs. Invite partners to introduce themselves to one another, or go around the room and have everyone say their name. Then say:

The children in Wonderful Welcome have talked about ways to give an intangible gift, like the gift of love. One way is by spending time making something together with someone, and another way is to make music with or for somebody. We're going to do both now.

Indicate where you have posted the getting-to-know-you questions for pairs to ask one another, if they wish. You may use these:

- What is your full name? What do you like to be called?
- Who is in your family? Who lives with you?
- What is your favorite food? What foods do you not like?
- What are you scared of?
- What do you like to play?
- What is your favorite color? What is your favorite thing that is that color? Why do you like it?
- What is your favorite animal or pet?
- Do you like ocean, mountain, desert, or forest best? Tell me about a time you went to one of these places or where you hope you can go someday.

Invite everyone to use these questions to learn about one another as they decorate paper to wrap around their coffee cans. If the group is making shakers instead of drums, make the dried beans available.

Try to visit and help each pair as they work. Explain that the adult visitors may take home the musical instruments.

When everyone is finished, you may wish to gather the group to show their coffee can instruments and make music together. Invite everyone to help clean up and then celebrate together with a snack.

### **Including All Participants**

Try to avoid making family pairs, not only so children can spend time with an adult they do not know well, but also to minimize "left out" feelings among children who do not have parents present. If you will serve a snack, find out about the allergies and food limitations of all participants and plan accordingly.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders.

- How do I feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## **TAKING IT HOME**

*Love is something like the clouds that were in the sky before the sun came out. You cannot touch the clouds, you know; but you feel the rain and know how glad the flowers and the thirsty earth are to have it after a hot day. You cannot touch love either; but you feel the sweetness that it pours into everything.*

– Annie Sullivan

### **IN TODAY'S SESSION...**

This program uses a Wonder Box that contains different items in each session to introduce the children to a particular intangible gift. In this first session, the Wonder Box was empty to reinforce the idea that intangible gifts, such as today's gift of love, cannot be seen. The story, *The Real Gift* is about a child who makes a blanket with his grandmother. The child is upset when the blanket is lost, but the grandmother explains that the real gift was the time they spent together and that gift can never be lost.

The children learned the song "Little Drummer Boy" and discussed the meaning of the intangible gift given by a poor boy who could not offer gifts of gold. The children also played with shadows to illustrate something real that they can see but not touch.

### **EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...**

Talk about some special times you have spent together as a family and with friends. Identify some times when children gave or received material gifts and times when no material gifts were exchanged. Take turns trying to name the intangible gifts each of you gave or received when you were together with people you love.

### **EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

The Faith in Action activity for this session partners children with an adult in the congregation to make a craft together. The older partner takes the finished craft home. The children, however, know they, too, leave with a gift – the time spent making something together with someone in their community. You can find simple crafts

appropriate for younger and older people to do together at home on the [All Free Crafts](http://www.allfreecrafts.com/indexpage.htm) (at [www.allfreecrafts.com/indexpage.htm](http://www.allfreecrafts.com/indexpage.htm)) website.

## **FAMILY DISCOVERY**

See if your congregational library has or wishes to [order the book](#) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=707](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=707)) *A Lamp in Every Corner: A Unitarian Universalist Storybook* by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004). This is a collection of 21 short stories that amplify and explore the seven Principles through Unitarian Universalist history and traditions, including stories about famous Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist men and women. It includes helpful suggestions for the novice storyteller and a list of further storytelling resources. Take turns reading or performing the stories in your family.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NAMETAGS AS GIFTS**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Nametags and markers
- Small heart-shaped stickers for nametags

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Set materials on a work table.

### **Description of Activity**

If you have time and materials, invite children to make heart-sticker nametags like theirs for the other members of their families. After the session, they may give others their nametags. Say:

This gift is more than just a nametag. It is a way to tell the people in your family that we were thinking of them today while we talked about love, and what an important gift love is to give and receive.

### **Including All Participants**

Be ready to help some children spell or print family members' names.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 1: STORY: THE REAL GIFT

Nelson was worried. He had been worried about something all week and this afternoon, it was going to happen. During clean-up at church school, he decided to talk to his teacher, Lilia.

"Nelson, is everything okay?" she asked.

"Well, not really. My Nana Elsa is moving in with me and my dads today."

"It sounds like you do not want her to move in," Lilia said.

"Our house will be too crowded," Nelson said. "And now I will have three grown-ups telling me what to do. My grandmother, and my dads."

Lilia took a minute to think. Then she said, "You know, Nelson, both your dads are my friends, and I know your grandmother, too. I know they all love you very much. It may take time to get used to her living with you. But, I think it is important that you welcome Nana Elsa, even though you are worried." Lilia said.

"Welcome her? Why? She is already in my family," Nelson said, puzzled.

"Nana Elsa may be worried today, too," said Lilia. "She is moving into a home where three people already live. She might be worried that you and your dads don't really want her there. It will be important to let her know that you do love her."

Nelson thought Lilia was probably right. Nana Elsa might be feeling worried, today too. When he got home, Nelson made a card for his grandmother. He drew himself, his dads, and Nana Elsa standing in front of their apartment building. He wrote, "Welcome, Nana. I love you, Love, Nelson." He brought the card into the extra bedroom where his grandmother was putting her clothes into the dresser drawers.

"Hi, Nana. I wanted to give you something," he said.

"Oh, thank you very much Nelson," she said. "I love this card. I wanted to give you something too, but then I thought it would be better for us to make it together."

"Make what?" Nelson asked.

"May I teach you how to crochet? It is easy. We could make a small blanket together, to put on your legs when you watch TV," Nana Elsa said.

"Can I pick the color? I really like green," Nelson said.

The next day, Nelson and his grandmother walked to the craft store and bought green yarn and crochet needles. For two weeks, almost every day, Nelson sat with Nana Elsa after school, talking and crocheting. When the blanket was finished, Nelson took it to church to show Lilia.

"Wow, you made that with your grandmother?" Lilia said. "That sounds like fun, and, it looks warm."

Nelson loved that blanket. He took it everywhere with him. Because he took it everywhere, one day when he wanted to take it to bed with him, he couldn't find it. Soon the whole family was looking for it. But the green, crocheted blanket was gone.

At bedtime, Nelson was still upset. Nana Elsa sat on his bed and held his hand. "Nelson, I hate to see you so sad," she said.

"But Nana, we made that blanket together. I love it so much, and now it's gone!" he cried.

"I know you feel bad, But you know, Nelson, the most important gift was not the blanket," said his grandmother. "It was the time we spent making it."

"You made me so happy when you welcomed me into your home. I wanted to spend special time with you making something and we did that. The real gift was the time we spent being together. We will always treasure that time and our love for each other and our family."

Nelson looked up at Nana Elsa. He rubbed the tears away from his face. He realized his Nana was right. The time they spent together was the real gift. And he realized he was glad, now, that his grandmother lived with him and his dads.

"I love you very much, Nana," he said.

"I love you very much, too, Nelson."

# WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 1: HANDOUT 1: "LITTLE DRUMMER BOY"

Come they told me, pa rum pum pum pum

A new born King to see, pa rum pum pum pum

Our finest gifts we bring, pa rum pum pum pum

To lay before the King, pa rum pum pum pum

rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum

So to honor Him, pa rum pum pum pum,

When we come.

Little Baby, pa rum pum pum pum

I am a poor boy too, pa rum pum pum pum

I have no gift to bring, pa rum pum pum pum

That's fit to give the King, pa rum pum pum pum,

rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

Shall I play for you, pa rum pum pum pum,

On my drum?

Mary nodded, pa rum pum pum pum

The ox and lamb kept time, pa rum pum pum pum

I played my drum for Him, pa rum pum pum pum

I played my best for Him, pa rum pum pum pum,

rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum

Me and my drum.

## FIND OUT MORE

### "Little Drummer Boy "

Much can be learned about the song, "Little Drummer Boy," online. The U.K. website, [Carols.org](http://Carols.org) (at [www.carols.org.uk/little\\_drummer\\_boy.htm](http://www.carols.org.uk/little_drummer_boy.htm)), notes:

... the song includes no less than 21 rum pum pum pums... 'Little Drummer Boy' has been a huge hit for several artists. The most notable rendition was created by the most unlikely

combination of Bing Crosby and David Bowie. This version ... was in fact Bing Crosby's most successful recording since the legendary White Christmas.

### Intergenerational Craft Activities

See simple craft ideas for people of all ages to do together on the [All Free Crafts](http://All Free Crafts) (at [www.allfreecrafts.com/indexpage.htm](http://www.allfreecrafts.com/indexpage.htm)) website.



# SESSION 2: THE GIFT OF COVENANT

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*A covenant is not a definition of a relationship; it is the framework for our relating. ... This calls for a level of trust, courage and sacrifice that needs to be nurtured, renewed and affirmed on a regular basis. ... Abiding in covenant is an art form. A mutual creation.*

— Rev. Lisa Ward, in a sermon, "From Creed to Covenant," delivered November 17, 2002 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County ( Churchville, Maryland )

This session introduces the children to the intangible gift of covenant. Children will explore the concept of covenanting through their own real-life experiences and make a covenant to guide their time together in Wonderful Welcome.

While covenant is also important in Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths, the covenant that Unitarian Universalists share is the one we make with one another, not with God. The children will learn that as Unitarian Universalists, they belong to a covenanted community of people and congregations make commitments to certain agreed-upon values — our seven Unitarian Universalist Principles. The story for this session describes how, in 1960, Unitarians and Universalists discussed, debated and compromised to articulate six Principles which members of both faiths could covenant together to affirm and promote as Unitarian Universalists.

It may help children understand "covenant" if you use the word interchangeably with "agreement" or "promise." In Session 3, The Gift of Forgiveness, children will have opportunities to tackle the question of what to do if someone breaks a covenant.

In Activity 5, the children make a paper chain symbolizing their experience making a covenant together. If you have time, replace Activity 5 with Alternate Activity 1, Paper Chain Covenant, in which the children decorate links in the chain not only with their names but also with the promises they have agreed to keep. In the Closing, you will wind the paper chain around the Wonder Box poster to symbolize the gift of covenant.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the concept of covenant as an intangible gift we give and receive in community

- Showcase how covenants work and their role in a variety of contexts such as classroom, playground, family, and faith community
- Present the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles and their origins as a covenant.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn how a covenant — agreeing on rules together and promising to follow them — supports everyone's safety and the group's success
- Understand a covenant as a an intangible gift they can give and receive as members of a community
- Discover how their Unitarian Universalist faith is based on covenant
- Create a group covenant together
- Express covenanting through song.

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: The Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: "Simon Says" without Rules	10
Activity 3: Story — Making Promises, Making Covenants	10
Activity 4: We Covenant Together	10
Activity 5: Making a Paper Chain	10
Activity 6: Singing "The More We Get Together"	5
Faith in Action: Adults Covenant, Too!	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Paper Chain Covenant	20
Alternate Activity 2: The Most Important	20

Promise

Alternate Activity 3: Singing Safety Songs 10

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Think about your spiritual upbringing. Did you grow up in Unitarian Universalism? Do you have another religious background? Think about the first time you learned about a covenant. Was it in a religious context, or a setting outside your faith community? Think about how you understood the concept and what it meant to you.

Most children understand, but may not have articulated, that entering into an agreement with others is essential for playing together. As adults, we know that entering into an agreement with others allows us to function in community at work, at home, in congregational life, and at play. Reflect with appreciation on how entering into a covenant creates a safe and productive space for yourself and any community you are part of. Share this understanding and positive energy with the children today.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where everyone can see it when they gather in a circle.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Explain that you start each session with a ritual. Ask if anyone knows what a ritual is. You may say:

A ritual is something you do again and again, often at the same time of day. If you have a routine for going to bed, that is an example of a ritual.

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists connect with one another, even though they may never actually meet.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words, line by line.

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box
- A copy of the [Unitarian Universalist Principles in children's language](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=708) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=708](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=708))

- Construction paper in assorted colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors

#### Preparation for Activity

- If you have not already made a Wonder Box, see Session 1 Materials and Preparation for instructions.
- Cut strips of colored construction paper.
- Place the copy of the children's version of the Principles and the strips of colored paper inside the Wonder Box.

#### Description of Activity

Use the Wonder Box to activate participants' curiosity about today's intangible gift: covenant.

With the children in a circle around the chalice, ask them to guess what could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then, open the box, take out the Principles and the strips of paper, and say something like:

These are the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles and paper that can be made to form a chain. Does anyone have an idea of what today's session will be about?

Invite responses. The children may suggest that the discussion will be about our seven Principles; gently redirect this answer. Say something like:

A covenant is when people make promises to each other. Keeping their promises holds people together as a family, or as friends, or as people together in a Unitarian Universalist congregation. Being in covenant is an intangible gift that we share with the others in our faith community. One way you can see a covenant is when people write down the promises they make.

Hold up the seven Principles, and say:

These seven Principles are ideas we promise to care about, because, as Unitarian Universalists, we are part of a covenant.

Roll two strips of colored paper into circles and hold them up, interlinked. Then say:

Another way you can see a covenant is all around you. When you are in a group of people and you notice that people are playing together or learning together, being safe, being fair to one another, and having fun, the gift of covenant is probably being quietly exchanged. Here in Wonderful Welcome, we will make a covenant

today. We will make some promises to one another, so we can work together and support each other and the Seven Principles.

## ACTIVITY 2: "SIMON SAYS" WITHOUT RULES (10 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have a large, open floor space for this game.
- Optional: If you have more time and/or want to try another game, find rules for many simple games which most of the children will already know, on Geof Nieboer's [Kids Games website](http://www.gameskidsplay.net/frame_alphabetical_listing.htm) (at [www.gameskidsplay.net/frame\\_alphabetical\\_listing.htm](http://www.gameskidsplay.net/frame_alphabetical_listing.htm)).

### Description of Activity

By playing a game they already know, the children experience how a covenant works in an everyday situation.

Gather children to play the game, "Simon Says." Point out to the group that most of them seem to know how to play the game. Explain the rules in case some children do not know them: One player is "Simon." Simon calls out movements for the other players to do. If Simon's directions begin with "Simon says..." the players should do as Simon says. If Simon neglects to say "Simon says" — for example, if Simon says only "Raise your arms over your head" — any player who follows the direction is out. The last successful player becomes Simon in the next round.

Play for a few minutes. Then, stop the game. Say,

That went really well. It seemed like everyone agreed to play by the rules. What would have happened if I was trying to be Simon, and everyone ran around in circles or did the opposite of what Simon said?

Invite responses.

### Variation

If you are comfortable, while the game is underway, join in as if you do not know any of the rules. (For example, if you are called out, jump back in.) This way, you help illustrate the disruption to a community that can occur when members break a covenant — in this case, the rules of a simple game. Children may comment that you do not know the rules or are not "playing fair." Allow their comments. Then, step out of the game and let the group resume play.

### Including All Participants

Be mindful of individual participants' mobility issues. As "Simon," make sure the directions you give can be followed by all children.

## ACTIVITY 3: STORY — MAKING PROMISES, MAKING COVENANTS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [Making Promises, Making Covenants](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it, rather than read it from the page.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to get comfortable for listening to a story. Tell the story.

## ACTIVITY 4: WE COVENANT TOGETHER (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Post the newsprint where all participants can see it.
- If the group includes children who may have difficulty understanding or keeping the group covenant, talk with your DRE about your concerns.

### Description of Activity

The children will make a group covenant, demonstrating how they can share the intangible gift of covenant with one another. Help them create a safe space by making behavioral agreements that result in a place where everyone is welcome and knows what behaviors are accepted.

Gather the children in a circle. Explain that they will give one another the intangible gift of covenant. Ask them how they think they can give and receive this gift. Invite responses. Then say:

We are going to work together to think of some promises we can make to one another. These promises will be our group covenant every time we are together.

We come to Wonderful Welcome to learn about our Unitarian Universalist faith and how we are part of it. We are also here to have fun. What do we need in our group, to learn and have fun together?

If the children do not identify the following two conditions that foster everyone's learning and fun, mention them:

- Every child feels safe.
- Every child feels valued (others respect and care about them).

Explain that they will now make their own covenant. You might say:

We have talked about the covenant which Unitarians and Universalists made when they joined two religions together. And we have talked about how covenants help us play games together. Now we will make a covenant with each other. We will make some rules we can all agree with, some promises about how we will behave when we are together in Wonderful Welcome.

Allow children to contribute their ideas and record all ideas on newsprint. As the leader, you are also part of the group. You will be adding to the agreement as well. For example, children may say things like, "No hitting," and "No punching." You may also add, "Listen to the leaders." Children may ask, "What happens if someone breaks the covenant?" Ask them what they think should happen. You might say:

If someone does break our covenant, we will stop what we are doing and review our covenant. We will talk again about what the covenant is and why we have it.

If you plan to do Session 3, Forgiveness, tell the children they will have a chance to talk more about consequences at another meeting.

Ask the children if they think the group should review the covenant each time they meet. Where should the covenant be posted?

### **Including All Participants**

Speak with your religious educator before this session if you think there may be children with special needs or behavior issues that may make it hard for them to understand and/or keep a group covenant. Work with staff to have a strategy for successfully including all participants, for example, enlisting a youth or adult helper assigned to a child who needs help.

## **ACTIVITY 5: MAKING A PAPER CHAIN (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Construction paper in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Thin markers
- Tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Read Alternate Activity 1: Paper Chain Covenant and, if you have time, consider substituting this activity in which children write the key words of their covenant on strips of paper before joining the strips in a chain.
- Cut colored construction paper into strips at least 8" long.

### **Description of Activity**

Distribute paper strips and markers at work tables. Invite children to write their names on strips of paper. When they have finished, show them how to form a circle by attaching the ends of the strip of paper. Tape your circle closed to make the first link of a paper chain. Invite each child to add their link to the chain to make it grow. As each child adds their link, ask them to repeat after you:

I agree to follow the covenant, the promises we have made.

After each child has added to the chain, say:

We have made a covenant together and we all agree to do our best to keep it.

Allow the children to add more links to the paper chain.

### **Including All Participants**

Writing skills can vary widely in this age group. Some children may need help writing their names. It is also okay if some prefer to write their initials or draw a picture instead of writing their names.

## **ACTIVITY 6: SINGING "THE MORE WE GET TOGETHER" (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Make sure you know the song, "The More We Get Together." You can hear it on a [National Institutes of Health website](http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/lyrics/moreweget.htm) (at [kids.niehs.nih.gov/lyrics/moreweget.htm](http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/lyrics/moreweget.htm)).
- Optional: Write the lyrics to "The More We Get Together" on newsprint and post.

### **Description of Activity**

Teach and lead the song. When you are done singing, tell the children that singing together also needs a covenant. Guide them to talk about the promises we make and keep when we sing with others. Tell them how nice their singing sounded!

# FAITH IN ACTION: ADULTS COVENANT, TOO!

## Preparation for Activity

- Make a time for the children to meet with their minister and/or members of the congregation's board. Ask the adults to bring copies of a congregational covenant or provide copies of the Unitarian Universalist Principles for them to use. Prepare the adults to talk about their experiences with covenants. You may want to give them copies of the Spiritual Preparation section of this session.

## Description of Activity

Children who understand covenanting in terms of safety and learning and playing together can gain a deeper understanding of covenant when they hear why adults need covenants, too.

Prepare the children by eliciting their questions about what kinds of covenants adults make with one another or with children. Prompt them by suggesting contexts such as family, work, congregational life or sports where adults are in community.

When visitors arrive, guide a conversation to explore your congregational covenant — how it was made, why it is important. If your congregation does not have a covenant, facilitate conversation about the Unitarian Universalist Principles. Adults may also like to talk about their personal experiences with covenanting.

## CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- Paper chain made in Activity 5 or Alternate Activity 1, and tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- If you have not made a Wonder Box poster, cut and decorate a sheet of poster board to resemble a gift box. In each session's Closing, you will place an icon on the poster to represent the session intangible gift.
- Find a place to display the Wonder Box poster in the meeting space for the duration of the program. If you will invite children to attach icons to the poster, make sure they can reach it.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show them the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box because it is another place where we remind ourselves about our intangible gifts. Invite two volunteers to tape or glue the paper chain around the edge of the poster. You may say something like:

What if we tried to play a game without agreeing about the rules of the game? What would the game be like? What if the game kickball was played without any teams, or bases? How would you know if you were supposed to be a pitcher, a kicker or a fielder, or even how to play? How could anyone get points or win the game?

Allow some comments. Affirm:

When we agree on which rules to play by, then we are in covenant, and we can play fair, play safely and have fun. Being in covenant with others is an intangible gift we give and receive.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together is a way to thank one another for sharing the intangible gift of covenant with us. Because we are in covenant together, we agree on how to be when we are here so we can all be safe, learn, and have fun. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

*We are thankful.*

*We are thankful to be here.*

*We are thankful to be here, together.*

*We are thankful to be here, together, now.*

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom," or the name of this session's intangible gift — covenant!

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute copies of Taking It Home. Thank and dismiss participants.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*A covenant is not a definition of a relationship; it is the framework for our relating. ... This calls for a level of trust, courage and sacrifice that needs to be nurtured, renewed and affirmed on a regular basis. ... Abiding in covenant is an art form. A mutual creation.*

— Rev. Lisa Ward, in a sermon, "From Creed to Covenant," delivered November 17, 2002 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County ( Churchville, Maryland )

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children explored the intangible gift of covenant. They learned how covenants are made in various contexts such as on the playground, in their school classrooms, and in the larger Unitarian Universalist faith community, and they made a covenant for how they want to be together in Wonderful Welcome.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER . Talk about ...

Whether or not you have articulated them, a variety of promises form the basis of your family relationships. Give some thought to the covenants that already exist in your family. By accepting the responsibility to parent your child, you have made a set of deep promises that you act on every day. Beyond feeding, clothing and sheltering your child, the love, protection and guidance you provide are fulfillments of a covenant.

Take the time to identify for yourself, and share with your child(ren), the covenants that support the relationships in your family. What promises do children make? What promises do adults make? Engage your child(ren) in exploring how your family's covenants are a "two-way street." Your child can understand that love, for example, goes both ways.

This may be an opportunity to develop together some covenant rules just for your family. For example, if you set aside times, such as a family meal, when you do not

answer the phone or have a television on, engage your child as a willing participant in this agreement. Together, you will covenant to treat that time in a special way, so that nothing outside interferes with your time together.

### FAMILY DISCOVERY

It is likely that your family's values and practices mirror some if not all the Unitarian Universalist covenant expressed in the seven Principles of our faith. How do individual members of your family keep the covenant of Unitarian Universalism? If you do not have a copy of the [seven UU Principles](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml)), you can find them online.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

You may like to express your family's covenant or your Unitarian Universalist faith by taking a moment before shared meals for prayer or thanksgiving, and/or the lighting of a chalice or candles. One source of simple prayers for UU families is the UUA pamphlet, Family Prayers: a Sampler, available online at [uua.org](http://uua.org) or for purchase through the UUA Bookstore,

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: PAPER CHAIN COVENANT (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Construction paper in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Markers for participants
- Tape
- Covenant from Activity 4, We Covenant Together

### Preparation for Activity

- Note: This activity is a longer version of Activity 5: Making a Paper Chain. You will need more time and some children who are confident writers or copyists.
- Cut colored construction paper into strips at least 8" long.
- Post the newspaper with the covenant promises (rules) the group generated in Activity 4, We Covenant Together.

### Description of Activity

Distribute paper strips and markers at work tables. Invite each child to take several strips of paper. Ask children to write their names on strips of paper. Ask for volunteers to use additional strips to write key words of the promises the group generated in Activity 4, We Covenant Together. Children who choose not to write

can draw symbols and decorate more strips of paper for the chain.

When the strips are done, show the children how to form a circle by attaching both ends of a strip of paper together. Tape your circle closed to make the first link of a paper chain. Invite each child to add a link to the chain to make it grow. As each child adds the link with their name on it, ask them to repeat after you:

I agree to follow the covenant, the promises we have made.

After each child has added one link to the chain, say:

We have made a covenant together and we all agree to do our best to keep it.

Have the children add the remaining links to the chain.

### Including All Participants

Writing skills can vary widely in this age group. Some children may need help writing their names. Ask for volunteers to write key words of the covenant; do not assign anyone a task that may be too hard. Make sure children know it is okay to write their initials or draw a picture instead of writing their names.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: THE MOST IMPORTANT PROMISE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Group covenant from Activity 4, We Covenant Together
- Optional: Paper and markers or crayons for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- Post the newsprint with the covenant generated in Activity 4, We Covenant Together.

### Description of Activity

This activity engages the group in why we make promises to each other.

Review the covenant with the group. Ask which promise they think is the most important and why. As the leader, you can volunteer the promise you think is the most important and why. It would illustrate the point best if you chose a promise that had to do with the group's safety.

Optional: Distribute paper and markers or crayons and invite the children to copy and/or illustrate the promise they think is the most important. Make sure they know there is no right or wrong choice — all the promises the group generated are important. Invite participants to explain why they chose their promise as the most important.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SINGING SAFETY SONGS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Choose one or more safety songs that you know or choose from the following sources. Try the [Perpetual Preschool website](http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/preschool_theme_s/safety/safety_songs.htm) (at [www.perpetualpreschool.com/preschool\\_theme\\_s/safety/safety\\_songs.htm](http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/preschool_theme_s/safety/safety_songs.htm)); a CD by Walter McCutcheon, "[Mr. Walter: Safety Songs,](http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/mrwalter)" (at [cdbaby.com/cd/mrwalter](http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/mrwalter)) available from the CD Baby website; Mrs. Jones Sing Along songs such as "[The Earth Day Song](http://www.mrsjonesroom.com/songs/earthday.html)" (at [www.mrsjonesroom.com/songs/earthday.html](http://www.mrsjonesroom.com/songs/earthday.html)) (to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It") and "[G-E-R-M-S](http://www.mrsjonesroom.com/songs/germs.html)" (at [www.mrsjonesroom.com/songs/germs.html](http://www.mrsjonesroom.com/songs/germs.html)) (to the tune of "B-I-N-G-O"); and the [health and safety songs](http://www.preschooleducation.com/shealth.shtml) (at [www.preschooleducation.com/shealth.shtml](http://www.preschooleducation.com/shealth.shtml)) individuals have posted on a website, Preschool Education.
- Write the lyrics to one or more safety songs on newsprint and post.

### Description of Activity

People make covenants to express respect and care for one another. This activity uses a safety theme and the opportunity to sing together to reinforce the message that the promises of a covenant help our whole group stay safe and work and play well together.

Gather the children to sing. Tell them:

Sometimes a song can help us remember the promises we make to others. Do you know any songs like that? Songs that are easy to remember, where the words are about how we can stay safe, or how we agree to treat other people when we are playing together, in school together, at home or here at church?

Allow some suggestions; some children may offer to sing a song they know. You may want to lead the group in singing one of their contributions. Or, lead the children in singing one or more safety songs you have prepared.



## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 2: STORY: MAKING PROMISES, MAKING COVENANTS

By Janeen K. Grohsmeyer.

Do you remember your first day of school? I remember mine. Your parents and grandparents probably remember their first days, too. Probably everyone remembers, no matter how long ago it was.

Going to a new place and starting something new can be exciting... and sometimes a little scary. We have a lot of questions:

"Where do I sit?"

"What time do we eat?"

"Where is the bathroom?"

"Am I allowed to climb the trees?"

"Does the teacher expect me to do homework?"

And, of course, "When can we go outside to play?"

At school, the teacher shows us where things are and explains how things work. She tells us the rules. Once we know what we are expected to do and what we are allowed to do, it's not so scary anymore.

Sometimes, though, there is no teacher. On the playground, it's just kids. Sometimes we make up our own game, and we decide how it ought to be played. Sometimes we make the rules.

On the jungle gym, we can decide that the red bars are fire and you can't touch them when you climb. When we play tag, we can decide that the person who is It has to count to ten before they start chasing everybody else. It can be a lot of fun to make up the rules to your very own game. You get to make it just the way you like it.

That is, if the other kids agree. But, what if you think the red bars on the jungle gym are fire and can't be touched, but another kid says that the red bars are fine and you can touch them however you want?

There are a lot of different ways to play a game. And if you don't want to play all by yourself (and you can't play tag by yourself), then everybody has to agree on what the rules are while you are playing. Maybe you can keep all the rules. Or maybe you can change some.

Some how, some way, after discussing and changing and arguing and compromising, everybody agrees on what the rules should be. Maybe you don't like one of the other kids' rules all that much, and maybe someone else doesn't like your rules all that much, but you both agree to them anyway because you got some rules you liked and so did the other person. Then, finally,

everyone promises to each other to follow the rules, with no cheating, and we can play the game.

When we agree to follow the rules we make together, we are covenanting with each other. A covenant is a promise to each other about what we are going to do, and how we are going to behave. We need a covenant to have fun playing a game.

Covenants are not only for the playground. They can be made by people in families and by students and teachers in schools. They can be made in religions too. Our Unitarian Universalist religion has a covenant.

Our UU Covenant was made about 50 years ago, when your parents and grandparents were young. Back then, there weren't any Unitarian Universalists. There were Unitarians and there were Universalists. Two different religions, with different names, different buildings, different songs... different rules.

The Unitarians and the Universalists had been talking to each other for a very long time. Even though they had different rules for how they did things, they realized they agreed on many important ideas, many principles of life. Just like the kids on the playground, they had different rules, but they wanted to play the same game.

In 1960, they decided to play together. They knew they had to figure out new rules that all the Unitarians and all the Universalists would agree to follow.

It took them almost a year. After discussing and changing and arguing and compromising for months and months, the Unitarians and the Universalists from hundreds of different congregations agreed on six Principles — six rules — that they all could agree to follow. It's true that one person might not have liked another person's ideas for rules all that much and maybe that person didn't like the first person's rules all that much. But they agreed to follow them anyway, because they knew they both got a lot of the rules they wanted. And they got to play together.

They compromised.

And then they covenanted.

They decided to "play the same game."

Twenty-five years later, in 1985, they added one more Principle, to make it seven. You may already have heard of the seven Principles. These are the rules that Unitarian Universalists agree to follow:

1. Each person is important.
2. Be kind in all you do.
3. We're free to learn together.
4. We search for what is true.
5. All people need a voice.
6. Build a fair and peaceful world.
7. We care for Earth's lifeboat.

Today we will make a covenant with each other, here in Wonderful Welcome. We will work out rules for the times when we are together. We may have to make some compromises, in order to get most of the rules we want.

When we promise to each other to follow the rules we make, we are covenanting with each other. Just like the kids on the playground playing tag. Just like the Unitarians and Universalists did 50 years ago.

## FIND OUT MORE

The quotation that begins this session comes from "From Creed to Covenant," a sermon given by Rev. Lisa Ward on November 17, 2002 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County ( Churchville, Maryland ). [From Creed to Covenant : Roots of Unitarian Universalism](#) (at <http://www.uufhc.net/s021117.html>)

There are a few different versions of the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles for children. The UUA Bookstore sells stickers as well as the colorful fold-out, [My 7 Principles: A Child's Booklet](#) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=680](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=680)), using this wording:

1. Each person is important.
2. Be kind in all you do.
3. We're free to learn together.
4. We search for what is true.
5. All people need a voice.
6. Build a fair and peaceful world.
7. We care for Earth's lifeboat.

### History of the UU Covenant

There are several accounts of how the Unitarians and Universalists developed a set of Principles in 1960 and covenanted to affirm and promote them as a unified religious denomination. One is *The Promise and the Promise: The Story of the Unitarian Universalist Association* by Warren G. Ross.

# SESSION 3: THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*When I see the Ten Most Wanted Lists... I always have this thought: If we'd made them feel wanted earlier, they wouldn't be wanted now.*

*Eddie Cantor, 20th-century actor, singer and comedian*

*Forgiveness is the act of admitting we are like other people.*

*Christina Baldwin, Life's Companion, Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest*

*It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.*

*Mother Teresa*

Most children know what it is like to feel wronged or treated unfairly. Many, too, know the uncomfortable feelings that come when we realize we have hurt someone else. For either party in a conflict, it can seem natural and justified to feel angry or sad and to act accordingly. Yet "fighting back" or "staying mad" usually makes a conflict worse. Forgiveness is another option.

This session introduces forgiveness as an intangible gift with power to heal friendships and restore peace. The children consider forgiveness in the context of how they can respond if someone in Wonderful Welcome breaks the covenant the group made in Session 2.

The Wonder Box holds a picture of a dove carrying an olive branch, a common symbol for peace that also implies a willingness to forgive and a desire to be forgiven. A person who extends an olive branch is taking a brave step that puts two of our Unitarian Universalist Principles into action. Extending an olive branch says, "I affirm your inherent worth and dignity, as well as my own (first Principle)," and, "I want to promote justice, equity and compassion in our relationship (second Principle)."

In the story, The Prince and the Rhinoceros, one friend breaks another's trust. The other takes the brave step to seek an apology, and once the apology is received, completes the healing with forgiveness. Learning about forgiveness enriches the children's understanding of welcome. In a truly welcoming environment, people accept the possibility of conflict and understand how to use forgiveness to restore peace.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce forgiveness as an intangible gift

- Explore situations where forgiveness is appropriate and identify ways to express forgiveness
- Show how forgiveness helps us live our Unitarian Universalist Principles, especially the first Principle (inherent worth and dignity of every person) and the second Principle (justice, equity and compassion in human relations)
- Demonstrate that authentic welcoming must include a readiness to forgive
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the value and the challenges of giving and receiving the gift of forgiveness
- Through role-play, learn to use forgiveness to resolve conflict in their own lives
- Plan consequences for breaking the group covenant
- Reflect on a story in which forgiveness brings peace between friends and helps them accomplish something together

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — The Prince and the Rhinoceros	10
Activity 3: Forgiving Faces	10
Activity 4: Consequences	10
Activity 5: Singing "There Is More Love Somewhere"	10
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Making Doves of Forgiveness	10

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Take a quiet moment to reflect on a time when someone has hurt you — intentionally or unwittingly. Have you forgiven them? How difficult was it to forgive? What might have moved you more easily from hurt to forgiveness? Did you receive an apology? How did that feel? Did you express your forgiveness to the person who hurt you, or did you keep it to yourself?

This session helps the children understand the power of forgiveness. When one forgives, one generally feels better about the hurt that has transpired. Forgiveness can heal conflict between people and allow them to move forward together. Although it can be very hard to feel and express — or perhaps because it can be so hard — forgiving someone is a very strong expression of our Unitarian Universalist Principles.

Is there someone you need to forgive? Bring your willingness to forgive into your leadership today.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post where everyone in the circle can see.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants around the chalice. Explain that each session opens with a ritual. Ask if anyone knows what a ritual is. You may say:

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words, and the accompanying movement, after you, line by line.

We are Unitarian Universalists. (Make thumb and index finger of each hand into a "U.")

This is the church of the open mind, (Put hands on either side of the head and open them out.)

The loving heart (Clasp hands over heart.)

And the helping hands. (Extend hands in front of self.)

Together we care for our Earth (Raise hands above the head to form a globe.)

And work for friendship and peace in our world. (Gently grasp the hand of the person on either side.)

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: THE WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box [See directions in Session 1.]
- An olive branch, or a branch to represent one, or an illustration of a dove with an olive branch from [Leader Resource 1: Dove and Olive Branch](#) (included in this document)

#### Preparation for Activity

- If you have not already made a Wonder Box see the directions in Session 1.

- Place an olive branch, or a branch to represent one, inside the Wonder Box. (Or, print out Leader Resource 1: Dove and Olive Branch and place it inside the Wonder Box.)

#### Description of Activity

While children are still in a circle around the chalice, show them the Wonder Box. Invite them to guess what gift could be in this big, beautifully-wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then pass the box around for children to open and find the olive branch inside. Tell them the bird is a dove and it is holding a branch from an olive tree in its beak. Ask if anyone has seen this image before, and if so, if they remember where they saw it. Allow some comments and questions. Then say:

A dove with an olive branch in its beak is a symbol for peace. When countries are at war, people who want the war to end will often use the symbol of a dove to stand for their desire for peace. When people are arguing or fighting, and someone wants to offer peace and end the fight, we say they want to give the other person an olive branch. It means you are ready to forgive the other person, and ask them to forgive you, too. Forgiving somebody helps you stop fighting and make peace together. It may seem easy to hand someone a branch and end a fight. But, it only works if you are ready to forgive.

Ask, "What words do you say when you want someone to forgive you?" Affirm the responses, such as "I'm sorry."

Ask, "What words do you say when you are ready to forgive someone else?" Affirm the responses such as: "I forgive you." "It's OK." "I'm not angry anymore" and "Let's be friends and play."

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE PRINCE AND THE RHINOCEROS (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [The Prince and the Rhinoceros](#) (included in this document)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story. If you can, prepare to tell it rather than read it from the page.

#### Description of Activity

Invite the children to get comfortable for listening to a story. Read or tell the story.

Engage the group in a discussion of the kind of friendship Great Joy and the Prince had before their disagreement. What qualities made the friendship strong and valuable? If the group understands the term, "intangible gifts," you may use the term in these questions:

- What intangible gifts did Great Joy give the Prince? [love, trust, invitation (to run the race), kindness, loyalty, honesty]
- What intangible gifts did the Prince give Great Joy? [love, trust, covenant (to run the race together), kindness, loyalty, affirmation of his good qualities]

Now ask:

- When the Prince spoke harshly to Great Joy, how did that change their friendship?
- Was the Prince being fair?

### **ACTIVITY 3: FORGIVING FACES (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Plain construction paper, markers and glue sticks for all participants
- A red and a green construction paper circle for all participants, plus some extra

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Cut two circles — one red and one green — for each child plus a few extra.
- Read the Description of Activity and prepare to present the scenario with the red and green circles as props.

#### **Description of Activity**

Settle the children at worktables. Hold up a red and a green circle, and say:

I'd like you to meet my friends, Red and Green. Red and Green are two children. They are in religious education together and they are usually good friends. But something happened today.

Red didn't mean to, but Red did something that made Green feel bad. Green had been sitting next to a new person during circle time. When Green got up to get something, Red went over and took her spot. Green came back and was upset and hurt. She walked away feeling mad and a little bit sad because Red did not ask if someone had been sitting there.

Have you ever had a time when a friend did something that made you feel bad?

Allow some responses, but discourage elaborate stories that affix blame, and guide children away from naming peers who are present. Revisiting incidents that have happened in this group may be addressed in Activity 4: Consequences.

Now say:

Green was angry, and then Green felt sad. What do you think Green did?

What do you think Red did?

Children may talk about what Green and Red might have done, or about how they might have felt. Help the group consider possibilities, such as:

- Green spoke up, and Red apologized.
- Green spoke up, and Red did not apologize.
- Green told a grown-up what happened. The grown-up talked to Green and Red together and they made up.
- Green didn't speak to Red or the new child for the rest of the day.
- Green felt upset when she went home.

Point out the responses that imply forgiveness, such as "Green decided she was no longer mad," or "Red apologized and Green said, 'It's okay.'"

Distribute blank paper, a red and green circle, markers and glue sticks to each child at work tables. Invite them to make a picture of the friendship between Red and Green.

### **ACTIVITY 4: CONSEQUENCES (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Wonderful Welcome group covenant (from Session 2: Everyone Is Welcome)
- Newsprint, markers and tape

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Be ready to use the language of covenant rather than the language of rules during this activity. Covenant words include agreement, promise, group choices or group decisions.

#### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle. Direct their attention to the covenant poster they created together in Session 2. Review the covenant to remind the group of their work and to bring new participants on board. Ask the children if they still think it is a good agreement for their Wonderful Welcome group and allow some discussion.

Now ask, "How well have we been keeping our covenant when we are together?" Children may mention

times when the covenant has not been kept. If they do not, prompt them. You may need to mention specific incidents, for example, "Remember last time we met, no one helped clean up?" Avoid tying a covenant-keeping lapse to a particular child.

Then say, in your own words:

You know, we didn't really make any plans for what to do if someone does not follow our covenant. If someone in the group does not follow the covenant, how do you think we should respond?

Elicit responses. It will be important to differentiate among behaviors; there will not be one consequence that will fit every kind of lapse. If a child breaks a covenanted promise that is important for the safety of the group, such as by hitting another child, time out might be an appropriate consequence. However, if someone is talking out of turn, a more appropriate consequence might be to stop the discussion, turn everyone's attention to the covenant, and remind everyone of the agreements.

Record the consequences that the group agrees on. You may wish to post this list in your meeting space.

## ACTIVITY 5: SINGING "THERE IS MORE LOVE SOMEWHERE" (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copy of "There Is More Love Somewhere," Hymn 95 in *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Recording of "There Is More Love Somewhere" and appropriate music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano, or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Listen to a recording of the song, "There Is More Love Somewhere" (see Find Out More), and prepare to teach it to the group.
- Write the lyrics on newsprint and post.
- If you are uncomfortable leading a song, consider inviting a musical volunteer to lead the singing or provide instrumental accompaniment.

### Description of Activity

This song engages children in the expression and power of forgiveness. Teach the song, line by line, and then lead children to sing it through once or twice.

## CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- Picture of a dove with an olive branch ([Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) ) and tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- If you have not made a Wonder Box poster, cut and decorate a sheet of poster board to resemble a gift box. In each session's Closing, you will place an icon on the poster to represent that session's intangible gift. Display the Wonder Box poster in the meeting space throughout the program
- Print out Leader Resource 1, Dove with Olive Branch. Cut out the image to attach to the Wonder Box poster.
- Write the closing words on newsprint and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy Taking It Home for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Point to the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the picture of a dove with an olive branch to the poster. You may say:

Now we will see the dove of peace every time we are together here. The dove reminds us that, just as Great Joy forgave the Prince and brought peace back to their friendship, we, too, know how to use forgiveness to make peace.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that it is important to be ready to forgive one another. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.



Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — "Forgiveness!"

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute copies of Taking It Home. Thank and dismiss participants.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*When I see the Ten Most Wanted Lists... I always have this thought: If we'd made them feel wanted earlier, they wouldn't be wanted now.*

*Eddie Cantor, 20th-century actor, singer and comedian*

*Forgiveness is the act of admitting we are like other people.*

*Christina Baldwin, Life's Companion, Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest*

*It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.*

*Mother Teresa*

## IN TODAY'S SESSION...

When children opened the Wonder Box today, they found a picture of a dove bearing an olive branch — a common symbol for peace. We talked about the intangible gift of forgiveness, something we can use to restore peace to a relationship when we feel hurt or wronged. The children learned that forgiving somebody can make things fair again and can be a way to welcome someone back with you after a conflict.

In the story from India, a prince and a rhinoceros, Great Joy, are good friends. Great Joy offers to help the prince win gold in a race, but in his hunger to win, the prince abuses Great Joy, who then refuses to perform. Mistrust

and mistreatment are overcome when an apology is accepted.

## EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Have there been conflicts in your family that ended in forgiveness, or should have? Talk together about these times.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...** Make a family covenant together with forgiveness as its focus. Acknowledge that there will be conflict within the family, and agree together that the individuals in conflict will seek forgiveness of one another — even if it takes time for the forgiveness to come.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: MAKING DOVES OF FORGIVENESS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 1: Dove with Olive Branch](#) (included in this document)
- Sheet of heavy stock paper for dove template
- Construction paper, pencils or markers, and scissors (including left-handed scissors, if children will be cutting)
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: One-hole hole puncher and yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1 and cut out the dove shape. Trace it on heavy stock paper and cut it out for a template. Trace a dove onto construction paper for each participant, plus a few extra. Cut these out or save this task for participants to do. If you pre-cut the dove shapes, punch a hole in the top of each, pass a length of yarn through, and knot the yarn loosely to create hanging ornaments. If the children are cutting out their own shapes, these tasks can be done as they work.
- Set pencils or markers (and scissors, if children will cut out dove shapes) on work tables.
- Write the words "I FORGIVE YOU," on newsprint and post.

### Description of Activity

Gather children at work tables and distribute materials. Say, in your own words:

The words "I forgive you" are simple, but can be hard to say. When we are ready to forgive someone, we might like to tell them with a very special card. We are going to make cards

shaped like a dove and write on each card, "I forgive you."

Invite the children to close their eyes, if they are comfortable doing so, and think of someone whom they would like to forgive. You can prompt them to remember a conflict they have had recently at school or with someone in their family. Give them a moment. Then tell them:

If you have someone in mind to forgive, making an "I forgive you" card might help you get ready to really forgive that person. If you do not have someone in mind, make a card and save it for a time when you do want to forgive someone.

Show the children where you have posted the words "I FORGIVE YOU." Invite them to write the words and decorate the doves any way they wish.

### **Including All Participants**

Not all children are proficient at forming letters. Be ready to help some children print "I forgive you."

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 3:STORY: THE PRINCE AND THE RHINOCEROS

An Indian tale of speaking kindly, from Teaching Tolerance, Rhinos & Raspberries kit. Permission pending.

*Read or tell the story.*

Once upon a time in India, a rare rhinoceros was born, with skin so beautiful it almost glowed. The rhinoceros was given to a noble prince who was very lonely and whose kingdom was poor. The prince was so delighted with the unusual gift that he laughed joyfully. So he named the little calf Great Joy.

The prince treated the rhino with great kindness. He fed her rice, fruit and choice tender plants, and he always spoke in a kind and gentle voice. Great Joy grew and was happy. The prince thought Great Joy was quite beautiful.

At sunrise she would be golden. At sunset, she would be a canvas of pink and red and orange, and later the dark blue of evening. Sometimes after a rain, she would reflect everything around her. She seemed almost enchanted.

"You are wonderful and special to me," the prince whispered softly.

In time, Great Joy grew into an enormous rhino. She was very strong. One day she thought about her good life with the prince and what she could give him in return. "I am only a rhino, but I can use my strength to help him earn gold for his kingdom." She suggested to the prince that she compete in a contest of strength against the town's strongest bulls.

A rich merchant with many fine oxen agreed to the wager: Great Joy would pull a hundred loaded wagons usually towed by his team of eight oxen. The bet was one thousand gold pieces.

The next day, the prince inspected the wagons and harnessed Great Joy to the front. Then he climbed onto the driver's seat. Great Joy waited for a few kind words of encouragement before starting. Instead, the prince, thinking only of the gold, waved a whip in the air and

shouted, "Pull, you big wretch. Move, you worthless rhino."

Great Joy was shocked at her beloved prince's words. Wretch? Worthless? "I'm no wretch," she thought. "I'm not worthless, either." She stiffened her huge legs and refused to move an inch.

Humiliated, the prince ran home and hid in his royal bed. "I'm ruined," he cried.

Great Joy was filled with pain and sorrow. She needed to understand what she had done to deserve such cruel insults. After many days and nights without food or sleep, she went to the prince's palace, which had grown shabby due to his impoverished state. "Oh, Prince, in all our years together, have I ever done anything to hurt you?"

"No, never."

"Then why did you say those terrible things to me? Was the thought of gold worth more than what I can offer?"

The prince hung his head. Tears ran down his face. "The gold distracted me. I forgot the importance of our friendship. I am so ashamed."

"Then we will try again," Great Joy said. "Go back to the merchant and double your bet."

Again the carts were loaded, and Great Joy was harnessed to the front. The prince climbed up and sang out, "All right, you marvelous marvel, you splendid rhino, my Great Joy. It's up to you!"

The powerful rhino snorted, pawed the ground and charged forward. Her sides heaved as she pulled, until the last cart crossed the finish line. The townspeople cheered wildly as they covered her with garlands of flowers and strands of tinkling bells.

The prince collected his two thousand pieces of gold, then humbly thanked Great Joy for a job well done. That very evening, the prince and the rhino walked along the river in the red glow of sunset.

"I didn't mean to say such hurtful words to you," the prince whispered. "Please forgive me."

"I already have," said Great Joy.

And that's how they lived forever after — in friendship and great joy. Never again did an unkind word pass between them.

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 3:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: DOVE WITH OLIVE BRANCH**



## **FIND OUT MORE**

### **The Symbols of the Dove and the Olive Branch**

The olive branch as a symbol of peace has roots in Hebrew scripture (Genesis) and ancient Greek mythology and tradition. In Genesis, Noah releases a dove to find land after the rains have stopped. The dove returns with an olive branch in its beak (Book of Noah,

8:11), signifying God's forgiveness or mercy toward humankind and the end of the flooding.

In Greek mythology, the goddess Athena gives an olive tree to the people of Athens, and they name the city for her in gratitude. An Olympic winner's olive branch crown, in tandem with the Greek's tradition of suspending war for the duration of the games, suggests a relationship between the olive tree and peace.

# SESSION 4: THE GIFT OF KINDNESS

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*So many gods, so many creeds,*

*So many paths that wind and wind,*

*While just the art of being kind*

*Is all the sad world needs.*

— *Ella Wheeler Wilcox, American poet (1850-1919)*

This session introduces kindness as an intangible gift that can be freely given every day. The Wonder Box holds a golden ruler that represents one of Jesus' timeless teachings: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Golden Rule can be found in many faith traditions. In the story, "The Very Short Rule," the children hear a parable in which Jesus teaches that following all the rules in the Bible will not necessarily make someone a good person. If we are to follow only one rule, Jesus taught, we should be kind to others in the same way that we would want others to be kind to us.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce kindness as an intangible gift
- Explore the Golden Rule and reveal opportunities for children to use it
- Show how kindness is a way of living our Unitarian Universalist Principles
- Demonstrate that authentic welcoming must include kindness
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the value of the Golden Rule

- Create a "Golden Ruler" to represent being kind to others
- Learn how kindness is an important part of welcome
- Hear a story in which Jesus explains the Golden Rule.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — The Very Short Rule	10
Activity 3: Making Golden Rulers	10
Activity 4: Acts of Kindness Role Play	15
Activity 5: Singing "Filled with Loving Kindness"	10
Faith in Action: Acts of Kindness	Varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: "Be Kind" Cards for the Congregation	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a quiet moment to reflect on the Golden Rule. Try to remember the first time you heard it and what you thought about it. Did it make sense to you?

Do you try to live by the Golden Rule? Think about a time when you were kind to someone without a "reward." Did you help a stranger find their way on the street? Did you donate money anonymously? How does it feel when you are kind to others? How does it feel when someone shows you kindness? Take the positive energy from these memories with you into this session.

# SESSION PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

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

### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children can see it when they gather in circle.

### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Explain that each session starts with a ritual. Ask if anyone knows what a ritual is. You may say:

A ritual is something you do again and again, often at the same time of day. If you have a routine for going to bed, that is a kind of ritual.

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words, line by line.

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

## ACTIVITY 1: THE WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (For instructions for making a Wonder Box, see Session 1.)
- [Leader Resource 1: Golden Rulers](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Use Leader Resource 1, Golden Rulers, and the instructions in Activity 3: Making Golden Rulers, to make a Golden Ruler.
- Place a Golden Ruler in the Wonder Box.

### Description of Activity

While the children are still in a circle around the chalice, show them the Wonder Box. Invite them to guess what gift could be in this big, beautifully-wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then pass the box around, for children to open and find the Golden Ruler inside. Ask the children if they have ever heard of the Golden Rule, and what they know about it. Then say:

This Golden Ruler represents the Golden Rule. Jesus was one of the world's greatest teachers. He wanted to help people be closer to God by teaching the ideas of the Jewish faith in a simple way. He taught people to follow the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule says we should treat others the way we want others to treat us. It sounds like an easy rule. However, sometimes it is hard to follow. We will talk about why it is important that we try our best to be kind everyday.

Ask the children, "What are some ways to show kindness?" Affirm answers that demonstrate kindness, such as, "Saying 'please' and 'thank you.'" "Helping a person who falls down." "Sharing snacks with friends."

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE VERY SHORT RULE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- (included in this document) A copy of the story, [The Very Short Rule](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story. If you can, prepare to tell it, rather than read it from the page.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to get comfortable for listening to a story. Read or tell the story.

After the story, help children explore the frustration of the people who wanted to be good, but found it difficult with so many rules to follow and so much work to do just to survive. Some questions for discussion include:

- What were some of the difficulties people had in following the rules?
- Is it hard for you to remember many rules?

- If you could be kind all the time, what would you be like? What would a typical day be like? What kinds of things would you do?
- What would it be like if everyone was kind to you all the time?

### ACTIVITY 3: MAKING GOLDEN RULERS (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 1, Golden Rulers](#) (included in this document)
- Yellow or gold card stock
- Scissors or paper cutter
- Thin markers or pencils in dark colors to show up well on the bright paper
- Glitter glue or shiny stickers to decorate
- Newsprint, markers and tape

#### Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Leader Resource 1, Golden Rulers onto yellow or gold card stock and cut out enough rulers for all participants plus a few extras.
- Set drawing and decorating materials on work tables.
- Write the words "Be Kind" on newsprint and post.

#### Description of Activity

Settle the children at worktables. Invite them to write the words "Be Kind" on their golden rulers and decorate them. As they work, the discussion of kindness can continue.

### ACTIVITY 4: ACTS OF KINDNESS ROLE PLAY (15 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- The Golden Rulers participants made in Activity 3
- Newsprint, markers and tape

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Tell them they will have a chance to act out situations where they might use the Golden Rule. Ask for volunteers to come into the middle of the circle to act out the first scenario. When the volunteers are ready, share one of the following scenarios for them to act out. Continue with other volunteers and scenarios. Invite brief discussion after each role play. After a few scenarios, tell the children to

raise their Golden Ruler if they have an idea for another scenario, perhaps one from their own experiences or one they make up.

#### Scenarios

- Your friend dropped all of their candy out of their bag. You still have your whole bag of candy in your hand.
- You see your friend crying on the playground. When you ask why they are crying, they say "I wanted to play tag with the older kids, but they said, 'No.'"
- You are in the grocery store with your parents and you see someone drop items from their hands onto the floor.
- You notice a new child your age walk into the sanctuary at church holding tightly to their father's leg.
- During coffee hour you notice an adult in a wheelchair holding a cup of coffee with both hands, but they do not have a treat to eat.
- At school you notice that when your class ran outside for recess, only one classmate stayed behind to help your teacher clean up after snack.

End the activity by asking the group to hold up their Golden Rulers and say; "I promise to be kind and treat others the way I want to be treated."

#### Including All Participants

Some children may be shy about volunteering to act out roles. That is okay. Try to engage everyone in discussion.

### ACTIVITY 5: SINGING "FILLED WITH LOVING KINDNESS" (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Copy of "Filled with Loving Kindness," Hymn 1031 in *Singing the Journey*
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Recording of "Filled with Loving Kindness" and appropriate music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

#### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to teach the song, "Filled with Loving Kindness," to the group. If you are unfamiliar with the tune, [hear it on the UUA website](http://www.uua.org/publications/singingjourney/52328.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/publications/singingjourney/52328.shtml](http://www.uua.org/publications/singingjourney/52328.shtml)).



- Write the words to the song on newsprint and post.
- Optional: Obtain a recording of the song to familiarize the children with the tune.
- Optional: Invite a musical volunteer to lead and/or accompany the song.

### Description of Activity

Teach the song line by line, and then lead children in singing it through once or twice.

This is a good song to have the children teach the congregation in the sanctuary at some point.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- The Golden Ruler that was in the Wonder Box
- Tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- If you have not made a Wonder Box poster, see instructions in Session 1.
- Display the Wonder Box poster in the meeting space.
- Write the closing words on newsprint and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show them the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the Golden Ruler to the poster. You may say:

Now we will see the Golden Ruler every time we are together here. It will remind us that treating others the way we want to be treated is the most important rule to remember.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that it is important to be kind to one another. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — Kindness!

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: ACTS OF KINDNESS

### Preparation for Activity

- Use your own ideas, the ideas provided in Description of Activity below, or ideas from the following websites to help the children's planning. Some sites include:
  - The website of the organization, [Random Acts of Kindness](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/). (at <http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>)
  - A website which presents lessons and education about altruism in different faiths and in the secular community, [Learning to Give](http://www.learningtogive.org/). (at [www.learningtogive.org/](http://www.learningtogive.org/))
  - The [Help Others](http://www.helpothers.org/) (at [www.helpothers.org](http://www.helpothers.org/)) website, "a portal dedicated to small acts of kindness"

### Description of Activity

Engage the children in brainstorming and then implementing "random acts of kindness." One option is making "feel good" cards for people in the congregation. The religious educator or minister can help identify people who would benefit from receiving a "feel good" card. The children may want to deliver the cards themselves. Another option is to send the cards anonymously. In that case, you might say something like:

It does feel good when we hand someone a card or special gift. But, part of feeling good about giving can be that we give when no one knows we did it. Why would we want to give without telling anyone? Because giving feels good and

sometimes it is more important to help someone than get credit. For example, when your parents give money to an organization like the American Red Cross, they might be helping people all over the country. The people they help will never know who helped them, but it feels good to your parents to have made a difference.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*So many gods, so many creeds,*

*So many paths that wind and wind,*

*While just the art of being kind*

*Is all the sad world needs.*

— *Ella Wheeler Wilcox, American poet (1850-1919)*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

When children opened the Wonder Box today, they found a Golden Ruler. This symbolizes the Golden Rule, one of the most famous of Jesus' teachings: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The children learned that versions of the Golden Rule exist in many different religions. According to Rev. Sophia Fahs' telling of the story, "The Very Short Rule," contemporaries of Jesus expressed frustration at having to remember so many rules. Many were poor and had to work very hard for a living. They did not have the time or education to remember all the rules in their faith. Jesus taught that even following all the biblical dictates would not necessarily make someone a good person, but following the Golden Rule contained the essence of a faithful life.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

How the Golden Rule applies in your family.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

Put the Golden Ruler your child(ren) brought home on the refrigerator for everyone to see. See who can say "the very short rule" while standing on one foot.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

Tell the family you will all keep alert for people being kind. When someone is caught being kind, they get a hug from the family member that "catches" them. For example, if someone cleans up the living room without being asked you can say, "Hey, I caught you being kind! You get a HUG!" Or, when someone sees an opportunity for kindness, they can grab the Golden Ruler and say, "Hey, let's treat others as we want to be treated." When siblings are bickering might be a good time to do this. They might even try it standing on one foot.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: "BE KIND" CARDS FOR THE CONGREGATION (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Blank index cards and colored markers for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the words "Be Kind" on newsprint, and post.
- Make arrangements with your religious educator, minister or lay leaders to distribute "Be Kind" cards, perhaps in worship.

### Description of Activity

Distribute blank index cards and markers. Invite children to write and decorate "Be Kind" cards. Tell them how you plan to distribute them to people in the congregation.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 4:STORY: THE VERY SHORT RULE

From *From Long Ago and Many Lands* by Sophia Lyon Fahs, second edition (Boston: Skinner House, 1995).

*Read or tell the story.*

When Jesus came into town, someone who knew him was sure to pass the word around. A plan would be worked out for him to be at a certain place when evening came and the day's work was done. Then men and women who had to work during the day could gather and listen to what Jesus had to say.

Sometimes they would find him in the house of a friend. And the number of people who would come might fill the whole house and the street outside, too. Other times they would follow Jesus to the lake. He and some of his fishermen friends would step into a boat. They would anchor it near the shore. The people would sit on the rocks and grass near by, and Jesus would stand up in the boat and talk to everybody.

Sometimes there were men and women who listened to Jesus who were very much discouraged. Some were so poor they did not get enough to eat. Some had sick children to take care of at home. Some were old and crippled and always in pain. Some felt that nobody cared for them. They were always given the meanest jobs to do and they were always being scolded because they did not do them well enough.

There were others who felt it was scarcely worth while trying to be good at all. No one was ever pleased with what they did no matter how hard they tried.

These people went regularly once a week to the synagogue on the Sabbath. They heard the Bible read to them, but they could not remember all that they heard, so they did not do all that they were told they ought to do. They knew they were not praying as often as they were told to pray, but it was so hard to remember the words to say. They knew they were not giving as much as they were told to give to the synagogue, but they had so little to live on, how could they give more? They admitted that they did some work on the Sabbath while the teachers said they should never do any work at all on that day. But the hours in the week were not long enough to get everything done that had to be done to keep the children from starving.

Often they would go home after listening to Jesus, and they would remember just one little story or one short sentence that Jesus had said. But that little bit they remembered a long, long time, because somehow they liked to remember it.

Such people as these were naturally discouraged. They felt all the time that their teachers were not pleased with them. If their teachers were not pleased, then probably

God was not pleased either. This thought made them feel even more discouraged.

One day as Jesus was sitting in a boat and the people were squatting on the rocks along the shore, one of these discouraged men asked a question. "I am a shepherd," he said. "I have to spend long hours in the open fields. When eating time comes, I cannot always find a brook where I can wash my hands before I eat. It is the rule, is it not, that a man should always wash his hands before eating? Do you think, Jesus, that I am a bad man because I have to eat my lunch without washing my hands?"

"Certainly not," said Jesus with a smile. "You are not a bad man simply because you eat without washing your hands when you are in the fields and cannot do so. Unwashed hands cannot make a person bad anyway. Goodness and badness are inside of you, not in your skin."

Then a woman spoke up and asked another question. "There are many of us here, Jesus, who have never learned to read. We have not gone to school. We have not been able to study the laws in the Bible. We can't remember all the laws the preachers in the synagogue tell us about. There seem to be hundreds of laws the preachers say we must follow if we want to please God. But we simply cannot remember them all. Do you think, Jesus, that we are bad because we can't remember all the laws? Our other teachers seem to think we are no good just because we don't know much."

Then Jesus would encourage these people. He would say: "For many years, our teachers have been adding more and more laws to the ones that are in the Bible. They have meant to help us but what they have really done is to make living a good life so hard that none of us can be counted good.

"I say to you, friends, that being good is not just obeying a large number of rules. You could obey every single one of the rules the teachers have made, and still not be really good. Whether one is good or not depends on how one feels inside in one's heart. Do you feel hateful or loving toward others? Do you feel angry or patient with the person who hurts you? Those are the things that count."

"That kind of talk sounds good, Jesus," said a man who had been busy all day long hauling stones for building a road. "But I wish you would tell us in just one sentence what is most important so that we can't forget."

Jesus smiled at this and said: "Your wish reminds me of what someone once said to Hillel, that great teacher of ours of whom you all have heard. The story is told of how a student one day said to Hillel: 'Tell me, Rabbi, what all the laws put together mean and tell me so simply that I can hear it all while I stand on one foot.'" At this everyone laughed.

"Hillel gave the student a very good answer and a very short one," said Jesus. "Hillel said: 'Never do to anyone else the kind of thing that is hateful to you. This is all the laws put together. All the rest is just an explanation of that one short rule.'" Then Jesus added his own thought.

"I would say this rule in just a little different way. I would say it this way. Do those things to others that you would like to have others do to you."

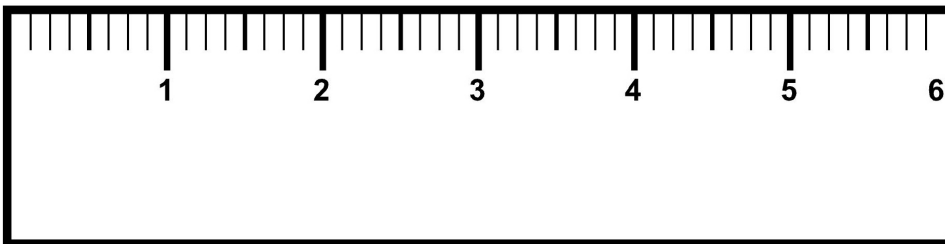
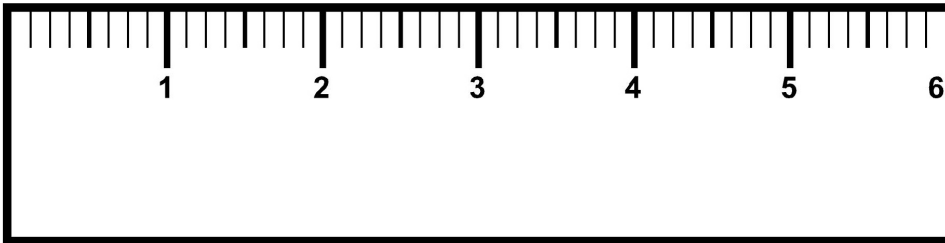
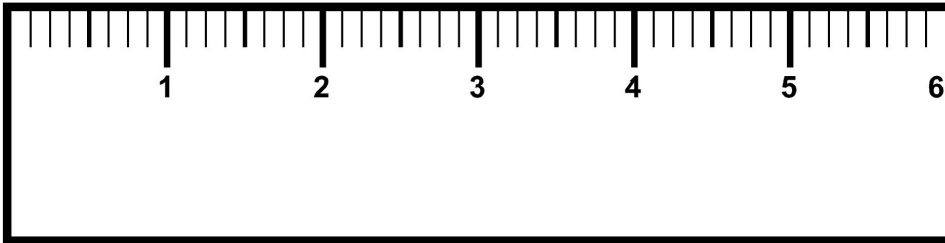
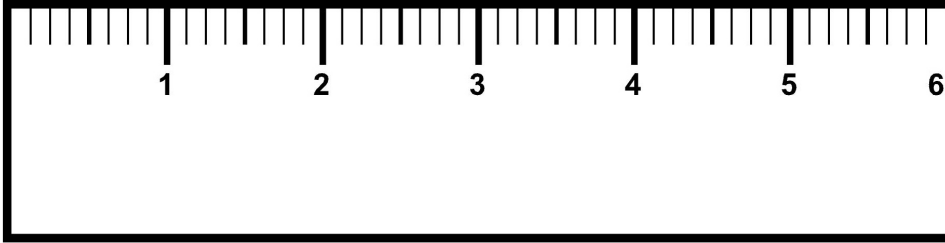
"That's a good rule," said the workman who had asked the question. "I could have stood on one foot easily while you said that."

"Try the rule," said Jesus. "It doesn't take long to say it, but it may take a long time to learn to follow it."

When his talk was over, the people got up from the ground and walked along the shore to their homes. Some of them seemed very much relieved. Jesus had given them something they could understand and something they could not forget.

"Do those things to others that you would like to have others do to you." It was a very short rule, but one that is still remembered after nearly two thousand years. We call it our Golden Rule.

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 4:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: GOLDEN RULERS**



## FIND OUT MORE

Find ideas for kind acts on these websites:

- The website of the organization, [Random Acts of Kindness](http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/) (at <http://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>)
- [Learning to Give](http://www.learningtogive.org/) (at [www.learningtogive.org/](http://www.learningtogive.org/)), a website which presents lessons and education about altruism in different faiths and in the secular community
- The [Help Others](http://www.helpothers.org/) (at [www.helpothers.org/](http://www.helpothers.org/)) website, "a portal dedicated to small acts of kindness."

# SESSION 5: THE GIFT OF INVITATION

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Come, come, whoever you are,  
Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving....  
— Rumi*

This session's intangible gift is "invitation." Children explore multiple ways to communicate that someone is invited. The story focuses on the Jewish custom of welcoming Elijah with a place at the Seder table and an open door at Passover.

For Activity 3, Invitation Collage, you will need magazines with images children will recognize as communicating welcome. The more creative and diverse the images you provide, the broader the children's understanding of "invitation," including whom we invite, the many ways we can express invitation, and the various contexts in which we can offer invitation. Leader Resource 1, Images of Invitation, can start your collection.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce invitation as an intangible gift
- Explore situations where people are welcomed by being invited
- Highlight the spiritual reward of inviting others through a story about the Jewish custom of symbolically welcoming the prophet Elijah to the Passover Seder
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the value of giving and receiving the gift of invitation
- Learn that even when you do not think you have enough to share or give, you can always give the gift of invitation
- Experience a story about a young girl's encounter with the prophet Elijah that taps two Unitarian Universalist Sources: Jewish tradition

and the direct experience of mystery and wonder

- Identify and explore images and words that illustrate different ways to express invitation and welcome across cultures and age groups

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — Grandmother's Lesson	10
Activity 3: Words of Welcome	10
Activity 4: Singing "Peace, Salaam, Shalom"	5
Activity 5: Invitation Collage	20
Faith in Action: Being Greeters at Our Congregation	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Party Invitation	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a quiet moment to yourself. Think about some invitations you have extended. A formal invitation to a meal you have prepared? A suggestion that a new colleague join a conversation you are having with others whom they do not know?

Now think about invitations you have not extended. Are there times when you might have included a new person and not done so? Are there times when you felt the scarcity of time or goods, and not included others who might have appreciated your invitation? If invitation does not always come easily to you, imagine how new this territory may be for the five- and six-year-olds you will lead today. In this session's story, a grandmother recalls how she learned the value of invitation and how she could share that gift with others, no matter how little she thought she had to share. Maybe you, too, have learned this lesson through experience. Honor your own experiences as you invite the children today to learn with you.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post where the children will be able to see it when they gather in circle.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Explain that each session starts with a ritual. Ask if anyone knows what a ritual is. You may say:

A ritual is something you do again and again, often at the same time of day. If you have a routine for going to bed, that is a kind of ritual.

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words, line by line.

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: THE WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See instructions for Wonder Box in Session 1.)
- A drinking goblet or wine glass

#### Preparation for Activity

- Place a goblet inside the Welcome Box.

#### Description of Activity

While children are still in a circle around the chalice, show them the Wonder Box. Invite them to guess what gift could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then pass the box around for children to open and find the goblet inside. Ask the children if any of them have seen or used something like the goblet before. Allow some comments. Then say:

Does this special cup look like an invitation? Well, it is. When Jewish people gather for a special meal called a "Passover Seder," one custom is to leave an empty place at the table, where no one sits. That place is set with a glass so any guest who might come can have something to drink. During the Seder meal, the glass is filled, and someone opens the front door of the home, so anyone passing by knows they are welcome.

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — GRANDMOTHER'S LESSON (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [Grandmother's Lesson](#) (included in this document)
- Goblet or wine glass from the Wonder Box
- Optional: A shawl and/or reading glasses for storytelling props

#### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story. If you can, prepare to tell it, rather than read it from the page. You may wish to don a shawl or glasses, and perhaps alter your voice when you speak as the grandmother.

#### Description of Activity

Invite the children to get comfortable for listening to a story. Set out the goblet, telling the children it is for Elijah. Ask a child to go and open the meeting room's door. Tell the children these actions are customary during a Passover Seder.

Read or tell the story. After the story, ask children if they can think of a time when someone made them feel welcome by inviting them to do something or go somewhere. You might ask children to raise their hands if they have ever been invited to play, to a birthday party, or to eat with someone? Ask them how it felt to be invited. Then, ask if anyone wants to tell about a time they invited someone else to play, to come to a party, or to eat together. Ask how that felt, too.



## ACTIVITY 3: WORDS OF WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Posters or print-outs showing words of welcome in multiple languages
- Optional: Drawing paper and art materials

### Preparation for Activity

- Be ready to present words of invitation and welcome from languages other than English, especially if your congregation includes families who speak another language at home. Research the correct pronunciations and, as needed, the correct use of the appropriate alphabet (such as Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, or Russian). See Find Out More in this session for more resources.

### Description of Activity

Distribute paper and art materials if you want children to copy, write or illustrate words of welcome. Teach the group to say one or more phrases. You might ask them to choose one phrase and illustrate it. You could have the children go around in a circle and use words or gestures to show they are inviting the person next to them to be their friend.

## ACTIVITY 4: SINGING "PEACE, SELAM, SHALOM" (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Recording of "Peace, Selam, Shalom" and appropriate music player
- Optional: Percussion instruments for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- If you do not know the song, "Peace, Selam, Shalom," listen to a recording and prepare to teach and lead it.
- Optional: Write the words "peace, selam, shalom" on newsprint and post.
- Optional: Gather simple percussion instruments for the children.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle to sing together. Tell them that Arabic- and Hebrew-speaking people use the words "selam" and "shalom," which mean peace, as a greeting of welcome. Teach the song and sing it a few times.

## ACTIVITY 5: INVITATION COLLAGE (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Magazines for participants to cut up
- Plain paper for all participants
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors) and glue sticks to share
- Optional: Leader Resource 1, [Images of Invitation](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Set out all materials on worktables. Make sure there are enough magazines for all.

### Description of Activity

Settle the children at worktables. Ask them to find pictures where they think that welcome and invitation are being shown. You could say:

We are going to find examples of welcome. How do you think someone may look if they are welcomed? (Children may say "happy" or "joyful.") Find pictures of people you think are engaging in welcoming behavior.

Show a few examples of images of welcome and invitation, and invite the children to speculate as to what is going on in each of the pictures. You may use magazine pictures or the images in Leader Resource 1. You may also draw your own examples and/or have children make drawings to include in the collage — or instead of a collage.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster (Instructions included in Session 1)
- Image of an open door from [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document)
- Tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1, Images of Invitation, and cut out the image of the open door to add to the Wonder Box poster.
- Write the closing words on newsprint and post.
- Customize, print out and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show them the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the open door symbol to the poster. You may say, in your own words:

"Now when we look at our Wonder Box poster, we will remember that inviting someone is a wonderful way to show them welcome. We know the words to say to invite someone and make them feel welcome. And we know how good it feels when we open our doors to invite people in."

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that we are all, always, invited and welcome here. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — Invitation!"

Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: BEING GREETERS AT OUR CONGREGATION

### Preparation for Activity

- Arrange with worship leaders or volunteer coordinators for the children to be ushers or greeters. Decide together what tasks the children can do.
- If you will need to gather children at a different time or place than your usual meeting place, give parents advance notice.

## Description of Activity

Give the children an opportunity to experience inviting people to your congregation. As ushers for a worship service, they can invite the people entering the sanctuary to take an order of service and a seat. At a coffee hour, the children can welcome people and invite them to take a nametag, something to eat or drink, or flyers about upcoming church activities.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Come, come, whoever you are,*

*Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving....*

— Rumi

## IN TODAY'S SESSION...

When children opened the Wonder Box today, they found a goblet, symbolizing the cup for Elijah that is part of the table setting at a Jewish Passover Seder. We talked about the intangible gift of invitation and explored a variety of ways we use the gift of invitation to let people know they are welcome.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

At this age, children do much of their "inviting" in the context of family. Talk about how your family uses different ways to show you are welcoming others with invitation. Be aware of ways you model invitation for your child(ren), including ways you show welcome to new people in your congregation and your neighborhood.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

This session may give your family the impetus to invite friends for a meal who have never been to your home before.

## FAMILY DISCOVERY

Do you have neighbors you have never met? As a family, reach out in invitation to a neighboring family.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 5:STORY: GRANDMOTHER'S LESSON

A contemporary story by Elisa Davy Pearmain, based on the Jewish tradition of the Passover Seder.

*Before telling the story, set out a goblet for Elijah and invite a child to go and open the meeting room's door. These actions are customary during a Passover Seder.*

Once upon a time there lived a brother and sister named Leah and Sam who were about your age. They were Jewish and Passover was their favorite holiday because there was so much to do. The day before the Seder they would help sweep the house clean of all bread crumbs, help set the table with special Passover dishes, and put an extra chair and cup for Elijah the Prophet. Then on the evening of Passover the relatives would arrive, and the Seder would begin just after sunset.

One year they came to a place near the end of the Seder where their father poured wine into Elijah the Prophet's goblet and asked the children to go and open the door for him. This was one of their favorite parts because it was so mysterious. They ran to the door and looked up and down the street. They didn't see anyone except the new children next door. They had just moved from Haiti and they were playing in their yard. No Elijah.

Leah came back to the table feeling sad. "Where is Elijah?" she asked. "Every year we pour him wine and open the door but he never comes. What does he look like? Will he ever come for Passover?"

Her parents looked at Grandmother.

[Here you may wish to put on a shawl or reading glasses — something to set the grandmother's character apart. If you are comfortable, you can slightly deepen your voice and slow the tempo to suggest an older person who is thinking back.]

"I have seen him," she said, "though I didn't realize it at first. Elijah comes in many disguises.

"I saw him long ago when I was about your age. One cold day just before Passover I was minding my younger brothers and sisters and my mother was resting. There was a knock at the door. I opened the door and there stood a beggar. He was dressed in rags and had an old sack over his back. I saw that his shoes were full of holes.

"May I come in and sit by your fire and have some food?" he asked. "I am so hungry and cold."

"I knew we were not a wealthy family. My parents worked hard and still had barely enough for a simple

meal, let alone a Passover feast. 'We have nothing extra for you,' I said, and I shut the door.

"I peeked out the window and saw the beggar walk to our next door neighbor's house. The neighbors had even less than we did, since the father had died. The mother worked very hard taking in sewing but she had many mouths to feed. I was sure that she would turn the beggar away. But I saw her open her door and invite him in.

"The next day, my mother was cooking our Passover meal and I was setting the table. Suddenly, there came a cry from the kitchen. Our dog had grabbed the chicken from the counter, knocking over the apple-raisin pudding my mother was preparing. When my father got home he found us sitting and crying. There was no money to buy another chicken or to make another desert to celebrate our Passover.

"We were still sitting and crying when we heard a knock on the door. It was our poor neighbor. She smiled at us and said, 'It seems that misfortune has come to you. I would like to invite you to celebrate Passover at our home this evening. I don't have much, as you know, but somehow I was able to make more matzoh balls than usual from my flour, and my soup kettle is full.' My parents thanked her and promised to bring the foods they had prepared that had not been spoiled.

"After our neighbor had gone, my mother asked me, 'Who was that that knocked at our door while I was resting yesterday?'

"I said, 'It was a beggar. I told him we didn't have enough and sent him away.'

"Where did he go?' she asked.

"To the neighbors,' I shrugged.

"My parents looked at each other. 'Do you know who that beggar was?' my father asked.

"No.'

"That was the prophet Elijah,' said my mother. 'He comes to see if we are helping to make the world a better place by being welcoming and generous.'

"We had a wonderful Passover with our neighbors. We found that when we shared from our kitchen, there was plenty for all. When it came to the part in the Seder where my father poured wine into the Elijah cup, I asked if I could go and open the door for Elijah. My parents smiled.

Grandmother finished the story by saying, "I didn't see Elijah again, but ever since then I try to treat everyone as if they were Elijah, and I find that there is always enough."

(Here, you might take off the shawl or glasses and return to being the narrator.)

When Grandmother's story was finished everyone was quiet. Then Sam asked, "What do you mean that you treat everyone like Elijah, Grandmother?"

Grandmother looked at them and asked a question: "What was the last kind and welcoming thing that you did for someone?"

"I helped my teacher to carry some books because she was tired," Sam answered.

"I invited the new girl at school to play with me and my friends at recess," said Leah.

"How did it feel?" asked Grandmother.

"Good." "Warm and happy," they replied.

"That is how it feels to treat everyone like Elijah," Grandmother said.

Then Leah jumped up from the table. "I think Elijah would like us to invite our neighbors to celebrate Passover with us. Can we invite them to our Seder?"

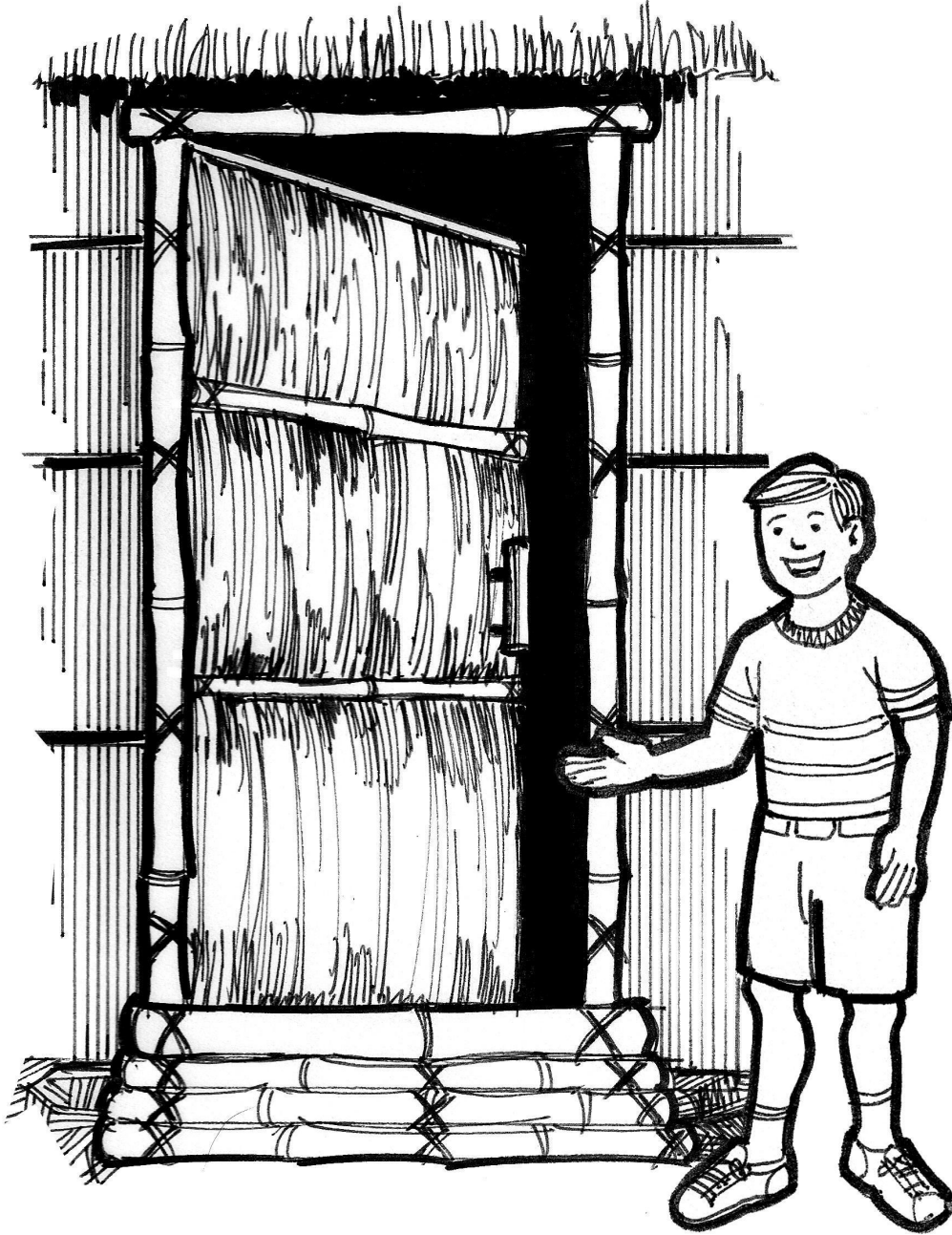
Mother and father looked at each other and smiled. The new neighbors weren't Jewish. They had recently moved to the neighborhood from Haiti . This was exactly the spirit of welcoming that Elijah taught. "Yes, go and tell them that if they would like to join our Seder meal, they will find our door open."

It seemed that Elijah did visit that Passover day after all!

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 5: LEADER RESOURCE 1: IMAGES OF INVITATION**







## FIND OUT MORE

### Stories about Elijah

Elijah the Prophet from Hebrew scripture appears in many apocryphal stories. Typically, Elijah, disguised as a poor beggar, visits people to test their compassion and generosity; those who welcome and help this stranger are often materially rewarded. Here are some sources for Elijah stories:

Elijah's Tears: Stories for the Jewish Holidays by Sydelle Pearl (Pelican Publishing Company, 2004)

God's People: Stories from the Old Testament retold by Geraldine McCaughrean (New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1997)

Tales of Elijah the Prophet by Peninnah Schram (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1991)

The Mysterious Visitor: Stories about the Prophet Elijah by Nina Jaffe (New York: Scholastic Press, 1997)

The Uninvited Guest and Other Jewish Holiday Tales by Nina Jaffe (New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1993)

### Elijah in the Passover Seder

The word "seder" means "order" in Hebrew. Celebrants usually use a "hagaddah" as a manual to guide them through the rituals of the Seder meal. A hagaddah includes instructions to open the door for Elijah and to fill Elijah's cup with wine. In addition to welcoming Elijah, some contemporary Seders also welcome the prophet, Miriam, by including an orange on the plate of ceremonial foods and pouring an additional cup of wine.

Two hagadot that can help introduce the Passover Seder to young children are Why on This Night? A Passover Hagaddah for Family Celebration by Rahel

Musleah ( New York : Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2000), which includes a common, simple Elijah folktale and The Family Haggada by Ellen Schechter (New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, 1999).

Wonders and Miracles: A Passover Companion, written and compiled by Eric Kimmel ( New York : Scholastic Press, 2004) contains a complex Elijah tale and information about the Miriam's Cup rituals.

### Multilingual Welcome

A number of online resources provide pronunciation and/or correct ways to write words of welcome in different languages besides English. The website Omniglot: The Online Encyclopedia of Writing Systems and Languages provides a list of ["welcome" in multiple languages](#) (at [www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/welcome.htm](http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/welcome.htm)) including Maltese and Serbian.

### "Peace, Salaam, Shalom"

Find a link in the text of [Pat Humphries' online biography](#) (at [www.pathumphries.com/bio/](http://www.pathumphries.com/bio/)) to hear her perform the song, "Peace, Salaam, Shalom..

A [You Tube video](#) (at [ethioborsaye.blogspot.com/2008/02/selam-shalom-shlomo-peace-song-sung-in.html](http://ethioborsaye.blogspot.com/2008/02/selam-shalom-shlomo-peace-song-sung-in.html)) presents "Selam Shalom Shlomo," a song in Amharic (Ethiopia), German and Lingala (Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Republic of the Congo ) by the band, Karibuni.



# SESSION 6: THE GIFT OF FRIENDS

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature.*

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*Hold a true friend with both your hands.*

— *Nigerian proverb*

People are social animals, and relating to others affirms both our and others' inherent dignity and self-worth. This session introduces the intangible gift of friendship and gives participants ways to show they appreciate their friends. The children learn that having friends and being a friend are an important part of who we are.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce friendship as an intangible gift
- Explore the value of having and appreciating friends
- Show how being a good friend helps us live our Unitarian Universalist Principles, especially the first Principle (inherent worth and dignity of every person)
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify what they like about their friends
- Learn some ways to express appreciation of friends
- Reflect on the value of friends through a story about how the Native American character, Coyote, learns to value his friends

- Learn and sing a song about friendship.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — How Coyote Lost His Songs, Music, and Dance	10
Activity 3: I Like My Friend Because...	10
Activity 4: Singing "Make New Friends"	5
Activity 5: Tissue Paper Friendship Flowers	20
Faith in Action: Bring a Friend to Sunday School	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Coyote and Friends Role Play	15
Alternate Activity 2: Making Friendship Bracelets	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Most of us know what it is like to enjoy and value our friends, and also what it is like to want to be alone. Take a quiet moment to reflect on friendships you have valued, and on times when you wanted — like Coyote — nothing but to be alone. How have you balanced these needs?

Take your own experiences and appreciative energy around friendship into today's session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post where the children will be able to see it when they gather in circle.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. You may say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words.

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: THE WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (Instructions are included in Session 1)
- Large, cardboard box with fitted lid
- Decorative wrapping paper or foil
- Optional: Ribbons, stickers, glitter and other decorations
- A woven friendship bracelet

- Optional: One or more images of Coyote and his friends, cut out from Leader Resource 1 and made into masks

#### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain or make a friendship bracelet. If you plan to do Alternate Activity 2, Making Friendship Bracelets, you can make a prototype for the Wonder Box. Place the friendship bracelet in the Wonder Box. You may also use it for the Wonder Box poster.
- Optional: Place one or more images of the characters from the Coyote story (see Leader Resource 1), instead of a friendship bracelet, in the Wonder Box and on the Wonder Box poster.

#### Description of Activity

While children are still in a circle around the chalice, show them the Wonder Box. Invite them to guess what gift could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then pass the box around for children to open and find the friendship bracelet inside. Ask the children if any of them have ever had a bracelet like this, or made one for someone. Tell them it is called a "friendship bracelet."

Sometimes people make a bracelet like this to give a friend. When you give or get this kind of bracelet, it's not the whole gift, is it? What do you think the real gift is?

Allow guesses; affirm the answer "friendship."

That's right. Friendship is a gift we can give to people we have known a long time or people we have just met, with or without a bracelet. There are lots of things that make a person a friend. Today we are going to talk about how we appreciate our friends — the friends we already have, and new friends we will meet.

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — HOW COYOTE LOST HIS SONGS, MUSIC, AND DANCE (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [How Coyote Lost His Songs, Music, and Dance](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Pictures, masks or puppets ([Leader Resource 1](#)) (included in this document) for Coyote, Rabbit, Moose, Bird and White Buffalo Woman

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story. If you can, prepare to tell it rather than read it from the page.
- Optional: To tell the story in an active way, use Leader Resource 1 to make puppets or masks. Use these as props to indicate different characters in the story. Or, ask for five children to volunteer to wear a mask, or hold up a mask or puppet when their character is talking.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to get comfortable for listening to a story. If some children will participate in the telling, gather them around you where the whole group can see them. Read or tell the story.

## ACTIVITY 3: I LIKE MY FRIEND BECAUSE... (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Stuffed animals, dolls, or picture cards of animals or people for all participants
- Basket or paper bag

### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a variety of stuffed animals, dolls or picture cards of different animals.

### Description of Activity

Ask the children if they ever felt like Coyote did, that they were tired of their friends or didn't like something about them, and felt like playing alone. Allow some comments. Then ask, "What happened to Coyote after he left all his friends?" Affirm comments like:

- Coyote lost more music every time he ignored a friend.
- When Coyote thought mean things about his friends, he didn't feel good.
- Coyote forgot how to have fun when he spent all his time alone.
- Make the point that Coyote learned that it is fine to be alone sometime, but we do need friends. And every friend has something about them that we can appreciate.

Invite the children one at a time to choose a stuffed animal, a doll or a picture card from the basket or bag, preferably without seeing which one they are taking. You might say, "[Name of child], would you like to have a new friend?" Ask each child, "[Name of child], who is your new friend?" Allow the child to give the friend a name. Then ask, "What is something special that you like about [new friend's name]?" Affirm all responses by saying, "Thank you," or "Pleased to meet you, [new

friend's name]." After all children have had a chance, ask them to return the "new friends" to the basket or bag so they can play together.

## ACTIVITY 4: SINGING "MAKE NEW FRIENDS" (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to teach the song, "Make New Friends." You may choose to teach it as a round. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to lead it.
- Optional: Write the words to the song on newsprint and post.
- Optional: Clear a floor space large enough for children to do a simple circle dance.

### Description of Activity

Singing this song together affirms being open to new friends and valuing the friends we already have. You may sing it as a round or have the group do a simple circle dance for a more active experience.

Gather children in a circle. Teach the song, line by line:

Make new friends,  
And keep the old.  
One is silver  
And the other's gold.

To sing it as a round, form two groups. The first group starts the song. When they reach the line, "One is silver...," the second group starts the song. Lead both groups to sing the verse three times.

For a simple circle dance, invite the children to stand in a circle and hold hands. Have them walk clockwise as you start singing the song, and switch directions with each couplet. To end the song and dance, lead everyone to walk to the middle of the circle and raise their arms together on the word "gold."

You may like to also teach this verse:

A circle is round,  
It has no end.  
That's how long  
I want to be your friend.

## ACTIVITY 5: TISSUE PAPER FRIENDSHIP FLOWERS (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Various colors of tissue paper
- Optional: Silver and gold tissue paper
- Pipe cleaners for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- Cut tissue paper into 8x10-inch sheets (five sheets per participant)
- Optional: See a finished tissue paper flower on the [Enchanted Learning website](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/flowers/tissueflower/) (at [www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/flowers/tissueflower/](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/flowers/tissueflower/)).
- Decide whether the children will take their flowers home to give to a friend or give their flowers to another child in the group.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children they will make a tissue paper flower. According to what you have decided, tell them:

You can keep your flower to remind you to value your friends, old and new, and to remind you that your old and new friends value you.

Or: You can keep your flower. You might like to give it to an old friend or a new friend. When you do, tell them something special you like about them, why you like being their friend.

Or: After we make our flowers, we will each give them to one of our old or new friends here in Wonderful Welcome.

Leave time for assembling the flowers and for clean-up. In keeping with the option you have chosen, invite the children to say what they will do with their flowers when they take them home, or gather the children in a circle and have each child pass their flower to the left. Make sure that every child gives and receives a flower.

### How to Make a Flower

Stack five 8x10-inch sheets evenly. Fold the sheets like an accordion. Twist the pipe cleaner around the center of the paper. Gently pull each piece of paper towards the top center of the flower, separating each sheet of paper from the others to form the petals.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster (Instructions are included in Session 1.)

- Friendship bracelet (or Coyote story characters) from Wonder Box
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Display the Wonder Box poster in the meeting space.
- Write the closing words on newsprint and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show them the Wonder Box poster. Explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape the friendship bracelet (or image of a Coyote story character) to the Wonder Box poster. You might say:

Just like Coyote, we learned today that it is very important to value our friends. Friends we already know and new friends, too. Our friends can make our day and our lives full of music. Just like Coyote.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you could all be together today. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that all kinds of friends are important, and we appreciate every one. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — Friendship!

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute the Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

# FAITH IN ACTION: BRING A FRIEND TO SUNDAY SCHOOL

## Preparation for Activity

- Talk with your religious educator about a good time to have visitors to Wonderful Welcome. If your congregation does not have a "Bring a Friend Sunday" choose a day that the religious educator can join the group to talk about Unitarian Universalism and your congregation.
- Write to parents about this session and encourage them to invite a friend of the family — an adult, child, or whole family — to the congregation for worship and/or religious education. Send the invitation well in advance of the scheduled day, and confirm responses at least a week before the session.

## Description of Activity

This is an opportunity for the children to share something special with a friend — their faith community. Share with visitors the Opening, Wonder Box, Wonder Box poster, and other group rituals. Let the children know that when they help their visiting friends participate they are showing appreciation of their friendship and giving an intangible gift. Tell the children they are also receiving the gift of friendship, because their friends made time to come be a part of Wonderful Welcome.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature.*

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*Hold a true friend with both your hands.*

— *Nigerian proverb*

## IN TODAY'S SESSION...

When the children opened the Wonder Box today, they found a friendship bracelet. We talked about the intangible gift of friendship. Friends can be people we have known a long time or people we just met.

In the story, How Coyote Lost His Songs, Music and Dance, a coyote decides that he doesn't want to be around his friends. As he abandons his friends to go off and be alone, he loses his ability to sing, dance and make music. Through a dream, he learns how his friends enrich his life in such a way that they inspire his music, song and dance. The children made "friendship flowers" to share with someone special. They also sang the song, "Make New Friends."

## EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

How do you make friends as a family? Have you vacationed and met people whom you have kept in touch with? Even if you don't see friends you meet on vacation again, recall how they made the vacation more fun by sharing experiences. Think about the friends you have made in your life, and talk about why it is important to have friends.

## EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

... reaching out to an old friend you have not spoken to in a long time. Talk as a family about someone you all remember, perhaps from an old neighborhood, a previous school or job, or another congregation. Contact them and ask how they are doing. You can have your child draw a picture to send to that friend.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: COYOTE AND FRIENDS ROLE PLAY (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of [Leader Resource 1](#), (included in this document) Coyote, Rabbit, Moose, Bird and White Buffalo Woman Masks and Puppets
- Scissors
- Optional: White shawl for child(ren) enacting role of White Buffalo Woman
- **For Puppets**
  - Color markers, pencils or crayons
  - Straws or chopsticks
  - Tape
- **For Masks**
  - Tape or Glue sticks
  - Single hole-puncher
  - Wide, durable ribbon

### Preparation for Activity

- Print out the images in Leader Resource 1 for children to make puppets or masks of Coyote, Rabbit, Moose, Bird and White Buffalo Woman. For puppets, children can cut the images out

and tape them on straws or chopsticks. For masks, cut out or have children cut out the individual images. You can also use one or more of these images, instead of a friendship bracelet, to place in your Wonder Box and/or to add to the Wonder Box poster during the Closing.

Optional: Obtain a white shawl for a prop to suggest the character, White Buffalo Woman, is not an animal but a dream spirit.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite children to use the images of the story characters to make puppets or masks. Distribute the images for puppets or masks and place other materials on work tables for children to share. Most children will be able to cut out the basic shapes for each mask/puppet. Be ready to help children cut the openings marked for weaving ribbons through to make a mask (see diagram on each page).

Leave time for children to play with the puppets or masks. You may wish to guide them to re-enact the story, "How Coyote Lost His Songs, Music, and Dance."

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: MAKING FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Colorful beads, including both dark- and light-colored beads
- Small bowls for beads
- Stretchy string and scissors

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Cut stretchy string into strips about 10 inches long to fit a child's wrist with extra string for knotting.
- Set bowls of beads on work tables for children to share.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children at work tables and tell them that they will make beaded friendship bracelets that they may give to a friend. Give each child a length of stretchy string. Help them tie a knot at one end and begin stringing beads. Invite them to create any pattern they like. When they are finished, tie the two ends of string together to form a bracelet that can be stretched onto the wrist. Tell the children they can take their friendship bracelets home to give to whomever they like.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 6: STORY: HOW COYOTE LOST HIS SONGS, MUSIC, AND DANCE

From, *Our Seven Principles in Story and Verse: A Collection for Children and Adults* by Kenneth Collier (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1997). Used with permission.

*Read or tell the story.*

Here is a new story about Coyote. One day it occurred to him that he didn't need any of the other creatures. There he was, sitting pretty all by himself. What did he need anyone else for? He had his songs, his flute and drum, and his fire. He had his dancing and his huge tipi. Besides, all the other creatures were kind of strange. There was Rabbit, with his huge ears and enormous legs, and all he ever did was run around. And there was Moose, with that absurd head of antlers, wandering up to his knees in marshes. And there were all these pesky birds, flitting around, twittering, and never letting Coyote nap. Ridiculous! Who needed them? Not Coyote!

So he decided to just leave them all behind. He picked himself up and wandered off, trying to find a place where he could be alone. Entirely alone, with none of these silly and absurd creatures to bother him, where he could dance his dances by himself and sing and play his flute and drum for no one but himself, a place where he wouldn't have to share his fire and he could nap in peace.

As Coyote was leaving, Rabbit happened to see him and tagged along. At first he ran ahead with his big legs and then he ran back, and then ahead, and then back. Coyote ignored him, hoping he would just go away.

"Hey, Coyote," Rabbit yelled. "Where ya goin'?"

Coyote ignored him.

Rabbit ran on ahead and came back. "Hey, Coyote," he said. "Know what's on the other side of that hill? I do. I just saw it."

Coyote was curious, but he ignored Rabbit and just kept on walking. Rabbit ran on ahead and came back.

"Hey, Coyote," he said. "There's something over there, where you're headed, and you ought to know about it. I just saw it. Want me to tell you about it?"

Well, Coyote did want to know, but he just ignored Rabbit, hoping he'd go away and leave him alone. Ridiculous Rabbit.

Rabbit's feelings were a bit hurt. "Coyote, you know what? You're crazy." And he went away.

That night, a funny thing happened. Coyote stopped and built his fire and sat down to sing, as he did every night.

But as hard as he tried, he couldn't remember any of his songs. And so all he could do was play his flute and drum, and dance a little. But he couldn't sing. And the night was strangely quiet.

The next day, Coyote was off again, feeling a little sad and a little strange. But he still wanted to get away from these ridiculous creatures with their absurd ways of being. Before long, he came to a marsh. It was so wide he didn't see how he could go around it, and, shrugging his shoulders, he started to go through it. Pretty soon he ran into Moose, who was as usual up to his knees in mud and weeds. Moose lifted his huge head of antlers when he saw Coyote coming. "Well, hello Coyote," he said. "What brings you way out here to the marshes?"

Coyote ignored him and kept looking for a way to cross the mud. Moose swung his great head this way and that, a little miffed that Coyote was ignoring him.

"Coyote, if you're looking for a dry path, I could help you," he said.

Coyote looked right at him and said nothing. What a ridiculous creature, Coyote thought to himself. If I had such silly things growing out of my head, I wouldn't let anyone see them!

Moose's feelings really were hurt by now. "You know what, Coyote? You're crazy!" And Moose walked away.

Coyote finally did find his way across the marsh and went on. That night something strange happened. Again, Coyote built his fire and tried to make his music, but not only had he forgotten his songs, now he couldn't remember how to play his flute and drum. All he could do was dance around the fire. And the night was frighteningly silent.

The next day, Coyote was really upset and a little afraid, but he had decided that he would get away from all these silly creatures, and get away he would. So he set off again. This time, he came to a little stream that flowed down out of the mountains. All along its banks were bushes and flowers and it was beautiful and still and cool. And since he was thirsty and a little tired, Coyote took a long drink, sat down, and decided to take a nap.

As they often are, the bushes were filled with birds, and just as Coyote was about to go to sleep, the little birds started singing their songs. This was exactly what he wanted to get away from. It really made him angry that the birds wouldn't let him sleep in peace. And he was a little afraid and jealous that they could sing and he had forgotten his songs and even how to sing. And so he leaped up and snarled and barked at them to frighten them away.

And he succeeded. They flew up and off. But one bird, a little braver than the others, said to him — being careful

to fly just out of his reach — "Coyote, you're crazy!" And off she went.

Coyote was kind of pleased with himself for getting rid of the birds and so he decided to stay right there. That night he made his fire, but the strangest thing happened. Not only could he no longer sing, and not only could he no longer play his flute and drum, but now he couldn't even remember how to dance! All Coyote could do was stare into the silent fire and think about how much he had lost.

Finally he fell asleep and dreamed. In his dream, White Buffalo Woman appeared to him and asked him why he was so sad and scared. Coyote explained how he had lost his songs and music and dance. He didn't know what to do, and he was afraid that he would also lose his fire.

White Buffalo Woman asked him why he was out here all alone. Coyote explained that he was tired of being surrounded all the time by those silly creatures who looked strange and acted strange and lived such ridiculous lives, and he had decided that he would live by himself, away from them all.

"Coyote," said White Buffalo Woman, "don't you understand that your music and your dance, and even

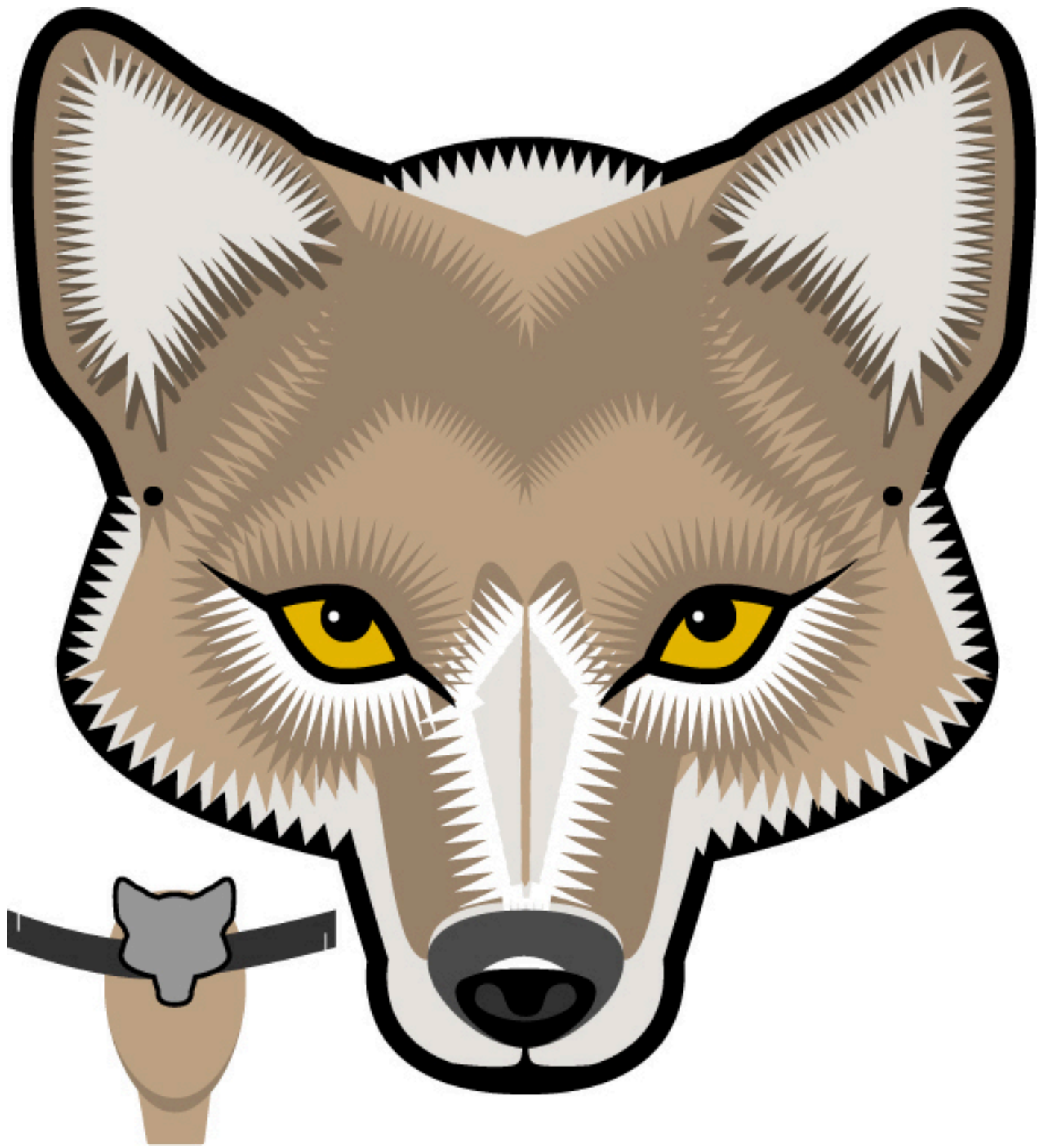
your fire, are nothing but the spirits of those creatures who are different from you? As you drove them away, they left even your heart and took their spirits with them. If you want your music and dance back, you must go back to your friends and accept them back into your heart. Only then will you be able to go on."

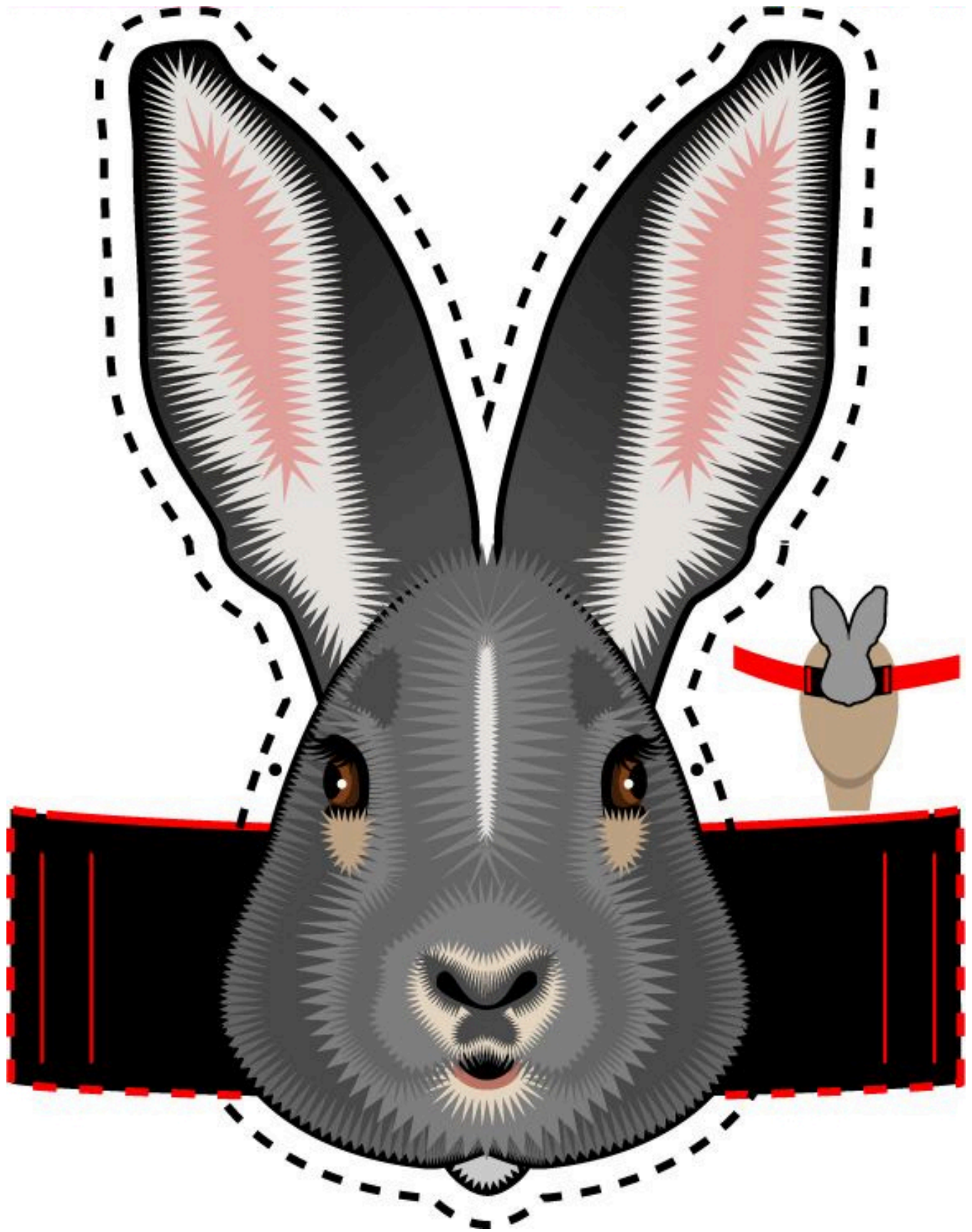
The next morning when Coyote awoke, he couldn't remember his dream, but when the birds began to sing, as they always do in the morning, he sat still and listened to them. And then he began to go back the way he had come. That night when he built his fire, he could remember his dance. And the next day he went on, back the way he had come, and chanced upon Moose. And he asked Moose how to get across the marsh.

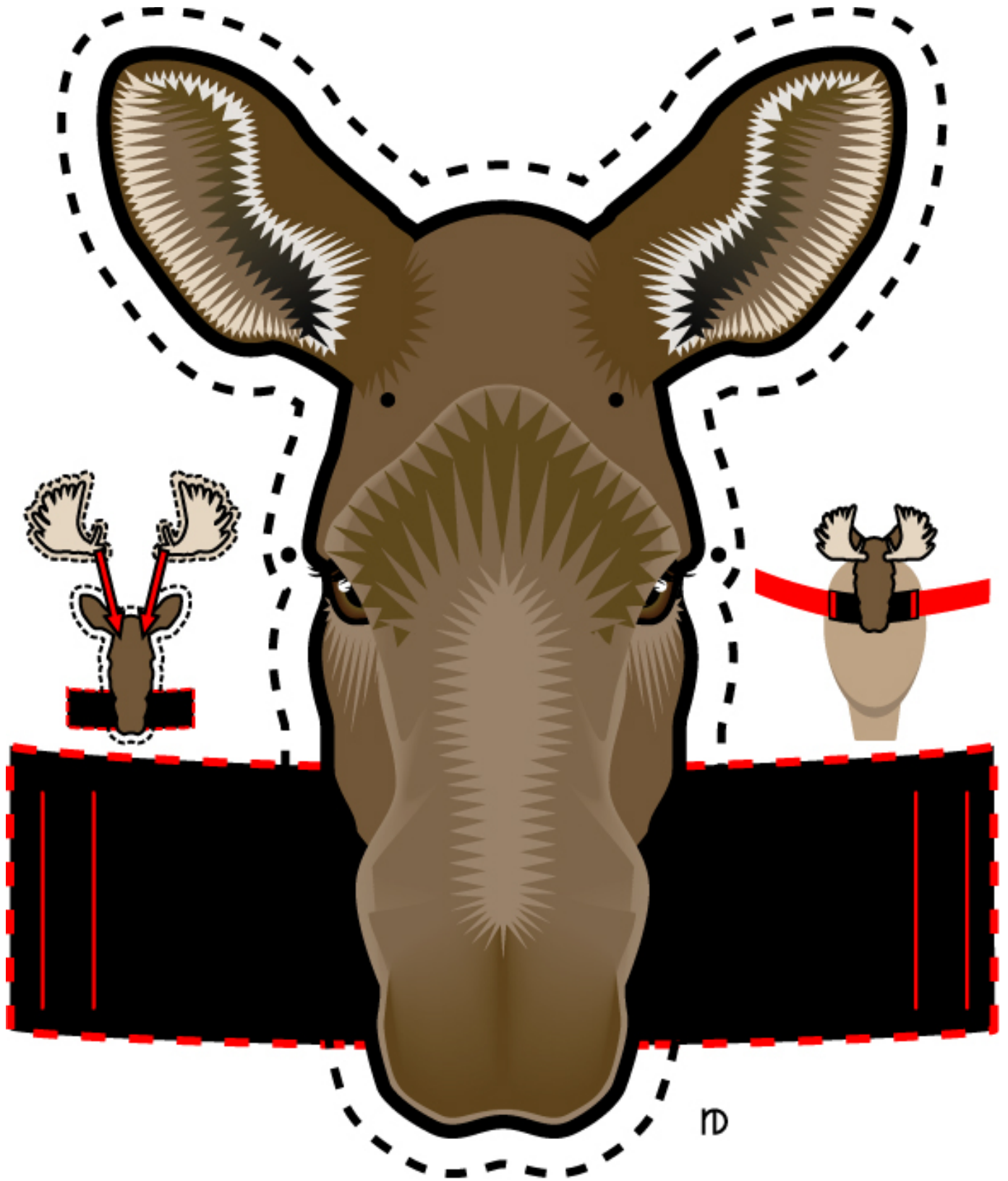
That night, when he built his fire, he remembered how to play his flute and drum and the night was not so lonely. And the next day he still went back the way he had come, and suddenly up ran Rabbit. Coyote ran with Rabbit and played and had a good old time. And that night, when he had built his fire, the air was filled with Coyote's songs. And never again did Coyote forget how easily he could lose his music and his dance and even his fire.

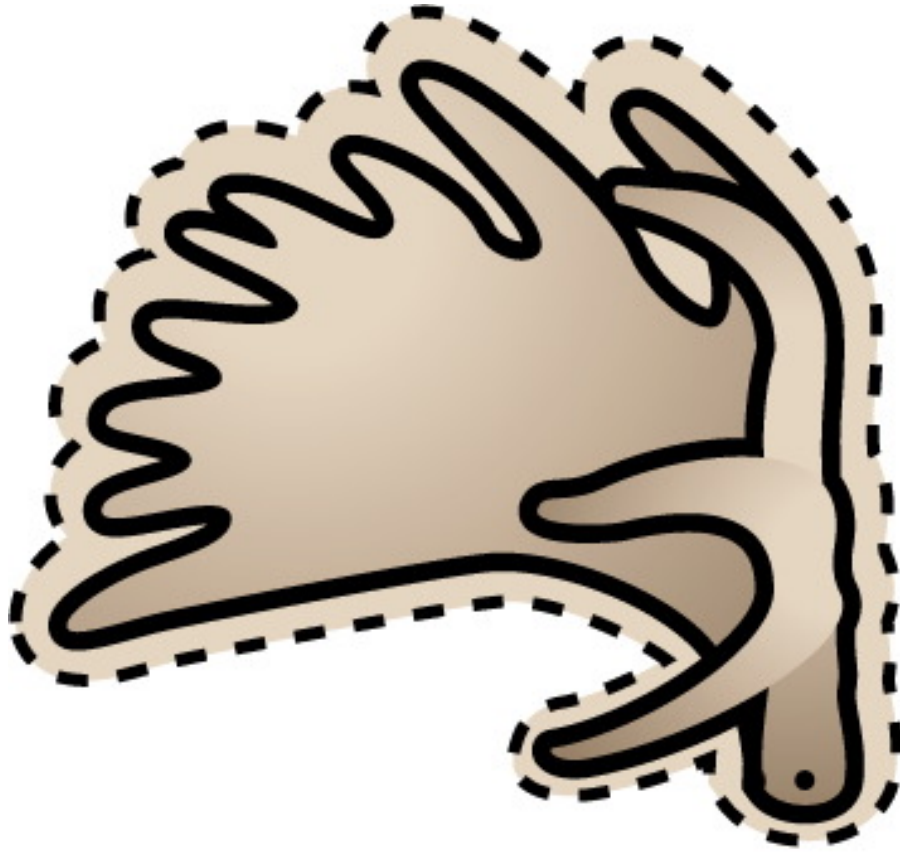


**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 6:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: COYOTE, RABBIT, MOOSE, BIRD AND WHITE BUFFALO  
WOMAN MASKS AND PUPPETS**





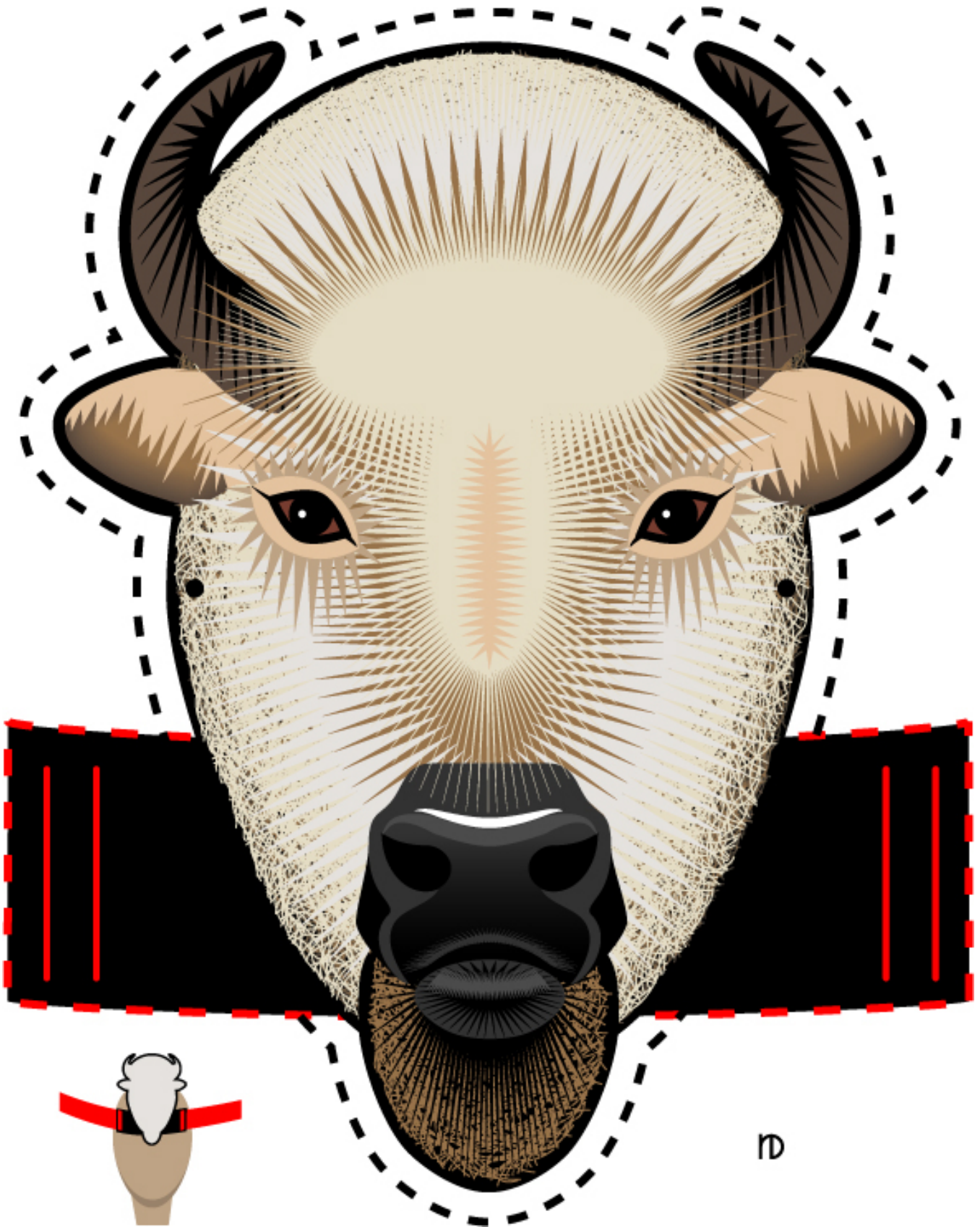




WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 6:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1 PAGE 2



10



## **FIND OUT MORE**

### **Coyote**

In Native American oral storytelling traditions, Coyote is a character that appears as a male trickster and sometimes a buffoon. In a typical story about Coyote, he gets himself into trouble and, as he gets himself out, the

listener learns some new wisdom along with Coyote. In Kenneth Collier's book, *Our Seven Principles in Story and Verse: A Collection for Children and Adults* (Boston: Skinner House, 1997), Coyote is the protagonist of a tale that illustrates why it is important to appreciate our friends.



# SESSION 7: THE GIFT OF HELPING

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Life's most urgent question is: What are you doing for others?*

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

This session introduces the intangible gift of helping, and teaches children that they can help people they have never met, as well as people they know. While helping is an intangible gift, helping produces tangible results. Many organizations raise funds and offer assistance in many forms to people all over the world. Heifer International provides tangible help in the form of animals, and engages families in sustainable agricultural enterprise. Recipients help their families by feeding their children and selling the animal's milk, eggs, or wool, and also help their neighbors by sharing the animal's offspring.

The children will learn that when we help people, we affirm our seventh Principle, the interdependent web of all existence. We are all connected — to each other, to animals and to the Earth. Helping also affirms our first Principle, that each person is important, including people we may never meet, and our second Principle, that we work for peace and justice in our world.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the concept of the interdependent web through a concrete example and an experiential activity
- Engage participants in helping people whom they will never meet and giving money to make the world more just and equitable
- Show how the intangible gift of helping affirms our first, second and seventh Principles: the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; and the interdependent web of life.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Consider a story about how people help others by contributing to an organization that helps families develop sustainable agricultural livelihoods
- Experience connectedness through an active game

- Make a Helping Hands Wreath to represent working collectively in the service of others.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Thread the Needle Hula Hoop Game	10
Activity 3: Story — The Gift of Giving	10
Activity 4: Making a Helping Hands Wreath	15
Activity 5: Singing "Children Helping Children"	10
Faith in Action: Help the Goat Climb the Mountain for Heifer International	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Helping Hands Wreaths to Take Home	25

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The opportunity to help presents itself in many ways. We may give money, food, or clothing — or literally a helping hand — to someone in need. Sometimes we empower others to help themselves. Sometimes we meet the recipients of our help, and sometimes we do not. Sometimes we are the recipients. Do you help by volunteering in person and therefore meeting people in need, for example, at a homeless shelter? If you donate to charitable organizations, how do you decide which ones to support?

In this session, you help children give the gift of helping to a person who lives far away, whom they do not know, will probably never meet, and whose name they may never know. Think about how you feel when you make a financial contribution to an organization that helps others. Do you feel part of the organization? What helps you understand that you have been helpful when you do not know the recipient? While the money you contribute and the help someone receives are tangible, the gift of helping is not. Help the children understand this intangible gift of the heart and the spirit. Bring your own positive energy around helping to this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Remind the group that you start each session with a ritual. You might say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words.

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See Session 1 for instructions for the Wonder Box.)
- Leader Resource 1, [Helping around the Earth](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Toy farm animals

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, cut out the picture of people holding hands around the Earth, and place it inside the Wonder Box.

- Optional: Gather some toy farm animals to place in the Wonder Box.

#### Description of Activity

With the children still in a circle, ask them to guess what could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then, open the box, take out the picture, and ask: What do you see in this picture?

Elicit responses. If the Wonder Box also contains toy animals, ask the children to identify the animals, and then say:

In a little while, you will find out how you could help a child you don't know get a farm animal which would, in turn, be a big help to their family.

Today we will be talking about the gift of helping. There are many ways to help and every day brings more chances to help.

Ask the children to name ways they have helped or could help someone else. They will probably talk about helping someone else in person. Affirm all answers. Then say:

You can help your mom or dad clean the house. You can help friends build something when you are playing. Today we will be talking about another kind of helping. We will talk about helping people who we have never met. How do you think we can help people we have never met?

Elicit some responses. Tell them:

An important part of being a Unitarian Universalist is we work for peace and justice in the world, which means we try to make the world fair for everybody. If things were not fair for you, you might appreciate some help, wouldn't you? Well, we can help make things more fair for other people. We can even help people we have never met. One way to help is to give money to an organization that helps others who live in another part of the world. Another way to help is to volunteer to work in a place that helps people or animals, for example, a food pantry, or an animal shelter. Today we will read a story about an organization that helps people by giving farm animals to families.

### ACTIVITY 2: THREAD-THE-NEEDLE HULA HOOP GAME (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- One large hula hoop

- Optional: Enough hula hoops for every pair of children in the group

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear a space in the room large enough for the children to form a circle.

### Description of Activity

In this game, the children need to cooperate to succeed. Invite everyone to stand in a circle and hold hands. Ask two of the children to let go of one another's hands. Place the hula hoop between them. Have them reclasp their hands through the middle of the hula hoop.

Now tell the children that together they are a strand of thread, and the hula hoop is the eye of a needle. Invite the entire group to pass the hula hoop around the circle, without letting go of anyone else's hands. They will have to step through the hula hoop to "thread" it.

### Including All Participants

If any participants have mobility limitations that would prevent them from being part of this activity, use a different cooperative game. If you have enough hula hoops, give one to each pair of children and choose one pair to lead this activity. Challenge them to balance the hula hoop between them in a creative way. Direct the rest of the group to try and imitate the leaders. Pairs that succeed continue; those that do not succeed are "out." Then, choose another pair to lead. Point out that the cooperation of partners and the group's ability to pay attention to the leading pair are two kinds of learning together.

If you skip this activity, you may wish to do Alternate Activity 1, Helping Hands Wreaths to Take Home in place of or in addition to Activity 4, Helping Hands Wreath.

If some children may be physically unable to do either version of this activity, skip it. You may wish to do Alternate Activity 1, Helping Hands Wreaths to Take Home in place of, or in addition to, Activity 4, Helping Hands Wreath.

## ACTIVITY 3: STORY — PASSING THE GIFT ALONG (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [Passing the Gift Along](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to read or tell it to the group.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a comfortable circle and read or tell the story.

## ACTIVITY 4: HELPING HANDS WREATH (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Construction paper in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors, to share
- Color pencils
- Glue or glue sticks
- A large sheet of poster board

### Preparation for Activity

- Distribute scissors and color pencils at work tables.
- Cut a circle out of poster board to serve as the base of the wreath. You can either cut out the center of the circle to make a ring, or leave the center in to represent the earth.

### Description of Activity

Explain that the children will join hands in a way that they can "keep." Say something like:

Today we are going to make a Helping Hands Wreath. We will trace each of our hands and put them together. We will hang our wreath when we are together to remind us of our commitment to helping.

Give everyone (leaders can also participate) a sheet of construction paper, varying colors to make the wreath look festive. Ask children to trace both of their hands and help them as needed. Once the hands are traced, ask them to cut them out and write their first name on them, again helping as needed.

Collect all the hands and gather the group around a work table as you assemble the hands into a wreath shape on the poster board base. Glue the hands so that all the fingers are displayed outward.

## ACTIVITY 5: SINGING "CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN" (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, Song: "[Children Helping Children](#)" (included in this document) Optional: A copy of the book, *May This Light Shine : A Songbook for Children and Youth* ( Charlotte, NC : Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network, 2006)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 2 or obtain a copy of the book, *May This Light Shine: A Songbook for Children and Youth*.

- Optional: Invite a musical volunteer to help you with this activity.

### Description of Activity

Teach and lead the song, "Children Helping Children."

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- Picture of the earth with people around it ([Leader Resource 1](#), (included in this document) from Wonder Box)
- Tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Display the Wonder Box poster (See Session 1.)
- Write the closing words on newsprint and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Print out Leader Resource 1, Helping around the World. Cut out the picture.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to attach the picture of the earth to the poster. You may say, in your own words:

Today we learned that the gift of helping is one of the most important gifts we give. Whether we are helping someone right next to us, or helping someone we do not even know, we can make a difference in other people's lives when we give the gift of helping.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that all kinds of friends are important, and we appreciate every one — including the friends we will never meet, but whom we were able to give the gift of helping. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — "Helping!"

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: HELP THE GOAT CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN FOR HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

### Materials for Activity

- Large sheet of poster board
- A copy of Leader Resource 3, "[Climb the Mountain](#)" (included in this document) Animals
- Color markers, glue sticks and scissors

### Preparation for Activity

- Draw the slope of a mountain on poster board. You may like to title the poster "Wonderful Welcome Helps," "Let's Help the Goat Climb the Mountain," or simply "Climb the Mountain."
- Cut out and decorate one or more animal figures from Leader Resource 3, "Climb the Mountain" Animals. Use an animal figure to "climb" the mountain as the group raises money to purchase that animal for a Heifer International recipient.
- Invite your religious educator, minister and/or congregational committees and members to support the children's fundraising activities. Display the "Climb the Mountain" poster where the entire congregation can monitor the fundraising progress.
- Browse the [Heifer International website](http://www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKQNiFiG/b.201458/) (at [www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKQNiFiG/b.201458/](http://www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKQNiFiG/b.201458/)) for fundraising ideas and information on how the organization helps people all over the world.

### Description of Activity

Guide the group to initiate a fundraiser to see how many animals the congregation can purchase through Heifer International for people all over the world. Twenty dollars purchases a flock of chicks or populates a fish pond. One hundred and twenty dollars purchases goats, pigs

or sheep. A Heifer costs \$500 while \$5,000 will purchase an "Ark" that includes two of every animal Heifer distributes.

On the bottom of the poster write the names of the animals or put their pictures, along with the fundraising goal for each animal. You could add the more expensive animals as the animal figure(s) climb the mountain. Post animals that you think your congregation could realistically purchase.

The children might have a table at coffee hour to tell people about the project and ask for their help to purchase an animal. No monetary gift is too small — make sure everyone understands that no one has to purchase a whole animal. As people contribute, have the cut-out animals, "climb" the mountain.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Life's most urgent question is: What are you doing for others?*

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children learned about the intangible gift of helping. Although helping is intangible, the results of help are tangible. The children made a Helping Hands Wreath constructed of their traced hands — a metaphor for hands linked together to help others.

The opportunity to help presents itself daily in concrete ways such as helping to clean the house. However, this session focused on helping people whom we will never meet, people who live very different lives from our own. The organization, Heifer International, empowers people by giving them farm animals to raise. Before receiving an animal, each family agrees to pass on the offspring to other families in need, thereby passing along the gift of helping.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

how you contribute to organizations that help others. This can include contributions made through your congregation. Often congregations collectively sponsor

organizations such as Heifer or Habitat for Humanity. Talk about why you have chosen to help. How does it feel to know that people you may never meet can improve their lives with your help?

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

forgoing birthday gifts from one another so that family members can instead contribute money to a charitable organization. Point out that the birthday gift you receive is the gift of helping.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: HELPING HANDS WREATHS TO TAKE HOME (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Construction paper in various colors, four different colors for each participant with some extra
- Pencils, glue or glue sticks, and scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Optional: Color markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Set out pencils, glue or glue sticks, and scissors at work tables.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children they will make a wreath they can take home that represents their helping hands.

Give each child four sheets of construction paper in different colors. Show them how to place and then trace their right and left hands on each sheet. Then invite them to cut out all of the hands they have traced. Some children may like to cut out one pair of hands, and then use these to trace on the remaining three sheets of paper. You may need to help some children with tracing and cutting.

When a child has cut out eight hands (four left and four right), arrange the hands in a circle with the fingers displayed outward and glue the hands together to make a wreath. Have the children write their names on their wreaths — perhaps one or two letters per hand. They might also write (or you can write for them), "These are my Helping Hands!"

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 7: STORY: THE GIFT OF GIVING

By Janeen K. Grohsmeyer.

On Steve's sixth birthday, many people gave him gifts.

His mother gave him a chess set and promised to teach him how to play after dinner.

His grandfather gave him a black rope that was twenty-five feet long and would be good for making forts and building bridges and all kinds of things.

His friend Shanaya gave him modeling clay, his friend Tom gave him a toy racing car, his aunt sent him ten dollars with a birthday card, and his dad gave him a book about dinosaurs. Steve took cupcakes to school, and his classmates sang "Happy Birthday" to him. His teacher let him be first in the line when they went outside to play.

Steve thought it was the best birthday he'd ever had.

That night after dinner, Steve was waiting for his parents to finish watching the news on TV so he and his mom could play chess. He was busy making a dinosaur out of the modeling clay when he heard the man on the TV say, "It's his sixth birthday today."

Steve looked up right away, but the TV man wasn't talking about him. On the screen was a picture of a boy in a T-shirt and shorts standing on dusty ground in front of a small building. It looked like the tool shed in Steve's back yard, except it was kind of crooked. The boy was barefoot and he wasn't smiling, even though it was his birthday, and Steve didn't see any gifts anywhere.

"He lives here with his parents, his grandmother, and three brothers and sisters," the TV man said. "Usually they eat only one meal a day. Some days they don't eat at all."

"Why don't they eat?" Steve asked.

"There's been no rain," his dad answered. "Their plants won't grow."

"Can't they go to a store and buy food?"

"They don't have money," his mom said.

Steve had money. He had the ten dollars his aunt had given him, plus a lot of coins hidden in his sock drawer upstairs. "How much does food cost?" he asked.

The TV man answered that question. "Just a few dollars a day would provide food for this family of seven."

While Steve and his mom were getting out the chess pieces, he said, "How long would ten dollars last, for food for that family on TV?"

"About four days," his mom answered.

"Can I send my birthday money to that boy?"

"Oh, Steve," she said. "That's very nice of you! We could ask the TV people where they live."

That sounded good. "But what happens after the four days?" Steve asked next. "When the ten dollars is used up?" He wouldn't have any more money to send, except the coins.

His mom nodded. "That is a problem," she agreed. "But I heard about an idea at church last week. I'll ask your RE teacher if you can talk about it next Sunday."

Sunday finally came, and Steve and his family went to church. In the RE room, pictures of animals were on the walls: bunnies and chickens and ducks, goats and sheep, a pig and a black-and-white cow, and a big animal that looked like the cow except it was all black and had bigger horns and sideways ears.

"That's a water buffalo," his friend Shanaya said. "They live in China and Korea and places in the east."

"That's right, Shanaya," said their teacher. Then it was time to gather in a circle and light the chalice and sing. After that, everyone sat down and talked more about the animals, how the birds laid eggs, and the sheep grew wool, and the goat and the cow gave milk. "People use all those things," said the teacher. "We get food and clothes and help from animals, every day."

Steve nodded. Animals didn't get all used up in four days, like his money would have. They lasted for a long time. "What's the water buffalo do?" he asked.

"They give milk, too," the teacher said, "and people also use them to carry things or pull plows and help farm the land."

Steve wondered if a water buffalo would help the boy on TV.

"One of the most important gifts these animals give," said the teacher, "is more animals. They have babies, and when those babies are grown up, they make milk or eggs or wool, too."

"And those babies make babies!" said Shanaya.

"Then after a while, everyone can have an animal," Steve said. That meant everyone would have food and clothes. This was great! "How do we give other people an animal?" he wanted to know.

"We don't have any ducks or goats or pigs," said Shanaya. "And definitely no water buffalos."

"We give money to an organization that does, and they give an animal to a family who needs one. Does everyone want to do this?"

Everyone said yes, and then they started talking about what kind of animal to give. Steve and Tom voted to give a water buffalo, and two girls voted for bunnies, but

Shanaya and five others all voted to give a goat, so the goat won.

"A goat costs one hundred twenty dollars," the teacher told them. "How can we get that?"

"I'll give my birthday money," said Steve. "Ten dollars."

"I have five dollars to give," said Shanaya, and the other kids said they had money too. When they added it all up, they had sixty-two dollars.

"We need fifty-eight more dollars," their teacher told them.

"We could sell cookies," suggested Tom. So the next Sunday they used the church kitchen to make cookies and sell them after the service. They put out a donation jar, too, and some of the grownups put in five dollars or even ten dollars. When Steve told his aunt what he had done with his birthday money, she sent him twenty more dollars for the goat.

Soon, they had the one hundred twenty dollars they needed, and the class sent the money to the organization that gave animals to people who needed them.

"Who is the goat going to?" Steve asked. "What's their name? Where do they live?"

"We don't know," answered his teacher. "There are many, many people all over the world who need animals. The goat may be given to a family in China or Uganda or Poland or maybe in our own country."

Steve had wanted to give the goat to the boy on TV. And maybe the goat would live there. Or maybe the goat wouldn't. Maybe the family the goat lived with would have another six-year-old boy. Or a six-year-old girl. Or maybe they'd have all older children, or only babies. It didn't really matter.

Because Steve knew that wherever the goat lived, and whomever she lived with, the family would take care of her. And when the goat had her kids, the family would take care of the kids, too. The people could drink the goat's milk or maybe sell some of it to buy clothes or other food. They would give the kids away to other families, and soon everyone would have a goat. And one of those people would probably be having a birthday, and maybe that person would be six years old.

Or maybe not. And it didn't matter, because Steve knew those ten dollars were the best birthday gift he'd ever given away.

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 7:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: HELPING AROUND THE WORLD PICTURE**





## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 7: LEADER RESOURCE 2: SONG

The song, "Children Helping Children," by Dana Clark, appears in the book, *May This Light Shine* (Charlotte, NC: Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network, 2006). Used with permission.

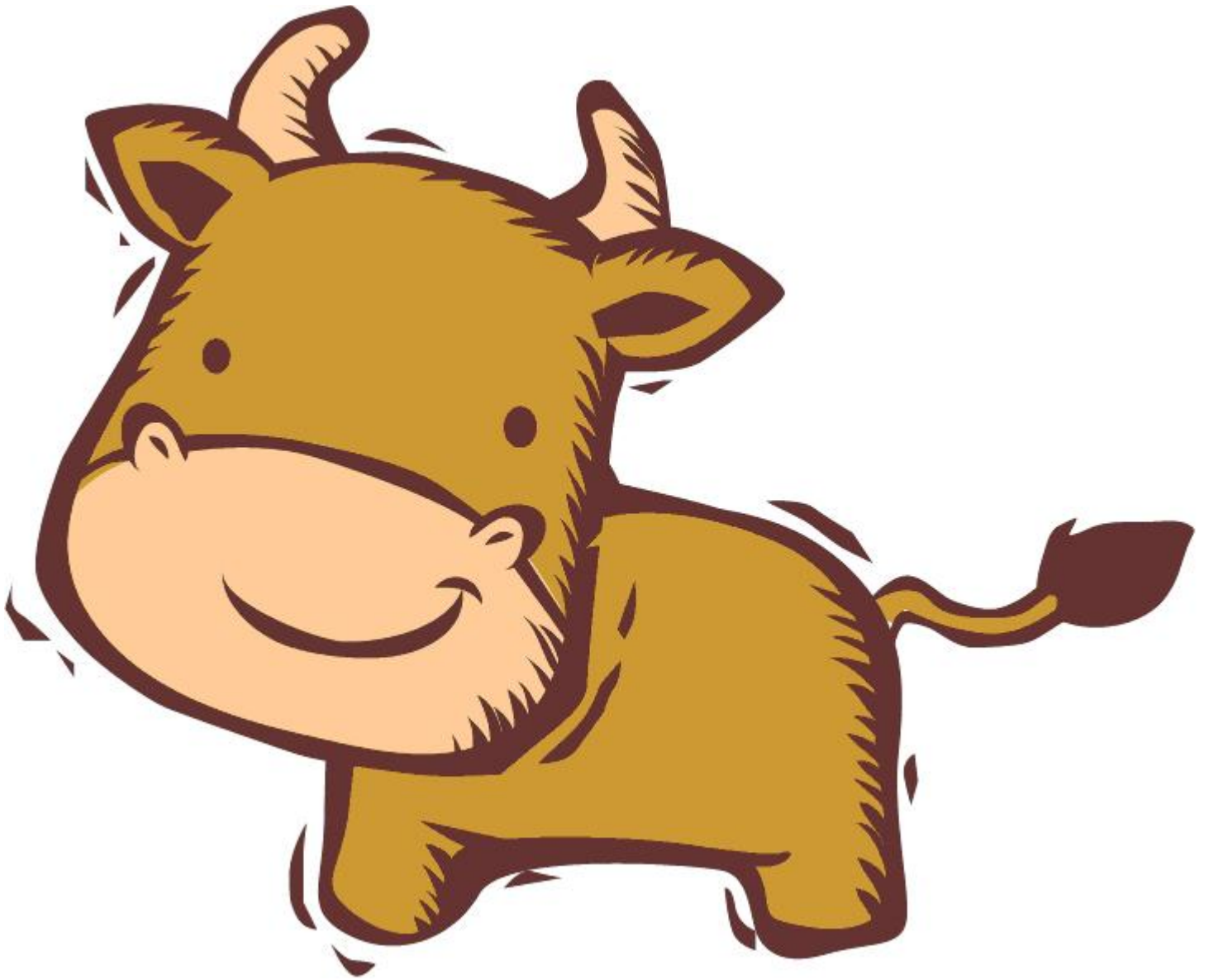
*The author and copyright holder of this song, Dana Clark, can be reached at [danapiano @ sbcglobal.net](mailto:danapiano@sbcglobal.net) (at <mailto:danapiano@sbcglobal.net>). Or, view [her website](http://www.lewisandclarkmusic.com/) (at [www.lewisandclarkmusic.com/](http://www.lewisandclarkmusic.com/)).*

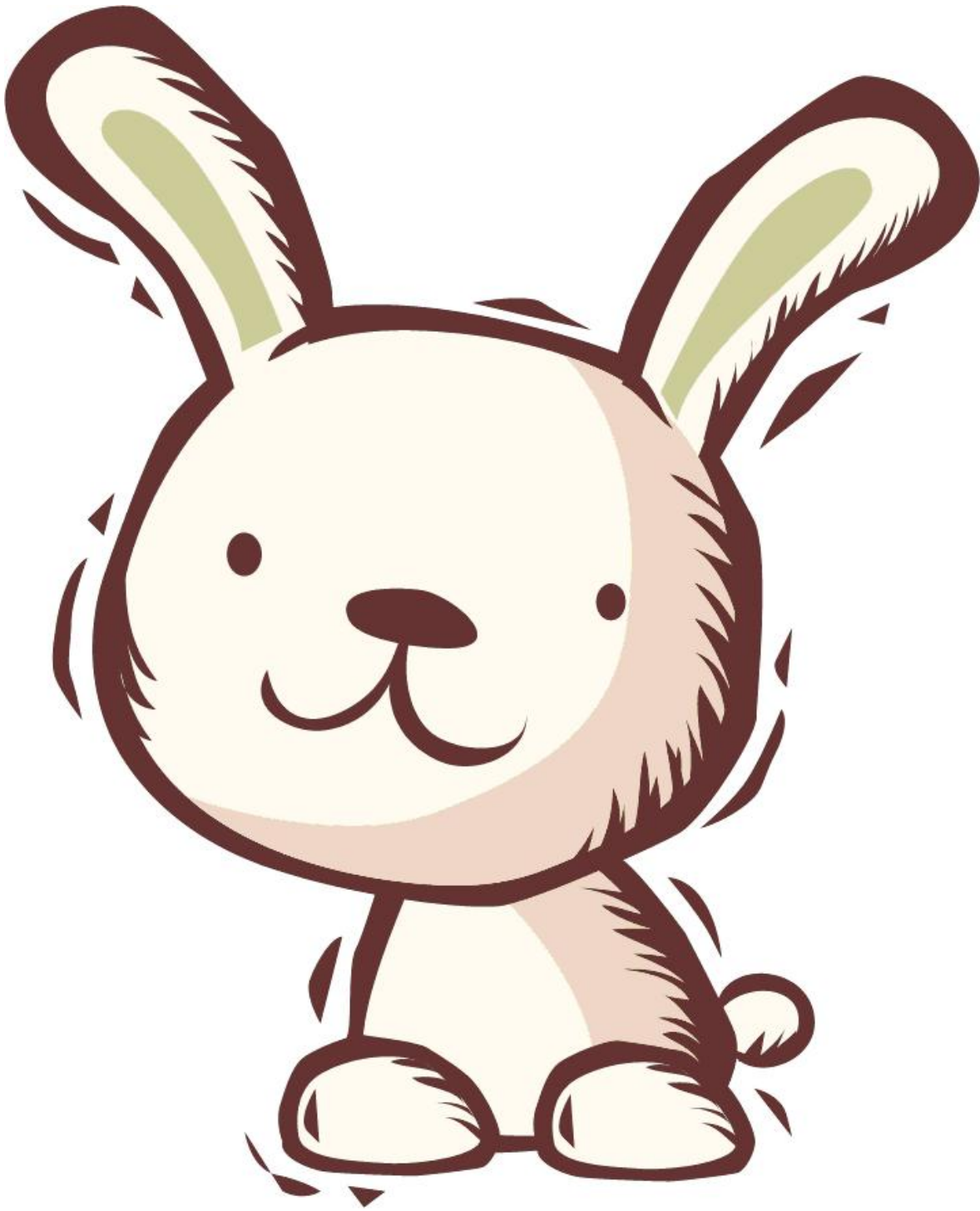
Some lyrics of the song are:

Children helping children, all around the world,  
Reaching out to every boy and every girl.  
Children helping children, I wonder if you know,  
Helping others give us what we need to grow.  
Open your heart and hold out your hand.  
Let someone know that you understand.  
Each kindness you give will come back to you.  
When you share with others they'll learn to share, too

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 7:  
LEADER RESOURCE 3: CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN ANIMALS**







## FIND OUT MORE

### Beatrice Biira

A July 3, 2008 [New York Times column by Nicholas Kristof](#) (at [www.nytimes.com/2008/07/03/opinion/03kristof.html?\\_r=3&scp=2&sq=arkansas&st=nyt&oref=slogin&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/03/opinion/03kristof.html?_r=3&scp=2&sq=arkansas&st=nyt&oref=slogin&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)) provides an update on Beatrice Biira, who graduated from Connecticut College, and describes how Heifer, International's programs have impact.

### International Social Justice and Economic Equity Programs

The [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#) (at [www.uusc.org/](http://www.uusc.org/)) is an affiliated organization of the UUA that is committed to social justice in the world.

On the [Heifer International website](#) (at [www.heifer.org/](http://www.heifer.org/)), find information about the organization's programs, along with fundraising ideas, activities and curricula.

[Global Giving](#) (at [www.globalgiving.com/](http://www.globalgiving.com/)) is another organization that connects people wanting to donate money to communities all over the world that need help.

[Women for Women International](#) (at [www.womenforwomen.org/](http://www.womenforwomen.org/)) helps women in impoverished and war-torn countries rebuild their lives. Through this organization, individuals sponsor women all over the world.

There are many, many more organizations committed to world social justice and economic equity. Surfing the web is one way to find a group that interests you.

# SESSION 8: THE GIFT OF FAMILIES

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*One of the oldest human needs is having someone to wonder where you are when you don't come home at night.*

— Margaret Mead

This session's intangible gift is sharing positive qualities such as kindness, respect and care with the people in our families. Although we do not usually get to choose them, some of our best friends can be the people we live with.

The children will explore what it means to share in our families. What do we share, and how? What do we give one another that is tangible and what do we give one another that is not?

The Gift of Kindness was introduced in Session 4. Kindness is revisited in this session, along with respect and caring. The focus is on our relationships with the people we spend the most time with — the people in our families.

For the purpose of this session, help children define their "family" as the people who live with and take care of them. The group may include children who live in small families, large extended families, two families, or children who do not have a permanent family home. Be aware that there may be children who have not experienced kindness in their families. Listen carefully. Talk to your religious educator if you observe that a child's words or actions might indicate a problem at home.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Guide participants to consider the intangible gifts they bring to and receive from members of their families
- Explore ways to share intangible gifts within our families
- Apply the first and second Unitarian Universalist Principles — the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and justice, equity, and compassion in human relations —to our family life.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Experience a story about kindness in a family

- Learn a Mandarin Chinese way to say "kindness" and hear about a New Year tradition in Chinese culture
- Articulate their own family structure
- Identify ways they give and receive kindness, respect and care in their families
- Create a picture to remind family members to treat each other with kindness, respect, and caring.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — The Picture on the Kitchen Wall	10
Activity 3: Picture for Your Kitchen Wall	15
Activity 4: Respect and Care Demonstration — Role Play	10
Activity 5: Dragon Families	10
Faith in Action: Chinese New Year	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Family Picture for Your Kitchen Wall	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Children learn how to give and receive respect and caring primarily in the family. Yet, in many families, the expression of these intangible gifts can be conflicted, intermittent or lacking. Even caring and respectful adults sometimes leave their best behavior at the door when they are with their families.

This may be a challenging session to lead if the topic of sharing respect and care with family members raises very strong emotions about your family of origin. Reflect on how respect and caring were expressed in the family of your childhood. Then reflect on how you demonstrate these qualities in your family now. Take a deep breath and allow any negative feelings that have come up for you to pass.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants around the chalice

You may say:

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line:

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth.

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: THE WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See Session 1.)
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document), Chinese Characters for "Kindness"

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1 and place it in the Wonder Box.
- To hear the correct pronunciation of the Chinese characters, "ren" and "ci," ask a Mandarin Chinese-speaker for help, or go online.

#### Description of Activity

Use the Wonder Box to activate participants' curiosity about today's intangible gift: sharing kindness, caring and respect in our families.

With the children still in a circle, show the Wonder Box and invite them to guess what gift could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then pass the box around for the children to open and find the Chinese characters, "ren" and "ci". Ask if the children recognize this language. Tell them it is Chinese and teach them how to pronounce both characters. Then say:

"Ren ci" is a Chinese way to say "kindness." Kindness is an intangible gift. It is like love, respect, and caring. You can't see it, but you know when it is there.

Tell the children:

Sometimes, at my house, the people in my family argue. Does that happen in your family? Do people yell sometimes or not share with one another?

Briefly allow some comments.

#### Including All Participants

Be alert to children's comments that indicate something may be going on at home that you need to share with your religious educator or minister. Keep confidentiality in mind, as well.

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE PICTURE ON THE KITCHEN WALL (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [The Picture on the Kitchen Wall](#) (included in this document)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell or read it to the group.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Read or tell the story.

When you are done, ask the children what they think it was like at Chang Kung's house. In Chang Kung's family, what did the people and pets do that was kind, caring and respectful?

Children will probably say, "not fight." Help them generate some other, affirmative ideas about kind, caring and respectful things that a parent, a child, a grandparent, or even a pet might do.

## ACTIVITY 3: PICTURE FOR YOUR KITCHEN WALL (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Chinese Characters for "Kindness"
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- 8 1/2 x 11-inch drawing paper and pencils for all participants
- Markers, crayons or paint and paintbrushes
- 11x17-inch color construction paper for all participants
- Glue sticks
- Optional: Painting smocks for children

### Preparation for Activity

- Copy the Chinese characters "ren" and "ci" (kindness) from Leader Resource 1 onto newsprint, and post.
- Place art materials on worktables. Set aside larger pieces of construction paper and glue sticks.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children:

What if we all had a picture on the wall at home to remind us to respect and care about one another? What kind of a picture do you think might help your family remember to be kind and caring to each other?

Allow some suggestions. Then tell them,

All of your ideas are good. They are all about kindness, respect and caring in our families. The character, shan, is one way you could write "kindness" in Chinese.

Invite the children to copy the character onto a piece of drawing paper. Before they decorate with markers or paint, they may want to draw the character in pencil. To frame each drawing or painting, glue it in the center of a larger piece of construction paper

## ACTIVITY 4: RESPECT AND CARE SCENARIOS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [Scenarios for Sharing Intangible Gifts in Our Families](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Review the scenarios in Leader Resource 2 and add some of your own.

### Description of Activity

The children hear some scenarios that could occur in families, act them out if they choose, and think about how they could share intangible gifts in these situations. Read aloud a scenario from Leader Resource 2 or one you have written. Invite a few volunteers to enact the scenario, then lead the group in a discussion.

## ACTIVITY 5: DRAGON FAMILIES (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Imagination
- Optional: Two large pieces of different colored construction paper and a stapler to make hats

### Preparation for Activity

- Find a large, open space for this game.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children they will be in two different families for this activity. Count off one, two, one, two to divide the group into Red Dragon Family and Green Dragon Family.

Select a child from each group to be the head and the tail of their dragon family. Invite each family to line up and hold onto one another's waists. Each dragon family's head (the first child) must try to catch the other dragon's tail without letting the body break apart. The gait, voice and personality of the dragons are up to the members of the families. Say something like:

If the people in your dragon family are kind, caring and respectful, you will be able to work together to play the game.

Play as many times as you wish, giving different children a chance to be the dragon family's head or tail.

### Including All Participants

If the group has children with physical limitations, find a way for them to share the role of head or tail with another child.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- A copy of the Chinese characters, "ren" and "ci" (kindness) from [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document)
- Tape or glue stick



- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Display the Wonder Box poster (Instructions in Session 1.)
- Write the closing words on newsprint and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children together in a circle. Show them the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the Chinese character for kindness to the poster. You may say, in your own words:

Kindness is one of the intangible gifts we talked about today. How can we give this to people in our families?

Allow some comments.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that we share intangible gifts like kindness, respect and caring with one another. And, we are grateful that we know how to bring those gifts home to our families, and share these gifts with them. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom," or the name of this session's intangible gift — e.g., "sharing kindness, caring and respect in our families."

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: CHINESE NEW YEAR (60 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Look for ways the children can create a Chinese New Year celebration to share with the larger congregation. Gather information about how Chinese New Year is celebrated in Asia and in the U.S. Talk to congregants or others you know with Chinese or Southeast Asian heritage. Use online resources such as the [Kaboose](http://crafts.kaboose.com/holidays/chinese_new_year.html) (at [crafts.kaboose.com/holidays/chinese\\_new\\_year.html](http://crafts.kaboose.com/holidays/chinese_new_year.html)) or [Enchanted Learning](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/) (at [www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/)) websites, a [mini-website about Chinese New Year](http://www.history.com/minisite.do?content_type=mini_home&mini_id=53324) (at [www.history.com/minisite.do?content\\_type=mini\\_home&mini\\_id=53324](http://www.history.com/minisite.do?content_type=mini_home&mini_id=53324)) on The History Channel's website, or English-language Chinese cultural resources such as the website of the [Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco](http://www.c-c-c.org/) (at <http://www.c-c-c.org/>).

### Description of Activity

A lunar holiday, Chinese New Year usually falls in February or March, but the planning for its celebration — including making decorations or practicing dancing a Lion Dance or Dragon Dance — takes place throughout the year. You may wish to invite a visitor to present about their own Chinese New Year customs, or arrange for the children to attend a Chinese cultural celebration if one takes place near you.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*One of the oldest human needs is having someone to wonder where you are when you don't come home at night.*

— Margaret Mead

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** Today your child(ren) talked about ways family members share kindness, respect and caring with one another. They heard a story about Chang Kung, whose very large extended family in

ancient China lived together so peacefully that the emperor came to visit to find out their secret. The secret was kindness. The children learned to draw the Chinese character for "shan," one expression of "kindness" in Mandarin.

#### **EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER . T alk about ...**

Talk together about how you share kindness, respect and caring with one another in your family. Be specific and make sure you identify opportunities for every member to share these gifts.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...** The story children heard today, The Picture on the Kitchen Wall, tells the story behind the Chinese custom of posting an image of Chang Kung in their homes. The image reminds family members to be kind to one another. When your child brings home a picture of the Chinese character, shan (kindness), post it in the kitchen. Talk about how "shan" can remind each of you to be kind.

#### **FAMILY ADVENTURE**

Find out the next date of Chinese New Year. If you are located near a Chinese community, investigate celebrations that are open to the public. You could lead your congregation in connecting with a local Chinese church group, community center or family, to plan a celebration together.

#### **FAMILY DISCOVERY**

Online, research Chinese New Year celebrations. Find out which animal (dog, rat, horse) is the next year's animal. Look for Chinese New Year recipes or decorations you can create at home.

### **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAMILY PICTURE FOR YOUR KITCHEN WALL (15 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Drawing paper and markers or crayons
- Color construction paper larger than the drawing paper
- Glue sticks

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Set materials at work tables.

#### **Description of Activity**

Tell the children:

What if we all had a picture on our kitchen walls to remind us to show respect and care for one another. What kind of a picture do you think might help your family remember to be respectful and caring?

Allow some suggestions. Offer the idea that some children might want to draw a picture of people in their family being kind and caring to one another. As children present their ideas, affirm all family structures and relationships that are mentioned.

Then distribute the drawing paper. Invite the children to draw a picture that they can post on their own kitchen wall to remind them and their family members to share their intangible gifts such as love, respect, kindness, invitation, and caring.

As children finish their drawings, help them write a few words to explain what the picture is about. To frame each drawing, glue it in the center of a larger sheet of colored construction paper.

#### **Including All Participants**

If you are prompting children with ideas about what to draw, avoid language that assumes anything about children's family structures and the roles different people might play.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 8: STORY: THE PICTURE ON THE KITCHEN WALL

A story from China . Sophia Lyon Fahs, From Long Ago and Many Lands . Permission pending.

*Read or tell the story.*

Long, long ago in the land of China there lived a very old grandfather, named Chang Kung, who had a very large family. First, there were Chang Kung's own sons. When his sons grew up they all married and their wives came to live in Chang Kung's house. Then grandchildren were born. When these grandsons grew up, they also married and their wives were added to Chang Kung's family. Then came the great-grandchildren. So Chang Kung's family grew and grew until there were several hundred people in it — all living together. There were old people and young people, middle-sized people and children. Always there were a number of babies.

Besides all this, Chang Kung's family was very fond of pet animals, especially dogs. It is said that at one time one hundred pet dogs belonged to the household.

As Chang Kung's family grew larger and larger, his house had to grow bigger and bigger too, until it became a collection of houses standing side by side around a large open courtyard. A high stone wall stood like a fence around all the houses, and that made all the houses together seem like one big home.

The larger his family grew, the happier old Chang Kung became. He liked to eat at one of the big long tables with his big and little children beside him. He enjoyed sitting in the sunny courtyard where he could watch his great-grandchildren play.

But Chang Kung's family is not remembered after these many years simply because it was such a large family. Many people of China have large families. Chang Kung is still remembered because, it is said, the members of his family never quarreled. At least so the story goes. The children never quarreled in their play. The old people never quarreled with each other and never scolded the children. Nobody — big or little — ever said a cross word. Nobody ever did a mean thing. Some said jokingly that even the dogs did not quarrel or bite. When they were brought their bones they would not even bark, but all would wag their tails and wait their turns.

Stories about this remarkable household spread far and wide over the country just as the breezes blow far and wide in the spring. Finally news of Chang Kung's happy family reached the ears of the Emperor.

Now it so happened that the Emperor was about to make a journey to the Western Hills, to a place not far

from the home of Chang Kung. So he decided to visit this wonderful household on his way back, and to see for himself whether or not the rumors he had heard were true.

What a sight it was the day the Emperor arrived outside the village gate. First in the royal procession came the very tall guards dressed in blue and red, carrying long bows and arrows in their hands.

Then came the mandarins, those important men in the Emperor's court. Their long silk gowns were beautifully embroidered with figures of colored birds. Blue and green peacock feathers waved from their round hats. Other attendants followed, playing flutes and harps as the procession marched down the street.

At last came the Emperor himself in his richly adorned sedan chair, carried on the shoulders of four men in red. When the Emperor entered the gate of Chang Kung's home, the old man himself was there, to bow many times and to greet his Emperor with very polite words.

"Very excellent and very aged Sir," said the Emperor, "it is said that inside your walls no cross words are ever spoken. Can this be true?"

"Lord of ten thousand years," said Chang Kung, "you do my poor house far too much honor. It is true that my family does not quarrel, but it would please us greatly if you would consent to walk about our humble courts and judge for yourself."

So the Emperor made his way from one house to another and from one room to another. He talked with everyone he met. In the great Hall of Politeness, he was served delicious food and drink. As he sipped his tea from a dainty cup, he said to Chang Kung: "You must have a golden secret in order to keep so many people living together in such order and peace. I, too, should like to know your secret. "

Then old Chang Kung called his servants to bring a tablet of smooth bamboo. (In those long-ago days there was no paper. All writing was done on wood or on stone.)

Chang Kung asked also for his brush and ink, and the ink stone with its little well of water. He took the brush in his hand and, dipping it into the water and then on the ink, he wrote one word on the tablet. He wrote the word a second time and a third time. He wrote the word over and over until he had written it one hundred times. Then with a low bow, he placed the tablet in the hands of the Emperor.

"You have written many words," said the Emperor, "but at the same time you have written only one word."

"Ai, ai," said Chang Kung, "but that one word is the golden secret, O Son of Heaven. It is KINDNESS over

and over without any ending." Chang Kung nodded his gray head as he spoke.

The Emperor was so pleased with the golden secret that he, too, called for a bamboo tablet. Taking the brush that Chang Kung had used, the Emperor wrote these words on his tablet: "Let all the families of China learn the golden secret of Chang Kung and his family."

When the Emperor had finished writing, he said: "Let this tablet be fastened to the outside of the gate where everyone passing may read it."

Not many years after the Emperor's visit Chang Kung died, but the story of his happy household has never been forgotten. People asked the Emperor to have pictures of the old man painted and sold so that families might hang his picture on the wall above their kitchen stoves to remind them to keep the golden secret that Chang Kung and his family had learned.

That is why, after these many, many years, in thousands of homes in China, at the New Year season, a fresh bright picture of Chang Kung is pasted on the wall behind the kitchen stove. Many Chinese will tell you it is a picture of a god, but you should know that Chang Kung was once just a very kind and good man who

helped the members of his family to learn to live happily together without quarreling. Since so many people think that God is perhaps much like the very best person that can be imagined, such a good person as Chang Kung seems to them to be like God himself.

To look at the picture of Chang Kung over the kitchen stove every morning helps to remind many thousands of people in China to speak kindly to one another. They feel as if Chang Kung were watching them and listening as they go about their work. They can sometimes imagine they hear him speak that golden word — KINDNESS.

Once a year on the night before New Year's, the picture of Chang Kung is taken down and burned. As the flames and smoke go upward, the people think: "Chang Kung is flying back to heaven to tell the great God of all the people just how well everyone has behaved during the past year."

Three days later, they will paste new pictures of Chang Kung on the walls over their kitchen stoves and they will say: "He has now come back again to the earth to keep watch over us for another year."

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 8: LEADER RESOURCE 1: CHINESE CHARACTERS FOR KINDNESS

[About.com: Chinese Culture - Frequently Asked Chinese Characters](#)

*Together, this pair of Pinyin Chinese characters, pronounced "ren" "ci," describes someone performing a kind action.*



## **WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 8: LEADER RESOURCE 2: SCENARIOS FOR SHARING INTANGIBLE GIFTS IN OUR FAMILIES**

*Read the scenarios aloud to the group to act out, if they choose, and to discuss. After you present each scenario, help the children identify the intangible gifts such as kindness, respect and caring that could be brought to the scenario.*

### **Scenario 1**

You are three siblings. There is no school today It is very hot outside.. Your dad has told you to stay together. One of you wants to play in a sprinkler. One wants to go to the library, because it is air-conditioned. One of you can't read and is thirsty for something cold to drink.

### **Scenario 2**

You are two siblings. You want to watch a DVD but your mom has told you to finish your homework and clean up the living room first. One of you has lots of homework left to do. There are lots of toys to clean up, belonging to both of you.

### **Scenario 3**

You are a grandparent and a child who are at home. The phone rings. It is hard for the grandparent to get up.

### **Scenario 4**

You are a mom and a child. The mom is putting the child to bed but the child is not tired. Not at all. The child wants the mom to stay longer and read some more stories together. The mom is also tired and wants the child to go to sleep so she can go to sleep, too, in her own room.

### **Scenario 5**

You are children who are hungry at dinnertime. Your parents are preparing food, but it is taking a long time. The table is not set and you have not washed your hands.

## **FIND OUT MORE**

### **Kinds of Kindness**

The two Chinese characters in Leader Resource 1 are pronounced "ren" and "ci" in Mandarin. Together they describe someone performing a kind action. Another word for "kindness" in Mandarin is "shan," which

describes a more passive sort of kindness, a quality of someone who is innocent of hurtful intentions.

### **Deep Fun**

The game, Dragon Families, was adapted from an activity presented on the Unitarian Universalist Youth Office website, [Deep Fun](http://www.uua.org/documents/youthoffice/deepfun.pdf) (at [www.uua.org/documents/youthoffice/deepfun.pdf](http://www.uua.org/documents/youthoffice/deepfun.pdf)).

# SESSION 9: THE GIFT OF MUTUAL CARING

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*We know from science that nothing in the universe exists as an isolated or independent entity.*

— Margaret Wheatley, American author and management consultant

This session focuses on the intangible gift of mutual caring in the connections we can make with animals. While the gift is reciprocal in many ways — including responsibility, affection, and loyalty — humans have the power to name and nurture it. By exploring and affirming mutually these relationships, this session affirms our seventh Principle, the interconnectedness of all life.

The children will talk about their own interactions with animals and learn about relationships in which a person and an animal need each other. The central story introduces guide dogs trained to help owners with disabilities: In these relationships, the animal depends on its owner for survival and nurture, and the owner depends on the animal for help with daily tasks and personal safety.

Encourage all the children to reflect on their experiences, even those who have had limited exposure to the special and at times spiritual connection that can occur between animals and people.

Make plans well ahead of time if you want to include Alternate Activity 1, Visit from a Guide Dog. Alternately, consider inviting children to bring a real pet for Activity 4, Blessing of the Animals. First, find out from parents or your religious educator if any children have extreme animal allergies or fears. If so, it may be best to skip the live animal visitors. Make sure you include safety rules for dealing with unfamiliar animals, animals in the wild, and other people's pets, whether or not live animals are part of the session.

Alternate Activity 2, Making Dog Biscuits, requires use of a kitchen. After baking, Vegan Dog Treats need eight hours to harden before packaging. The Faith in Action activity suggests that the children sell or donate the biscuits.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Demonstrate spiritual, emotional and functional ways humans and animals connect
- Teach that humans are responsible to ensure mutual help, not harm, between humans and animals

- Introduce a common Unitarian Universalist celebration, the Blessing of the Animals, which comes from the Catholic tradition of St. Francis of Assisi
- Present animal/human relationships as an aspect of the interdependent web of life (seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle).

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn that some animals have been trained to assist people with special needs and how these working animals are different from pets
- Understand how working animals exemplify care between species, an intangible gift the children can give and receive
- Explore their own interactions with animals as pets, at a zoo, in books or electronic media, or in nature
- Identify elements of a mutual caring relationship between a human and an animal, including responsibility, affection, loyalty, and help
- Connect caring relationships between humans and animals with the larger concept of the interdependent web of life, the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle
- Make gifts for animal friends and/or sell dog biscuits to raise funds for a guide dog school or a no-kill shelter.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: The Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — Leila Raises a Puppy	10
Activity 3: Animal Friends Pretend Play	20
Activity 4: Blessing of the Animals	15
Faith in Action: We Appreciate Our Animal Friends	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Visit from a Guide Dog	60



## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Folk tales, sacred texts and contemporary stories tend to either glorify or demonize our relationship with animals. For good or for bad, humans and animals are connected, and when we have a special animal in our

lives, that connection can be powerful. Examine your own relationships with animals. Have you ever owned a pet? In what ways was that relationship mutually caring?

If you have never owned a pet, why not? Whatever your experiences, prepare to discover more about this intangible gift as you learn with the children.

# SESSION PLAN

## OPENING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

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

### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post.

### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Explain that you start each session with a ritual. Say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

## ACTIVITY 1: THE WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See Session 1 or instructions.)
- A toy, stuffed dog (preferably, a guide dog dressed for work) and/or items representing care of a puppy

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the toy dog and/or other items inside the Wonder Box.

### Description of Activity

With the children still in a circle, show the Wonder Box. Invite them to guess what gift could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then pass the box around for children to open and find the dog-related items inside. Invite brief comments on their experiences and relationships with animals. Let them know they will have more opportunity to share later.

### Including All Participants

Some children may want pets and their parents have chosen not to have one. Without taking a side, you may want to affirm the immense responsibility of pet ownership.

Children whose allergies limit the contact they can have with animals may express sadness about this. Be mindful to offer empathy.

Be prepared for a child to bring up the death of a pet. You may like to have on hand the book, *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Erik Blegvad (New York: Simon & Schuster/Aladdin, 1987). The book focuses on a little boy's relationship to his cat and how he copes with his loss when the cat dies.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — LEILA RAISES A PUPPY" (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [Leila Raises a Puppy](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it.

### Description of Activity

Ask the children how they would feel about raising a puppy they would have to give away. The children may talk about their own pets and they may say they would never give away their pet. Affirm this decision. Then say:

This story is about a family that decided to raise a puppy they knew they would have to give away.

Read or tell the story.

Then, ask the children why they think a family would want to raise a puppy that would then go live with someone else. Affirm answers that touch on the importance of the job the puppy will have when it grows up. You might ask:

- Do you think it was hard for Leila to say goodbye to the puppy?
- Leila gave the puppy away. Does that mean she did not love the puppy? Does that mean the puppy stopped loving her? (No!)

Show the children any materials you have brought in about how guide dogs help people with disabilities lead independent lives. You may like to discuss these points:

- Some guide dogs wear a sign that says "Please Do Not Pet Me." Why do you think this is? Why do you think it is important to respect this?
- Some guide dogs help a person who cannot hear by letting them know when a doorbell rings, when a phone rings, when a car is coming, or when something falls to the ground. How could the dog let the person know?

### ACTIVITY 3: ANIMAL FRIENDS PRETEND PLAY (20 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1, [My Animal Friend](#) (included in this document) , for all participants
- Color markers or crayons to share

#### Preparation for Activity

- Place color markers or crayons on work tables.
- Print out and photocopy Handout 1
- Optional: If you will ask children to play-act their friendships with animals, make sure you have a large enough open space, preferably near the work tables.

#### Description of Activity

In this activity, children draw pictures of mutually caring relationships between people and animals.

Ask the children to think of an animal they have as a friend or one that they would like to have as a friend. Tell them it can be a real animal, such as their own pet, or an animal they have read about or seen pictures of.

Make it clear that they can use their imaginations, while acknowledging "real life" safety rules. You might say:

Of course it would not be safe to make friends with a wild raccoon. And, you wouldn't really pat or play with a strange dog you do not know. But it is okay to pretend some things and imagine an animal friend for your mutually caring picture.

Distribute photocopies of Handout 1, My Animal Friend. Invite the children to draw a picture of themselves with their animal friend. If they prefer, they could draw someone else with an animal friend — for example, a person who has a guide dog. Visit each child and help

them fill in the blanks on the handout to name the person and the animal in the picture.

While children draw, ask them, "What are the person and the animal doing together in the picture?" and "How do they show that they care for one another?"

Encourage children to identify some elements of mutual caring in their pictures with questions such as:

- How do this person and the animal show their affection for each other?
- How does the person act responsibly toward the animal? Does the animal have responsibilities? What are they?
- How do they show they are loyal to one another?
- How do the person and the animal help one another?

#### Variation

If the group has children who need to move around, invite them to take turns demonstrating the relationship of mutual caring that they are drawing. Assign or let them choose another child to play the animal role.

Or, end the drawing activity and gather the group in a circle. Pair the children. Invite pairs to demonstrate the human/animal relationships they have drawn.

#### Including All Participants

If you plan to include the demonstrations, it may be helpful to have more adults on hand for this activity, especially if the group includes children with high energy or who have trouble focusing.

### ACTIVITY 4: BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS (15 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Toy or stuffed animals for all participants
- A copy of chalice-lighting words and words for blessing the animals
- Optional: Table or box, cloth covering, and an LED/battery-operated chalice

#### Preparation for Activity

- In advance of this session, invite children to bring their own toy animals from home. Be sure to have extras for children who arrive without an animal. Alternatively, provide toy or stuffed animals or every child.
- Choose and print out chalice-lighting words and animal-blessing words. Find some possibilities in an [order of service for a Blessing of the Animals](#) (at

[www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/completeservices/submissions/25233.shtml](http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/completeservices/submissions/25233.shtml)) on the UUA's online WorshipWeb. Also on WorshipWeb, find an ecology-focused [meditation for an intergenerational service](#) (at [www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/meditation/sand/submissions/5526.shtml](http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/meditation/sand/submissions/5526.shtml)), by the Rev. Gary Kowalski, which includes animal names and nature words from A to Z.

- Plan a brief parade of the animals and a Blessing of the Animals ritual that includes time for each child to say something appreciative of the animal they are blessing today. Arrange furniture accordingly.
- Optional: drape a cloth over a table or box and set a LED/battery-operated chalice on it.
- If your congregation conducts a Blessing of the Animals, consider inviting your minister or a lay leader to participate in this activity.

### Description of Activity

Children experience a Blessing of the Animals ceremony.

Gather the children in a circle with their toy or stuffed animals.

Tell them, in your own words:

At many Unitarian Universalist congregations like ours, people sometimes come together to bless the animals. This tradition comes from our Catholic friends. A blessing shows how we appreciate the animals in our lives. These might be the pets in our families. It can also be animals we think are beautiful to look at or nice to pet on a farm, or animals that give us wool for clothes, pull plows on farms, and even give us their bodies for our food. We are going to have a Blessing of the Animals here today.

Ask the children to think of at least one thing that is special, valuable, or wonderful about the animal they are holding. Tell them they will each have a chance to say something about the animal. They may pretend the animal they are holding is a real animal they would like to bless, such as a dog or cat that is at home today. Or, they can think of something they appreciate about the kind of animal they are holding; for example: A tiger is beautiful and strong. A kangaroo can jump high. A lamb is cute and grows up to give us wool for clothes. A dog will love you if you are kind to it and take care of it.

Conduct the ritual you have planned. The ritual might include a chalice-lighting, a chance for each child to say how they appreciate an animal, and a collective blessing of all the animals. If the group is not too large, you might like to bless each child's animal individually, and invite the child to say something about the animal at that time.

Then lead the children on a parade with their animals unless you have chosen to hold the parade before the ritual.

### Including All Participants

It may be helpful to have additional adult volunteers for this activity, especially if the group includes children with high energy or who have trouble focusing.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- Leader Resource 1, Guide Dog, and tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1, Guide Dog. Cut out the image to attach to the Wonder Box poster.
- Display the Wonder Box poster.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy Taking It Home for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show the Wonder Box poster. Explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us of our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the picture of the guide dog to the poster. You may say, in your own words:

Now we will see the guide dog when we are together. It will remind us that there are many ways we can help animals and they can help us. We can give and receive the gift of mutual caring with different animals we in our lives. When we feed an animal, when a guide dog helps someone get around, when we pat a dog and the dog licks our hand with affection, we are caring for each other as part of the interdependent web of life.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that all of us, humans and animals, are part of the web of life. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye" or "Shalom," or the name of this session's intangible gift — "Mutual Caring."

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: WE APPRECIATE OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS (60 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, Vegan Dog Treats Recipe, which includes all materials, ingredients, and instructions for making the treats.
- Materials for Vegan Dog Treats gift packages
  - Small gift bags
  - Ribbons to tie bags, and scissors (including left-handed scissors)
  - Stickers with room for writing (or paper and tape), and markers
- Large box(es) or bag(s) for completed gift bags
- Optional: Brochures or other information about the animal shelter or the guide dog training school that will receive the Vegan Dog Treats or the funds raised by selling them.

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Arrange for access to the congregation's kitchen to prepare and bake biscuits. Or, make dough ahead of time, allow children to roll dough and cut shapes, and take biscuits home to bake.
- Contact a no-kill shelter or a guide dog training school in your area. Determine that they would welcome a gift of dog biscuits made by the children, and that the ingredients you plan to use are healthy for the animals in their care. Display brochures or other illustrated information about the facility for children to explore.
- The Vegan Dog Treats need eight hours to cool and harden. After you bake them in your congregation's kitchen, the children can

decorate the gift bags. You might plan to take home the biscuits and gift bags to assemble yourself, or schedule a time for children to package the biscuits. This can be an intergenerational activity involving other members of the congregation.

- Gather ingredients and cooking tools. If you have a large group, plan to have children work in small groups and make sure you have enough rolling pins, cookie cutters, and baking sheets. Enlist youth or adult helpers as needed.
- Set up a station where children can decorate gift bags and cut lengths of ribbon.
- Optional: Arrange for the children to sell the gift bags of Vegan Dog Treats. Have children make signs. Invite parents to assist with the sale.

### **Description of Activity**

The children make Vegan Dog Treats and package them in gift bags. The children can give the biscuits to a local animal shelter or sell them as a fundraiser for a no-kill animal shelter, an animal protection organization, or a guide dog training school.

If the children are making the Vegan Dog Treat dough, have the group work together to measure and assemble the ingredients. Then set up smaller groups for rolling dough, cutting out the shapes and placing biscuits on cookie sheets. Before baking, use wax paper to separate layers of uncooked biscuits.

Have all the children wash their hands in preparation for working with food. While they work, talk about the importance of caring for animals. Ask them in what ways pets depend on their owners to take care of them. Invite children to list different responsibilities someone with a pet may have, such as feeding, walking, and bathing their pet and taking the pet to the vet. Tell the children about the shelter or guide dog training school that will be the recipient of their gift of biscuits or money.

### **Including All Participants**

It may be helpful to have additional adult or high school youth volunteers on hand for this activity, especially if the group is large, includes children with high energy or children who have trouble focusing.

## **LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING**

Take a few minutes and think about how this session went. Reflect on the children's reactions to the story and the activities. Were any of the children already familiar with guide dogs? Did any of the children have allergies to animals, or bring fears or past negative experiences to the session? How did prior experiences, positive or negative, affect individual children's participation and the

session outcomes? What can we learn from the experience of this session? What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*We know from science that nothing in the universe exists as an isolated or independent entity. – Margaret Wheatley, American author and management consultant*

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** The children learned about how animals are trained to help people with disabilities. They learned that animals' potential to be useful to humans speaks to a deeper, seventh Principle connection that can exist beyond the feeding and shelter of pets. The children made biscuits to take to (or raise money for) an animal shelter and heard a story, *Leila Raises a Puppy*, about a family that raised a puppy and prepared it for training to be a guide dog.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** How are members of your family connected with animals? Do you have a pet? What contact has your family had with animals that assist people with special needs? When has your child had opportunities to interact with farm animals?

Talk about animals that members of your family have known, and how you have loved and/or taken care of them. Identify elements of mutual caring in your relationship with specific animals. If you have a family pet, point out that when your child helps with its care, they earn the pet's affection and loyalty.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...** Sit together outside your home and see how many animals you notice. Even urban areas offer opportunities to see animals in their natural habitat, such as squirrels, insects and birds of many kinds. Notice what the animals are doing. Are they searching for food? Are they playing together?

## FAMILY ADVENTURE

Is there is a petting zoo in your area? Go as a family to a small-scale zoo that provides safe, direct interaction with animals. Often a petting zoo allows visitors to feed as well as touch animals.

## FAMILY DISCOVERY

Part of a mutually caring relationship is to protect the other party from harm. As a family, go outdoors and practice caring for wild animal friends by leaving them alone. Talk about how wildlife is part of the environment that humans enjoy. Share your knowledge about how human actions affect wildlife. At a local pond, for example, tell your children, that feeding scraps of bread to waterfowl can actually harm them. Online, find information on encounters with animals in the wild, such as a [Wildlife Safety](#) (at

[/www.nps.gov/kefj/planyourvisit/wildlife-safety.htm](http://www.nps.gov/kefj/planyourvisit/wildlife-safety.htm)) section of the National Park Service website or this information on [National Parks and Safety Tips](#) (at <http://ezinearticles.com/?National-Parks-and-Wildlife-Safety-Tips&id=661665>) from Ezine Articles.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: VISIT FROM A GUIDE DOG (60 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Identify a guide dog training facility, an agency that places guide dogs with disabled adults, or a social service agency that may be able to connect you with clients who own a guide dog and would be willing to visit your group. Work with your religious educator to arrange for a guide dog and its owner to visit.
- Find out what accommodations and access the visitor and their dog will need, and arrange to provide them.
- Ask the owner about the ways the children need to behave around the dog. Be ready to tell the children the rules, such as "no screaming" or "no petting the dog."

### Description of Activity

Invite a working animal to visit the group with its owner. Have the owner give a demonstration of how the dog takes care of him/her and talk about how the human, in turn, takes care of the dog. An owner might also talk about how the animal was trained. In discussion, stress the mutual care that characterizes this human/animal relationship.

The children might like to present the visiting dog with Vegan Dog Treats as a thank-you gift. Determine beforehand if the owner approves.

### Including All Participants

From your religious educator and parents, determine whether any of the children have allergies, fears or other conditions that require special accommodations for them to meet a guide dog.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: STORY — ST. FRANCIS AND THE WOLF (10 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story carefully. It comes from the Catholic tradition. You may wish to adapt the story as appropriate to your congregation's faith culture.

**Description of Activity**

Tell the children this story comes from the Catholic tradition. You may say:

Francis of Assisi was a man who loved animals.  
The Catholic faith finds him so special that he is called a saint. This story is about him.

Read or tell the story.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 9: STORY: LEILA RAISES A PUPPY

*Read or tell the story.*

Have you ever had to give something away that you really loved? This is a story about a little girl who gave away a puppy she really loved because she made the decision to help someone else.

Leila was staring out the car window noticing the sun shining through the leaves as she thought about the children's worship service she heard that day. It was about the Unitarian Universalist idea of the web of life. Leila remembered this idea by calling it "the spider web of life." The lines of the web connect everything that is alive — people all over the world, and plants, and all the animals.

Leila knew how pollution and litter hurt all the life that shared the web. Leila was very sensitive about littering. She never threw garbage on the ground. She knew to turn off the lights when she left a room, to save energy. Leila was thinking she could do more to help the web of life. But, she didn't know what to do.

"How about volunteer at an animal shelter?" her mother, Sophie, suggested.

"Maybe," said Leila as she gazed out the window.

Instead of going right home, her mom parked in front of the local ice cream shop. "Hey, are we having ice cream for lunch?" asked Leila, coming out of her thoughts.

"We are! I feel like having an ice cream for lunch today," said Sophie.

In the ice cream shop, Leila noticed a dog with a bright yellow jacket on it and a stiff, rectangular leash. She loved dogs and wanted to run over and pet this one, but its jacket had some writing on it. "Mom, what does that sign say?" Leila asked.

"Dog in training. Please do not pet," read her mom.

Leila asked, "What is that dog training for?" Sophie explained that the dog was being trained to be a guide dog for people that can't see, people who are blind. Leila looked at the person holding the leash and said, "She looks like she can see."

"That's right," her mom replied. "The person holding the leash is a trainer. A guide dog has to be trained for a long time before it can help a person who can't see."

Licking on her cone in the back seat of the car, Leila thought about how dogs could be people's helpers. When they got home, Leila asked her mother, "Mom, could we get a puppy and train it to be a guide dog? We would be part of the spider web of life," she said. "We can help a dog that grows up to help a person!"

"We'll see," said her mom.

That night, Leila's parents talked about it. "Does Leila understand that the puppy would only live with us for a short time?" asked her father, Claudio. "What if she loves the puppy so much, she can't say goodbye when she needs to?"

"I thought about that, too," said her mom. "But, I love that she wants to do something so generous. I think Leila understands how helping the dog get ready to help someone else is a good way to be part of the interdependent web of life."

So Leila and her family signed up to be "Puppy Raisers" for a school that trained guide dogs for people who are blind. The guide dog staff interviewed Leila and her parents and visited their home, to make sure the puppy would be safe and well cared for. The puppy would live with them until it was about one year old. Leila was very excited to have a pet of her very own, one that would grow up to have an important job. Now they just had to wait for the right puppy to be born.

One morning a few months later, Leila opened her eyes and stretched with her arms way over her head. She put her arms down and yelled, "MOM! Is today the day? Are we getting the puppy we are going to train TODAY?!"

Leila and her family went to the guide dog school. They met a woman named Nadia, who introduced them to Chester, an adorable, tiny puppy. He was so cute! Leila loved him right away.

"Of course, you will feed Chester and take him for walks, and it is fine to love him and play with him," Nadia said, "But, you also have to get him ready to be a working dog. Take him everywhere you go. He needs to get used to lots of people, loud noises, and traffic."

The whole year Leila was in first grade, she played with Chester every day and took him for walks. She learned how to read the words on the sign he wore: "Dog in training. Please do not pet." Leila knew some day she would have to say goodbye to Chester, but for now, she cherished her time with him.

When first grade was finished for Leila, it was time for Chester's school to begin. Leila and her family returned Chester to the guide dog school which would be his next home. Nadia told Leila and her family they could come see Chester graduate from guide dog school when he was ready to go live with a person who needed him. Leila was sad to say goodbye, but she knew Chester would learn to do a very important job.

On a beautiful day when Leila was in second grade, she and her parents were invited to the guide dog graduation. Nadia brought them to see Chester. He had grown a lot bigger. As soon as Leila saw Chester, she shouted and ran up to him. Chester whimpered with joy when he saw Leila, but he stayed where he had been



told to stay — next to Miranda, the seventeen-year-old high school girl who would be taking him home. Chester had been trained very well. Leila realized with a little tug at her heart that Chester was no longer her pet.

Leila looked shyly at Miranda, and Nadia introduced them to each other. "Miranda has been blind since birth," Nadia said. "This is the first time she will have a guide dog, so she has been in school with Chester, too. Now they know how to work together. Chester can help Miranda do things she could not do on her own."

"Hi, Miranda," said Leila.

"It's very nice to meet you, Leila. Thank you for taking care of Chester when he was a puppy. I can tell you and your parents have done a great job! Chester is friendly and he is very focused. We have been walking around my neighborhood all by ourselves!" said Miranda.

"Please take very good care of Chester," said Leila. "He likes lots of hugs."

"I will take very good care of him. I promise," said Miranda. "And he will take care of me."

After the ceremony, Leila and her parents went home. Even though Leila would always miss Chester, she felt very good about helping Miranda. She felt so good that she asked her parents, "When can we adopt another puppy to become a guide dog?"

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 9: STORY: ST. FRANCIS AND THE WOLF

This telling of "St. Francis and the Wolf" was written by John Feister, editor of [AmericanCatholic.org](http://AmericanCatholic.org), based on the story recorded by Thomas of Celano during the 13th century.

*Read or tell the story.*

Perhaps the most famous story of St. Francis is when he tamed the wolf that was terrorizing the people of Gubbio. While Francis was staying in that town he learned of a wolf so ravenous that it was not only killing and eating animals, but people, too. The people took up arms and went after it, but those who encountered the wolf perished at its sharp teeth. Villagers became afraid to leave the city walls.

Francis had pity on the people and decided to go out and meet the wolf. He was desperately warned by the people, but he insisted that God would take care of him. A brave friar and several peasants accompanied Francis outside the city gate. But soon the peasants lost heart and said they would go no farther.

Francis and his companion began to walk on. Suddenly the wolf, jaws agape, charged out of the woods at the couple. Francis made the Sign of the Cross toward it. The power of God caused the wolf to slow down and to close its mouth.

Then Francis called out to the creature: "Come to me, Brother Wolf. In the name of Christ, I order you not to hurt anyone." At that moment the wolf lowered its head and lay down at St. Francis' feet, meek as a lamb.

St. Francis explained to the wolf that he had been terrorizing the people, killing not only animals, but humans who are made in the image of God. "Brother Wolf," said Francis, "I want to make peace between you and the people of Gubbio. They will harm you no more and you must no longer harm them. All past crimes are to be forgiven."

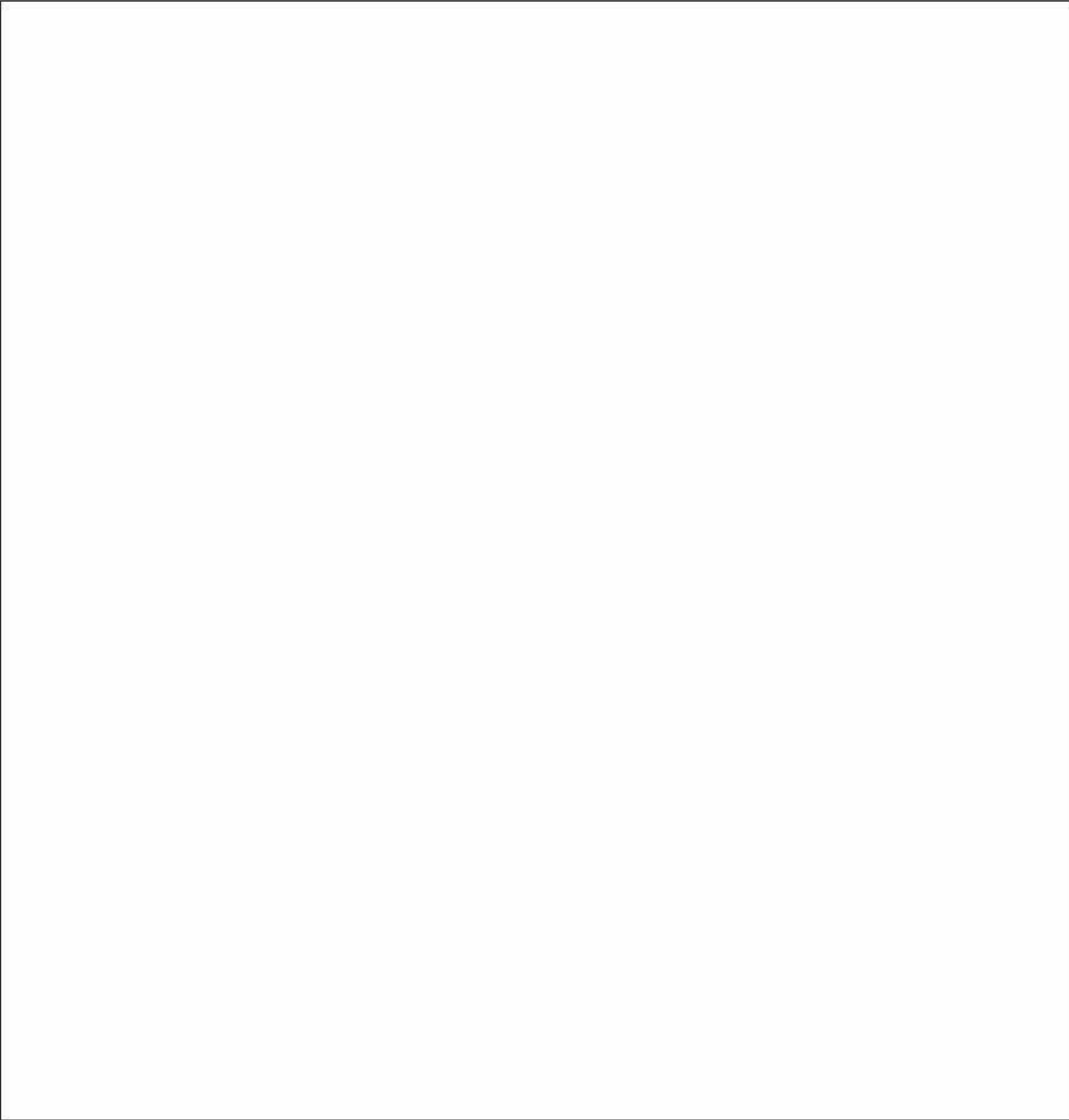
The wolf showed its assent by moving its body and nodding its head. Then to the absolute surprise of the gathering crowd, Francis asked the wolf to make a pledge. As St. Francis extended his hand to receive the pledge, so the wolf extended its front paw and placed it into the saint's hand. Then Francis commanded the wolf to follow him into town to make a peace pact with the townspeople. The wolf meekly followed St. Francis.

By the time they got to the town square, everyone was there to witness the miracle. With the wolf at his side, Francis gave the town a sermon on the wondrous and fearful love of God, calling them to repent from all their sins. Then he offered the townspeople peace, on behalf of the wolf. The townspeople promised in a loud voice to feed the wolf. Then Francis asked the wolf if he would live in peace under those terms. He bowed his head and twisted his body in a way that convinced everyone he accepted the pact. Then once again the wolf placed its paw in Francis' hand as a sign of the pact.

From that day on the people kept the pact they had made. The wolf lived for two years among the townspeople, going from door to door for food. It hurt no one and no one hurt it. Even the dogs did not bark at it. When the wolf finally died of old age, the people of Gubbio were sad. The wolf's peaceful ways had been a living reminder to them of the wonders, patience, virtues and holiness of St. Francis. It had been a living symbol of the power and providence of the living God.

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 9:  
HANDOUT 1: MY ANIMAL FRIEND**

**My Animal Friends**



**Drawn By** \_\_\_\_\_

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 9:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: GUIDE DOG PICTURE**



## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 9: LEADER RESOURCE 2: VEGAN DOG TREATS RECIPE

This recipe comes from the [Gourmet Sleuth website](#) .

*After mixing all the ingredients and kneading, divide the dough into small batches. Have children work in groups of three to roll dough, cut shapes, and place biscuits on flat cookie sheets. Help children tear off sheets of wax paper to separate layers of uncooked biscuits.*

### Materials

- Large mixing bowl and wooden spoon
- Flat surface(s) that can be floured
- Rolling pin(s)
- Flat cookie sheet(s)
- Unbleached wax paper

### Ingredients

- 9 cups whole wheat flour
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup nutritional yeast
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon yeast extract

### Directions

Mix dry ingredients. Add approximately the water. Knead into a pliable dough. Roll out to 1/8" thickness. Cut into desired shapes. Bake for 10-15 minutes at 350F. (Important: After turning off oven, leave biscuits in the oven overnight or for an 8-hour period so they become hard and crunchy.)

## FIND OUT MORE

### Children and Wildlife

Not all animals are appropriate candidates for mutually caring relationships with young children. As Susan Gilchrist writes:

It may be important to respect the feelings of animals and avoid causing them pain unnecessarily, but it is also important to see that wild animals do not belong as pets in people houses.

Gilchrist's article, "[Teaching Young Children About Wildlife](#)," (at [www.iowadnr.gov/education/backinfo/teach.pdf](http://www.iowadnr.gov/education/backinfo/teach.pdf)) adapted on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website, includes thoughtful writing and many structured activities that can help you focus young children on your local wildlife and highlight the ways wild animals are different from — and should be treated

differently than — family pets and working animals such as guide dogs.

### St. Francis of Assisi

The Blessing of the Animals done in many Unitarian Universalist congregations is inspired by a Catholic tradition related to St. Francis of Assisi . Find out more about [St. Francis on the American Catholic website](#) (at [www.americancatholic.org/Features/Francis/blessing.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/Francis/blessing.asp)). The site also includes some [stories about St. Francis](#), (at [www.americancatholic.org/Features/Francis/stories.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/Francis/stories.asp)) including "St. Francis and the Wolf."

### Death of a Pet

In case a child mentions the death of a pet and children are upset or have questions, you may like to have on hand the book, *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Erik Blegvad (New York: Simon & Schuster/Aladdin, 1987). A little boy appreciates his pet cat's life while coping with its death.

# SESSION 10: THE GIFT OF PROTECTION

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another and all involved in one another.*

— Thomas Merton

This session focuses on the interdependent web of life and introduces the intangible gift of protection — protection of the environment and all life that shares it. Learning to respect and appreciate the Earth, our home, is one of the cornerstones of our faith.

Children today are much more involved with indoor activities — often media, such as computers, video games and television — than adults were at their age. Many of our children lack the interaction with the outdoors that would help them develop a healthy relationship with nature. In this session, you will help children understand the importance of their connection to the Earth with activities that encourage interaction with nature regardless of the setting of your congregation.

In *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv argues that children who are not exposed to the natural world are at a disadvantage. Louv calls this disadvantage "nature deficit disorder." He writes, "A growing body of research links our mental, physical, and spiritual health directly to our association with nature in positive ways." Louv asserts that the environmental advocates of today are the children who spent time in nature years ago. He suggests that children need to go outdoors and experience the natural world in order to develop intellectual, spiritual and emotional understanding of the harm pollution and littering cause to the environment.

This session affirms Louv's ideas and helps address "nature deficit disorder." It includes a walk outdoors (Activity 4). If the group is large, engage additional adults in the activity. Have parents sign permission slips distributed well in advance. Make sure children have appropriate outerwear.

Beyond the session, the congregation can be a community that actively elevates the spiritual importance of spending time in nature. In one activity, the children create an "Energy Inventory" of either their congregation or home (Faith in Action). The Taking It Home section suggests ways for parents to offer their children unstructured, outdoor play time and suggests they make a commitment to doing so.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Help participants understand the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, the interdependent web of life, in the context of the natural world around us
- Develop participants' sense of responsibility to protect our and care for the natural environment
- Help participants develop a spiritual connection to nature.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn how to take care of the Earth on a daily basis
- Spend time in mindfully in nature
- Understand "protection" as an intangible gift they can give through their attitudes and actions on behalf of the Earth.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: The Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Nature Inventory	25
Activity 3: Story — The Green Man	5
Activity 4: If I Were the Green Man/Woman	15
Faith in Action: Energy Inventory	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Earth-Protection Skills	5
Alternate Activity 2: Fairy Houses	35
Alternate Activity 3: Outdoor Meditation	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Today, children's outdoor play is more limited than that of previous generations in terms of where they can go, what they can do, and how long they can stay outdoors. Children with little direct experience of the outdoors may

find it hard to understand the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle — the interdependent web of life.

Think about your free time spent as a child. Where did you play? Did you have time after school to just be outdoors with neighborhood friends? Did you have lots of adventures exploring? What sense memories do you

have from these times, such as the feel of pine sap, the smell of a meadow, the color of the sky at dusk? Before leading this session, reflect on positive experiences you had playing or simply being outdoors when you were a child. Share that energy with the children today.



## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: THE WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See Session 1 for instructions.)
- Items obtained from nature, such as acorns, fallen leaves, pine cones, twigs, wildflowers, grass, green leaves, in-season fruit or vegetables

#### Preparation for Activity

- Place items from nature inside the Wonder Box.

#### Description of Activity

With the children still in a circle, show the Wonder Box and invite them to guess what gift could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then

pass the box around for children to open and find the items inside. Ask if anyone recognizes the items and where they have seen them. Allow some comments.

Elicit ideas about what this session's intangible gift could be. Responses that include references to the outdoors will help lead the discussion to protecting the outdoors. You can say:

These are items from nature. Why is nature important to us? Why is it important that we respect and take care of the environment?

Allow some comments. Then say:

We want to protect the Earth because the Earth is the only place that human beings can live. We share the Earth with all of nature. It is important that we protect nature and everything in it. Protecting nature is a way to protect ourselves and make sure we have someplace to live.

As Unitarian Universalists, we think it's very important to always be aware that we are part of everything on Earth, and we must protect all the life we share our Earth with.

### ACTIVITY 2: NATURE INVENTORY (25 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Paper, and crayons or pencils for all participants
- Optional: Stickers representing items in nature (leaves, trees, acorns, squirrels, insects)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Arrange to walk around the outside of the congregation. If needed, obtain parents' permission. Invite additional adults to join you to ensure adequate supervision (and to make this activity multigenerational).
- Read Alternate Activity 1, Earth-Saving Skills. If you have time during or after the Nature Inventory walk, invite the children to share what they have seen outdoors and discuss specific skills and behaviors they can use to protect the Earth.

#### Description of Activity

The children observe and document the nature that exists outside the congregation's building. Before going outside, ask the children what they have noticed about the grounds around the congregation. Explain that they will be going outside to report on what kind of nature surrounds the building. Tell them they will draw, write or place stickers on paper to keep track of what they see.

As you walk, ask the group questions about what they see that is part of nature. How many trees or birds do they see? If yes, what kinds? What about squirrels? Pigeons? If it has rained recently, are there earthworms? Is there grass? Tailor your questions to the surroundings of the congregation.

When you are processing, ask if anyone noticed anything that didn't belong. Some children may notice litter. This would be a good transition to discussing pollution and how that harms nature. If you are in the woods and no litter has been spotted, ask how foreign debris would affect the site.

### Including All Participants

Be aware of any mobility issues with any of the children and make sure the outdoor space you plan to visit is accessible for all. If necessary, modify the outing to ensure each child can have an up-close outdoors experience.

Be mindful of any special needs children have. Is there a deaf child? Ask what they see. Is there a blind child? Ask what they hear. Have the group participate in focusing on specific senses, as well. Do they hear birds, squirrels running or wind rustling the leaves?

Some children might not be able to write, but most will be able to draw or use stickers to record what they see outdoors. Bring a variety of nature stickers and be ready to help children spell words they want to write.

## ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE GREEN MAN (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [The Green Man](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story. If you can prepare to tell it rather than read it from the page.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to get comfortable for listening to a story. Read or tell the story.

## ACTIVITY 4: IF I WERE THE GREEN MAN/WOMAN

### Materials for Activity

- Paper — preferably green — and crayons, color pencils, thin markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Give each child a sheet of paper and put coloring implements on work tables for all to share.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to imagine that they are the Green Man or a Green Woman. What are some of the items from nature would they put in their cave? How would they live so they don't disrupt the nature around them? How might they take care of the animals or small children? Give the children an opportunity to talk about their pictures.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- Leader Resource 1, [The Earth](#) (included in this document)
- Tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Display the Wonder Box poster.
- Print out Leader Resource 1, The Earth, or obtain another image of the Earth that you prefer. Cut out the image to attach to the Wonder Box poster.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy Taking It Home for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle and show them the Wonder Box poster. Explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the picture of the Earth to the poster. You may say, in your own words:

Now we will see the Earth we live on, every time we are together. The Earth is our home, and we need to protect it.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that we share our Earth with one another and with every living thing. Everything we do to protect our Earth is also a way to protect one another and all living things. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — "Protection!"

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: ENERGY INVENTORY

### Materials for Activity

- Notebooks and pens or pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Find out from an energy company in your community how to conduct an energy survey in your congregation. Or, schedule a time for an energy company auditor to come lead the group in conducting an energy survey.
- Engage additional adult volunteers to help conduct the energy survey with the children.

### Description of Activity

Have participants walk around the congregation and find out how much energy is used by lights, computers, and other appliances — including toys. Make note of all the items that use energy sources such as electricity, oil, or batteries. Explain that all energy comes from the Earth and we do not want to use it all up. Help the children talk about what it means to save energy and why saving energy is an important part of protecting our Earth.

### Including All Participants

Make sure any walking tour of the congregation or other building is accessible to children with mobility, sight or other limitations.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?

- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another and all involved in one another.*

Thomas Merton

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children discussed the importance of connecting with nature and took a nature inventory of the grounds around the congregation.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Together with your child(ren), estimate the time they spend playing indoors as opposed to playing outdoors. Then, compare the free time they spend in front of computers, television, video games, etc. with the time spent in nature. Ask them which is more fun, and why. Some factors that can limit children's outdoor play time include the location of your home, the proximity of safe outdoor play places, the extent of a child's structured, indoor non-school activities, and your family's culture and practices. As you talk with your child(ren), think about ways you could increase their access to outdoor experiences.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

Make a commitment to engage your children in unstructured, outdoor play time. If you are concerned about children's safety outdoors on their own or with peers, spend time as a family in unstructured time outdoors. At a park, on a trail hike, at a beach, in a rowboat, or even at a neighborhood playground, make time for your children to simply be outside.

### FAMILY ADVENTURE

Take pencils and notebooks to a meadow, a wood, or a body of water and do a nature inventory together. Sketch or write about some of the flora and fauna you see. At home, use the Internet and books to identify the plants and creatures you saw and learn more about them.

### FAMILY DISCOVERY

The song, "Blue Boat Home," Hymn 207 in *Singing the Journey: Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition* (words by Peter Mayer, melody by Rowland Huw Prichard), would be a good one to listen to, talk about and sing together. Some of the lyrics are:

Far away from the rolling ocean  
Still my dry land heart can say

I've been sailing all my life now  
Never harbor or port have I known  
The wide universe is the ocean I travel  
And the earth is my blue boat home.

### **A FAMILY RITUAL**

Plan to include outdoor time in your week. Walking a short distance you normally drive (such as to school or to a nearby friend's house); having a snack or meal outdoors instead of indoors; or simply playing outdoors one afternoon a week will improve your child(ren)'s acquaintance with the outdoors and decrease their time spent interacting with two-dimensional media such as computers, video games and television.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: EARTH-PROTECTION SKILLS (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Gather ideas for skills and behaviors children ages five, six and seven can use to protect the Earth. Include:
  - Use trash and recycling barrels instead of littering, when you are at school or at a park
  - Save energy at home by turning off lights and toys when you are not using them.
  - Recycling at home.
- Post blank newsprint where children can see it. Write "UU Earth-Protection Skills" across the top.

### **Description of Activity**

This activity is designed to follow Activity 2, Nature Inventory, but can be done on its own. Gather the children. If they have done the Nature Inventory walk, invite volunteers to share what they have seen outdoors. Thank each one who shares. Then, engage them in sharing specific skills and behaviors they can use to protect the Earth. Write their ideas on newsprint, along with the ideas you have prepared. After the activity, you may like to type up the list of "UU Earth-Saving Skills" and distribute it to participants' families, the entire religious education program, or the entire congregation.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: FAIRY HOUSES (35 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A basket for each child

- A shoebox or a heavy piece of cardboard for each child's fairy house
- Scissors, tape and glue to share
- Imagination!

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Identify an outdoor space, preferably with trees, where the children can safely walk from your meeting room to collect small items from nature.
- If the group is large, arrange for additional adults to join this activity to help supervise children outside.

### **Description of Activity**

By sending children outdoors with a mission, this activity helps focus their attention on the twigs, stones, leaves, and other small objects that make up the natural world.

Invite the children to put on their outerwear and come outside to collect the things they will need to build a home for a fairy. Give each child a basket and take the group outside to the location you have chosen. Tell them their fairy home must be made entirely from items found in nature. Suggest they look for twigs, moss, pine cones, leaves, small stones or acorns. Allow them to look, touch and gather.

Even children who do not believe in fairies can use their imaginations and be creative. Tell the "realist" they can make a home that a grasshopper, frog or even beetles might want to live in. The weather need not be perfect for this activity, as long as the ground is dry for children to pick up items and the children have appropriate outdoor clothing for the temperature.

Bring the group back inside with at least ten minutes to make fairy houses by placing or gluing/taping the objects they have found on cardboard or inside shoe boxes.

### **Variation**

Weather permitting, you may like to build the fairy houses outside. After gathering objects, the children can make fairy houses outdoors — perhaps leaving them there for potential residents to find.

### **Including All Participants**

If children in the group have limited mobility, be sure to choose an accessible outdoor spot. If any children may be unable to stoop to examine and pick up small objects, have the whole group work outdoors in pairs or triplets so any child who needs help will get help from a peer.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: OUTDOOR MEDITATION (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Optional: Cushions, sheets or blankets for participants to sit on outside
- Optional: A timer

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Decide if you will have the children do a walking meditation or a sitting meditation while outdoors.
- Find an accessible, quiet outdoor location for the meditation. Scout for poison ivy, fragile plantings, or other features of concern and make sure to warn co-leaders as well as participants about these before you go outdoors.
- Make sure you have enough adult volunteers and appropriate permission to bring the group outdoors.

### **Description of Activity**

Tell the children they will do a meditation. You may say:

We will meditate outside so we can pay attention to the outdoors and how being outdoors makes us feel. Please remember that although it is nice to do a meditation together, meditation needs some silence. When we meditate, we keep our bodies, our hands, our words and even our thoughts to ourselves.

Make sure everyone has appropriate outerwear and, if needed, something to sit on. Take the group to the location and lead the meditation you have chosen.

Even two minutes of silence can be meaningful (and challenging) for this age group. Before you begin the meditation, tell the children how many minutes of silence they must keep. Use your voice or a chime or bell to signal the beginning and end of the meditation. You may like to ask the children what they thought about or observed, and then try another meditation period — perhaps a minute longer.

#### **Walking Meditation**

Invite participants to walk around on their own and quietly observe with their five senses. Ask them to be mindful of what they smell, hear, see and touch. Remind them not to touch one another and to keep silent for the designated time.

#### **Sitting Meditation**

Help the participants arrange themselves sitting comfortably so none is touching another or too close to another's "personal space" — so that each child is surrounded by nature. Invite them to close their eyes to meditate if they are comfortable doing so, or to look

around them quietly as part of the meditation. Ask them to be mindful of what they smell, hear, see and touch.

Afterward, see if the group can walk back to the meeting room in silence, continuing the meditation.

### **Including All Participants**

Make sure the outdoor meditation space and the meditation activity itself are fully accessible to all participants.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 10: STORY: THE GREEN MAN

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

Once upon a time, there lived a rich and vain young squire. Servants prepared his favorite foods each day. His every wish was granted.

One of the young man's favorite things to do was to ride through the woods that were part of his kingdom, hunting small animals for sport. He thought that the woods and all its creatures belonged to him and he could do as he pleased with them.

The people in the village had a different idea about the woods. The woods provided a home to all the creatures that lived there: chipmunks, birds, squirrels, rabbits, deer, and wild pigs. They told their children a story about a Green Man who lived in the woods and cared for all of the small creatures. They said he even watched out for children in the woods. The villagers faithfully left out food on winter nights for the Green Man to eat.

One autumn day, the squire decided to go on a hunt. He called to all of his servants to saddle up the horses and get on their riding clothes: they were going into his woods.

They rode into the woods, trampling nests and dens as they went, sending dogs out ahead to chase small animals out of their homes so they could be easily hunted. After a time, the squire became separated from the rest of the hunting party. He was looking for them when he came to a pond — a beautiful, clear, cool pond.

"How clever of me to have a pond in my woods to refresh myself!" he said.

The young man began to remove all of his fine clothing — his shoes, his hat, his jacket, his shirt, his pants, and his socks. He laid his clothes neatly folded by the edge of the pond and jumped into the cool water. He swam back and forth, enjoying himself immensely.

While he was swimming and splashing away, a hand reached out from behind a tree and took his clothing and led his horse away. When the squire got out of the water, he discovered that he had nothing left to wear

save a piece of rope. He took the rope and fastened some leaves to it to make a cover up. When his hunting party came looking for him, he was embarrassed to be seen dressed in nothing but leaves. So he hid.

At night, the squire went looking for some shelter and he stumbled into a cave. He didn't sleep much that night. It was dark, and he was frightened, and he kept hearing animal noises all night.

In the morning, when the daylight came, he saw that he was not alone in the cave. There was a goat there, and a chicken, and a gourd for holding water. Someone had been living in that cave! He found some grass for the goat and feed for the chicken. He discovered some grain that he could eat as well.

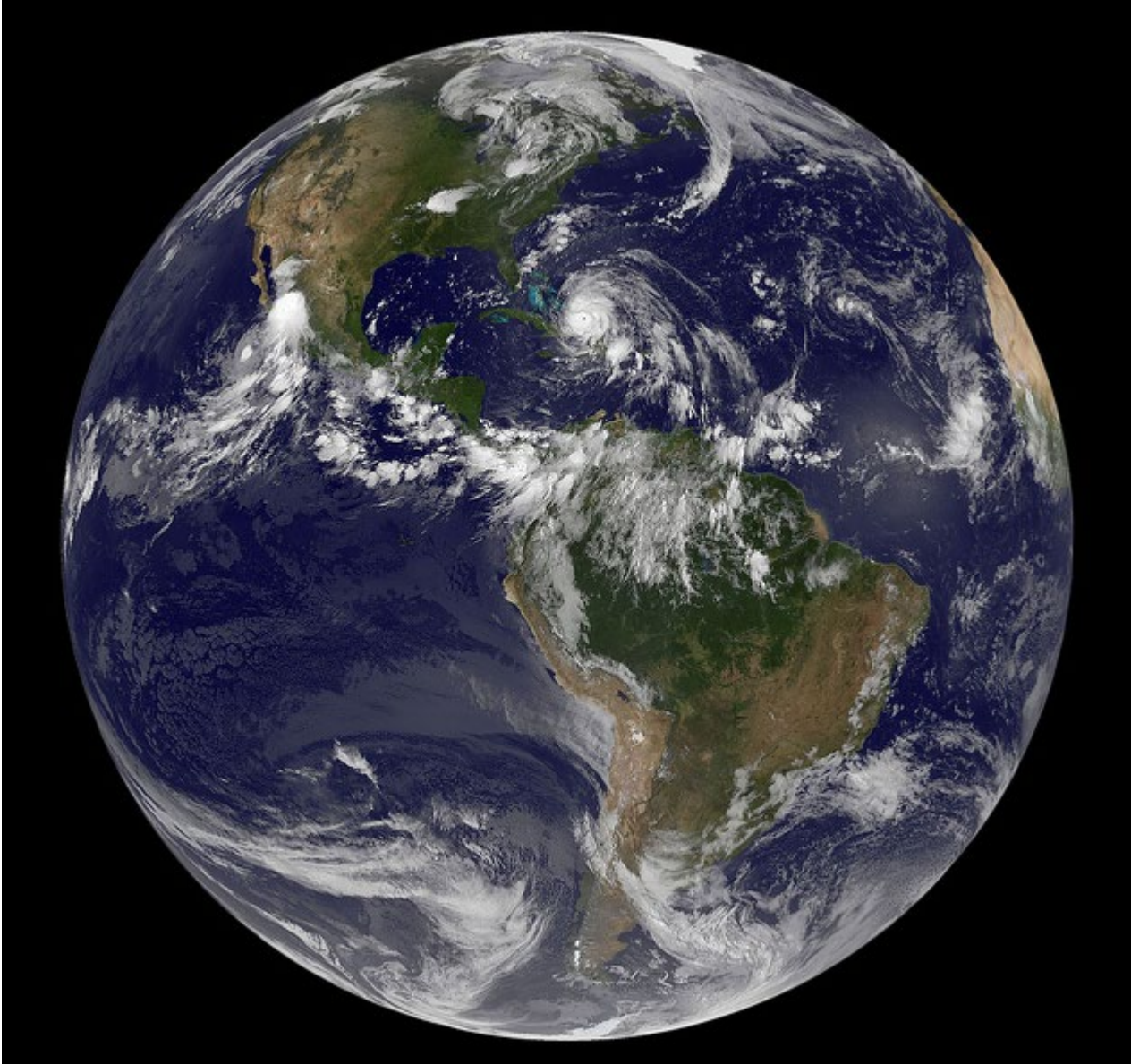
Over time, the squire settled in to life in the cave. He fashioned a whole garment out of leaves. He ate eggs from the hen and drank milk from the goat. He covered his hand with mud to prevent stings and reached into a beehive for honey to eat. He became acquainted with all the small woodland creatures, and he cared for them, helping them over swollen streams when heavy rains fell, making sure they had food and water, and sheltering them in the cave on the chilly nights.

One day he came upon two small children trapped by a wild pig threatening to bite. When he had chased the pig off, they looked at him. There he was, covered head to toe with leaves and mud, with a wild-looking beard and hair. "Are you the Green Man?" they asked.

"I guess I am," said the man, who no longer looked anything like a squire.

When winter came, the Green Man was happy to go into the village at night and to take the food that the villagers left out for him, sharing it with all his animal friends. A year passed peacefully, until one warm day when a hunting party came into the woods. The Green Man hid behind a tree to watch. A rich young man, a squire perhaps, became separated from his hunting group and decided to take a swim in the clear, cool pond. He took off his clothes, folded them, and left them under a tree. The Green Man reached out a hand and took the clothes and the horse, leaving behind his garment of leaves and a coil of rope. He used a sharp stick to trim his hair and beard, and rode into town, back to his parents' castle.

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 10:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: THE EARTH**



## FIND OUT MORE

### Blue Boat Home

The song, "Blue Boat Home," Hymn 1064 in *Singing the Journey: Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. reflects the spirit of this session. Some of the lyrics, by Peter Mayer, are:

Far away from the rolling ocean  
Still my dry land heart can say  
I've been sailing all my life now  
Never harbor or port have I known  
The wide universe is the ocean I travel  
And the earth is my blue boat home.

Mayer's CD, [The Great Story](http://www.thegreatstory.org/songs/blueboat.html) (at [www.thegreatstory.org/songs/blueboat.html](http://www.thegreatstory.org/songs/blueboat.html)), includes this song.

### The Green Man

In *Stories in Faith: Exploring Our UU Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales* (Boston: Unitarian

Universalist Association, 2007), Gail Forsyth-Vail uses the story, "The Green Man," to illustrate the sixth Unitarian Universalist Source — spiritual teachings from Earth-centered traditions. She provides background about Green Man legends in different cultures and guidance for understanding and teaching the story. Her text reads, in part:

As this tale begins, a privileged young squire treats the natural world as his dominion, to be used solely for his own pleasure and purposes. In the course of the story, he learns to live in harmony with the natural world and care for the plants and creatures of the woodland. He becomes, for a time, the archetypal Green Man of ancient myth and legend. The longer he embodies the Green Man, the more he takes on those sensibilities. When he returns to his former life he is a changed person, one who respects rather than exploits the resources of the natural world.



# SESSION 11: THE GIFT OF STEWARDSHIP

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*I tell you the truth; this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on.*

— Mark 12:43-44 (NIV)

The intangible gift for this session is stewardship. Perhaps if we introduce the idea of stewardship at a very young age, we will grow Unitarian Universalists who understand that their faith home belongs to them, and its vitality depends on their accepting and giving stewardship.

The health and well being of a congregation depends on the generosity of its members. When congregants give their time, talents or treasure, they are giving to themselves as well as to others — and everyone is the better for it. In *Creating Congregations of Generous People* (The Alban Institute, 1998), Michael Durall talks about creating a culture of generosity. This can begin at every level of the congregation, including the youngest. In this session, the children learn some of the responsibilities taken on by volunteers in the congregation, not only to fund maintenance of the physical building, but also to create a welcoming atmosphere for members and visitors who come for worship and other church events. The children will have an opportunity to join in an aspect of congregational life they do not usually participate in, as they make gifts for visitors, collect funds to support the congregation, or welcome others to a worship service, coffee hour or special event.

Activity 3 introduces a penny jar that children can fill by making donations in subsequent sessions. In the long-term Faith in Action activity, Penny Jar, the children begin collecting funds for the congregation with a presentation during a worship service. In Alternate Activity 2 the children help set up and host a coffee hour. Plan these activities well ahead of time with your religious educator, minister and/or lay leaders.

In Activity 4, the children make Salt Dough Decorations as gifts for visitors to the congregation. Prepare the dough at least half an hour before the session. If time is short, have the children form their decorations immediately after the Opening. The dough must harden before painting, and the paint must dry before packing the decorations in gift bags.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce stewardship as an intangible gift
- Introduce stewardship as the idea that everyone in the congregation is responsible for its well being through financial donations and volunteer commitments
- Guide children to make the connection between a generous congregation and its ability to welcome others
- Demonstrate that stewardship is a collective responsibility; it takes a community working together to make a congregation a welcoming place
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn how people in the congregation give the gift of stewardship in a variety of ways
- Hear a parable of Jesus which suggests that no matter how much money we have, all of us are capable of giving the gift of stewardship
- Practice being generous with their time, talents, and "treasure" to act as stewards of the congregation.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — The Most Generous Gift	10
Activity 3: Stewardship Penny Jar	5
Activity 4: Salt Dough Gifts	30
Faith in Action: Penny Jar (long-term)	varies
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Greeting Cards	20
Alternate Activity 2: Coffee Hour Set-up	30

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a quiet moment to consider ways that you have contributed to the life of the congregation. The fact that

you are teaching suggests you take an active part in the well being of the religious education program. Did you volunteer recently because you have a child in the program? Were you recruited years ago and are still teaching? Reflect on what motivates you to make teaching a part of your contribution to congregational life.

Be honest about any mixed emotions you have about stewardship and hospitality. How do you view your

stewardship to your congregation in terms of both finances and time? What are the expectations in your congregation regarding volunteering and donating? Regarding hospitality, are newcomers welcomed every Sunday? Do you speak with people you don't recognize during coffee hour? How have you felt valuable, and valued, as a steward? How not? Bring your willingness to be a steward of generosity into this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children around the chalice. Explain that you start each session with a ritual. You may say:

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists.  
With minds that think,  
Hearts that love,  
And hands that are ready to serve.  
Together we care for our Earth,  
And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: THE WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See Session 1 for instructions.)
- Copy of congregational directory
- Optional: Other items, including pictures of members, that represent your faith community
- A few pennies

#### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a copy of your congregational directory, pictures of people participating in a church event, and/or other item(s) to indicate to the children that the session will focus on their faith community and the people in it.
- Place congregational items and pennies in the Wonder Box.

#### Description of Activity

With the children still in a circle around the chalice, show the Wonder Box. Invite them to guess what gift could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then pass the box around for children to open and find the pennies and items representing the congregation inside. The pennies represent money and the congregational item(s) represent the faith community. Ask the children:

What do you think money has to do with our congregation?

Affirm responses. See if the children can find their names or pictures in the directory. Ask if they know the minister, religious educator and other staff are paid. What else is needed to help the congregation function? Guide the children to talk about how the congregation operates. What does it take to maintain the church building? Who buys the paper, markers and other things they see in their meeting room? Tell them:

The members of our congregation are the stewards. We are all responsible for taking care of our church and that can mean giving some money or some time.

If pictures of congregants engaged in congregation activities are available, discuss the importance of volunteering as a way to nurture and sustain the faith community.

Tell the children they will learn two ways to be stewards of their congregation. The first, involves stewardship with money (donating to the penny jar) and the second involves stewardship with time and talents (making gifts for adults and/or children who are visitors or prospective new members).

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE MOST GENEROUS GIFT (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, [The Most Generous Gift](#) (included in this document)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story. If you can, prepare to tell it rather than read it from the page.

#### Description of Activity

Invite the children to get comfortable for listening to a story. Read or tell the story.

After the story, ask the children, "Why, do you think, the woman in the story gave away half of her money, when she didn't have much and she really needed it?" Allow

some responses. Then ask, "Would you give half of your toys to someone who needed or wanted them?" Ask if they have ever been asked to donate anything. How did they know how much to give? How did it feel to give? What was hard about giving? What felt good?

### **ACTIVITY 3: PENNY JAR (5 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- A large clear glass jar with a securely fitting lid
- A few pennies
- Permanent marker, or paper, markers and tape to label the penny jar

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Label the jar, Penny Jar: Our Gift of Stewardship
- Place a few pennies in the jar.

#### **Description of Activity**

Show the children the penny jar and tell them it will be in the Wonderful Welcome meeting room for the rest of the program. Say, in your own words:

From now on, you can make donations when you first come in. When the jar is filled (or when the program ends — whichever comes first), we will donate the money we have collected to the congregation as a gift from the entire Wonderful Welcome group. This is one way we can share the gift of stewardship.

Encourage the children to keep pennies they find, earn, or are given. Make sure they understand that no contribution is too small and when all the pennies are together they will add up. Do not assume children get an allowance at this age. It can be assumed that they have some access to coins through their caregivers, or by finding them.

### **ACTIVITY 4: SALT DOUGH GIFTS (30 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

Ingredients for Salt Dough Decorations

- 2 cups of flour (not self-rising)
- 1 cup fine grained table salt
- 1/2 cup room temperature water
- Large bowl
- Cling wrap

Food coloring or natural spices that have color, such as cocoa powder, cinnamon, curry powder, paprika, turmeric or saffron

Acrylic paint and paintbrushes

Small gift bags and ribbons to tie them

Optional: Postcards, business cards, or other small items printed with the name of your congregation.

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- At least half an hour before the session, prepare dough for Salt Dough Decorations. Combine flour and salt in a large bowl. Add water. Knead for five to ten minutes, until dough becomes smooth and elastic. Cover tightly with cling wrap to prevent drying. Let the dough sit for 30 minutes before using.
- Cover work tables with newsprint.
- Set paints and paintbrushes on work tables.
- Optional: Obtain postcards, business cards or other small items printed with the name of your congregation to include in the gift bags with the ornaments.

#### **Description of Activity**

This dough is pliable and can be formed to make many different shapes. Once it hardens, it can immediately be painted with fast-drying acrylic paint.

During the winter holiday season, children might make shapes to be used as ornaments for a Christmas tree. In the absence of a holiday, have participants make symbols of Unitarian Universalism such as a chalice or the letters, "UU," or another symbol that represents your congregation, perhaps the initials of the congregation. If the shape will be hung as an ornament when it is dry, poke a hole at the top, using a paintbrush handle.

After the items are painted and dry, invite children to place them in the small gift bags and tie each bag with ribbon to be a welcome gift to visitors.

### **CLOSING (5 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Wonder Box poster
- Picture of your congregation or a congregational event for the Wonder Box poster
- Tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Display the Wonder Box poster.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle and show them the Wonder Box poster. Explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the picture of the congregation to the poster. You may say, in your own words:

Here is a picture of our congregation. It will remind us that the care of our faith community is in our hands, and we are the stewards of our faith community.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together today. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember that we are thankful for giving and receiving the gift of stewardship. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — "Stewardship!".

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: PENNY JAR

### Materials for Activity

- Penny jar (see Activity 3, Penny Jar)
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Post blank newsprint.

### Description of Activity

Use this Faith in Action activity after the children have done Activity 3, Penny Jar.

Gather the children. Review the ways to give the gift of stewardship in your congregation. Brainstorm where

they would like to donate the money that they are collecting.

Remind the children that the penny jar will be in their room each time Wonderful Welcome meets. Encourage them to bring in pennies to contribute. Let them know that the money will be donated to the congregation from their entire group.

Share with the group the plan to present the money to the congregation, as you have discussed with the congregational leadership. If there are any preparations the children need to do to present this gift, facilitate those preparations now.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*I tell you the truth; this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on.*

— Mark 12:43-44 (NIV)

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children learned the importance of stewardship in congregational life. In an adaptation of a biblical parable, The Most Generous Gift, the children heard a story about a poor woman who gives one "mite," a coin worth less than one penny yet half of all she has, to the donation box after hearing a sermon by Jesus. Jesus proclaims that her gift is more valuable than that of the wealthy who gave much more, because she gave all she could.

The participants made gifts out of salt dough as expressions of welcome to newcomers to the congregation, and also learned a way they could contribute financially. We started a collection jar — Penny Jar: Our Gift of Stewardship — that will be available each week for the children to contribute pennies. At the end of the program, or when the jar is full, the money will be donated to the congregation as a gift from the group.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...**

Here are some questions related to stewardship for your family to discuss.

- What does stewardship mean to each of us?
- What are some ways we contribute to the congregation?
- What are some other ways we could give of our time and our resources to enrich our faith community?
- Do family members ever get money as gifts for birthdays or other special events? How do we encourage one another to donate some of the money to the congregation?

### **EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

Discuss the importance of giving to the congregation and share with your child(ren) stories about how you have given your time, talents or treasure to the church. If children receive an allowance, talk about giving a percentage to the congregation. Take this opportunity to nurture a culture of generosity and stewardship within your family when your children are young.

### **A FAMILY RITUAL**

Once a month, have a family meeting to discuss how the family will work together in support of a congregation project. If the congregation has a published mission, perhaps begin the meeting by reading that aloud. If there is not a current project, perhaps volunteer as a family to host coffee hour. The children can help bake or choose the snacks to be purchased.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: GREETING CARDS (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Blank card stock paper and envelopes
- Scissors
- Markers, colored pencils, stamps, stamp inkpads, and stencils
- Ribbon to bundle cards together

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Decide whether you will pre-select the recipient of the children's earnings from the sale of the cards, or whether you will guide the children to choose an aspect of congregational life they want to fund. You might like to invite one of your intended donation recipients, for example, a member of the Building and Grounds committee, to join this activity and talk with the children.
- If needed, cut or fold card stock to fit in the envelopes.

- Set out the art materials to decorate the cards.
- Optional: To customize the cards for the season, obtain stencils or stickers representing a particular holiday or congregational event.
- Make an example of a finished greeting card to show the children by creating a design on the outside of the card, folding it and placing it in the envelope.

### **Description of Activity**

Tell the children they will make cards to sell. The proceeds will be donated to the congregation. If you have chosen a committee or project to receive the donation, tell the group about it now. If the children will decide on the recipient, facilitate that process now.

Invite the children to create designs on the outside of the card only. Explain that people who buy the cards will need the inside to write on.

If you have invited a congregational committee member to visit the group, engage them in making cards with the children as they talk about how their committee spends its funds. The committee might also help the group sell the greeting cards.

Decide as a group how much to charge for the cards. It will be important to steer the conversation so the amount is fair, not unreasonably high or low.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: COFFEE HOUR SET-UP (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Donuts, cookies or other food that is easy for children to help serve
- Plates, napkins, etc. as customary in your congregation's coffee hour

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Contact the person in charge of scheduling coffee hour hosts and arrange for the children to serve as co-hosts. Explain how the children will experience stewardship, generosity and welcoming as they help host coffee hour. Determine exactly what the children will do, for example, arrange cookies on plates or set out plates and cups.
- Ask parents of the children to donate food for coffee hour.
- Engage a few extra volunteers to help lead the children from their meeting room to the coffee hour location and to help manage the coffee hour set-up.

## **Description of Activity**

First, have the children wash their hands. Make clear to the children that they are not to go near the coffee maker, or anything plugged into an electric socket, as it is dangerous. Invite the children to arrange the food and do the other tasks agreed on. Make sure each child has a chance to do something.

After coffee hour, gather the children to process the activity. Ask them how they liked helping to set up. Then ask, "Why do you think setting up for coffee hour is an important contribution to the life of the congregation?" Allow some comments. Then say, in your own words:

What would it be like if , after the service and RE program, all the people and families just left the church immediately? What would they miss? What are some of the benefits of having a coffee hour?

If the children have not voiced it already, discuss the importance of socializing and getting to know other members of the congregation. Coffee hour is the time when visitors can meet members and talk with the minister and religious educator. It is also a time when children and adults can be together.

## **Including All Participants**

If the coffee hour location is not fully accessible and any children cannot easily get there, consider asking for coffee hour to be relocated.

A child with limited mobility could be in charge of opening the packages and arranging the food on plates for other children to take to the tables.

## **WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 11: STORY: THE MOST GENEROUS GIFT**

Inspired by "The Widow's Mite," a parable from Christian scripture.

*Read or tell the story.*

In a little village near Jerusalem, a long time ago, there was an old woman who didn't have much money. She grew her own fruit and vegetables and had a chicken that gave her eggs.

One day, she was walking down the road when she saw two copper pieces on the ground. They looked like pennies, but together they were worth even less than one penny.

She put them in her pocket. "I will buy a piece of bread with this," she thought.

A few days later, she heard from her neighbors that a teacher named Jesus would be speaking in a worship service at a nearby temple. She thought it might be interesting to go to the service and listen to this teacher.

When she got to the temple, many people had gathered to hear Jesus. Some people she recognized, and some she did not know at all. Some said "Hello" to the old woman and a man moved over so she could sit on a bench with him and his family.

At the service, she prayed and listened to Jesus speak. She found herself feeling full of love and wonder.

*[You may wish to ask the children:*

*What do you think she heard that made her feel full of love?*

*What would make you feel of love?*

*Have you ever felt full of love here in our congregation? When?]*

There came a part of the service when Jesus asked people to donate money to support his ministry. There were people who were very rich and they donated a lot of money. The old woman reached into her pocket and found the two copper pieces, the only money she had in the world. She walked up to the donation box and put in one of the pieces, half of all the money she had.

*[Ask the children:*

*Why do you think she did that?]*

Jesus saw the old woman put her coin in the box, and he knew what she had shared.

He told the people assembled that her gift was more special than any of the gifts given by the rich people

there. She had given half of all the money she had. Jesus encouraged people to be generous always. To be generous not only with money, but also to be generous with their hearts.



## **FIND OUT MORE**

In *Creating Congregations of Generous People* (The Alban Institute, 1998), Michael Durrall gives guidance and action steps for intentional stewardship in the congregational setting.

# SESSION 12: THE GIFT OF ACCEPTANCE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*"When you find peace within yourself, you become the kind of person who can live at peace with others." — Peace Pilgrim, born Mildred Lisette Norman, an American pacifist, and peace activist*

This session introduces the intangible gift of acceptance, a particularly important gift because it makes sharing other intangible gifts possible.

Unitarian Universalists are proud of our tradition of accepting people marginalized by other communities. Our congregations strive to welcome people who have felt unwelcome in other faith communities, perhaps because of their sexual orientation or their rejection of religious doctrine. Unitarian Universalists explicitly embrace and value people who stand outside the mainstream in order to honor to their own truths and heartfelt beliefs.

Children can relate to the idea of "acceptance" on a personal, concrete level through their experiences of feeling accepted and accepting others. The simplicity of a child's understanding is not superficial, but deeply rooted in our Universalist heritage that includes the belief — heretical in its time — in a divine force which accepts each of us as we are. Built into our faith, too, is the belief that acceptance of others begins with acceptance of self.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the intangible gift of acceptance
- Illustrate the importance of belonging to a faith community that is accepting.
- Affirm our fourth Principle of free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- Affirm our first Principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Demonstrate that every person has valuable gifts to offer
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Reflect on a story about animals that are deemed unworthy by their owners, but are redeemed by acceptance in a group

- Create self-portraits that illustrate how everyone is the same and different
- Engage in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals with a focus on how these acts express a sharing of spirit.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story – Brementown Musicians	10
Activity 3: On the Road to Brementown Role Play	10
Activity 4: Self Portraits	15
Activity 5: How Are We the Same? How Are We Different?	10
Faith in Action: Musical Pride Parade – Anyone Can Make Music	varies
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Make a Unique Creature	20
Alternate Activity 2: Learning about the Platypus	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Many people choose Unitarian Universalism after rejecting — or being rejected by — the faith community of their childhood. Some people in an interfaith relationship look for a community that embraces and affirms all faith traditions. Think about why you chose Unitarian Universalism. Did you "try" more than one faith community? Were you born into the faith and chose to stay? What role do feelings of acceptance play in your choice?

Think about times when you felt accepted, and when you didn't. How willing have you been to accept others in your faith community? What are your expectations for others to accept you? Bring your most positive and nurturing experiences concerning acceptance in Unitarian Universalism with you to this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Penny jar, created in Session 11

#### Preparation for Activity

- Set the penny jar on a table near the entrance to the room.

#### Description of Activity

If you started a penny jar in Session 11, The Gift of Stewardship, invite children as they arrive to donate any coins they have brought. You might ask, "Who has remembered the gift of stewardship today?"

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. You may say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See Session 1 for instructions.)
- Leader Resource 1, Platypus Picture

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Platypus Picture, and place it in the Wonder Box.

#### Description of Activity

With the children still in a circle, ask them to guess what could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then, open the box, take out the platypus and say something like:

Does anyone know what this is? Have you seen this someplace before?

The children may recognize the animal as a platypus; if not, allow a few guesses. Then say:

This is a platypus. What do you notice about this animal?

Elicit responses. Affirm that a platypus is furry and has a duck bill and webbed feet. It is unlike any other animal on earth. Each of its features is crucial for its survival, even though we may consider the animal "funny" or "strange." Say:

Our Unitarian Universalist congregation is open to anyone who wants to try to live by our Principles. In fact, our first Principle says that every person is important. Even if someone were a platypus, if they believed that every person — and platypus — is important, they could certainly be part of our congregation. It's nice to know that everyone who wants to be here can belong.

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE BREMENTOWN MUSICIANS (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, [The Bremontown Musicians](#) (included in this document)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it or read it aloud to the group.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Read or tell the story.

## ACTIVITY 3: ON THE ROAD TO BREMENTOWN ROLE PLAY (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Percussion instruments for all participants
- "Animal ears" headbands or another simple costume prop for a donkey, a cat, a rooster and a dog

### Preparation for Activity

- Gather drums, shakers, rattles and other percussion instruments.
- Make or obtain "animal ears" or other props such as a flowery hat for the donkey, a dog bone for the dog, etc.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children:

Now that you have heard the story, can some of you pretend to be the musicians?

Invite the first few volunteers to play the roles of Donkey, Dog, Cat, and Rooster. Give them the props you have brought, and have them choose a percussion instrument. Then say:

Now we're going to see what happened after the robbers went away. The Brementown Musicians were very happy making music in their cabin. Animals all around heard about this place and sometimes a new animal came along who wanted to join them.

Invite the children who want to take part in music-making to say what kind of animal they want to be and what instrument they want to play. Make sure they know they can simply use their voice and make their animal's sound. Once all the children who want to have joined, invite the "musicians" to prepare a concert tune. You might suggest "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or another song they all know. Allow the children to make music as they wish.

## ACTIVITY 4: SELF PORTRAITS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Large roll of paper
- Optional: 11x17-inch sheets of drawing or construction paper in various shades of brown

- Color pencils, pastels and/or markers, including colors that represent eye and hair colors of children in the group
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors

### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a large roll of paper such as butcher paper, paper for wrapping parcels, or the paper for children's easels. Note that if you use white paper, most children will need to spend a lot of time coloring to accurately represent their skin. Plain brown paper is a more neutral choice that will allow all the children to focus on details such as hair, eyes and clothing.
- Optional: For head-and-shoulders self portraits, provide 11x17-inch paper in a variety of shades of brown so children can select a color they think is accurate.
- Decide whether the children will create whole-body self-portraits or head-and-shoulder portraits and plan accordingly.
- Set out art materials on the work tables and/or the floor.
- Invite a few adult or youth volunteers to help trace the children's outlines.

### Description of Activity

The children will be making self-portraits. Have each child lay down on the paper and cut a sheet a bit longer than the child is tall. An adult or youth can trace the person's body. Or, if using construction paper, help children outline a head and shoulders. Invite the children to draw their own features and clothing as accurately as possible.

Co-leaders and volunteers should also make a self portrait if they will participate in the next Activity 5, How Are We Different? How Are We the Same?

### Including All Participants

If mobility issues prevent a child from lying down, allow all participants to choose to draw a head-and-shoulders self portrait instead of a whole-body portrait.

## ACTIVITY 5: HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT? HOW ARE WE THE SAME? (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Self portraits from Activity 4

### Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Identify a wall space in your meeting room or elsewhere to display the portraits. Invite children and parents to create the display.

## Description of Activity

This activity engages participants to affirm ways they are different and the same. Have the children form a circle, each holding their self portrait. Say:

Now that we have drawn our self portraits, we are going to use them to help us notice ways we are the same, and different. As we go around the circle, you will look at your own self portrait and the one done by the person standing on your right. See if you can tell us one thing the same and one thing that is different. You can pass if you don't want to answer. I will begin.

Hold your own self-portrait next to the one done by the child on your right, so everyone can see both. Model observing a very basic similarity, such as "We both have eyes (or noses, or hair, or hands)," or "We both drew ourselves smiling." Model a difference that can be clearly seen from the self-portraits, such as "My eyes are brown and Julie's eyes are blue," or "I have brown skin and Benjamin's skin is lighter and he has freckles."

As you go around the circle, prompt children to begin with a similarity ("We both... "). Affirm in a value-free way the similarities and, especially, the differences that are mentioned: "That's right, George, your hair is curly and Margaret has straight hair in a ponytail." "Yes, Liam has a scar on his face and no glasses, and Anna wears glasses and does not have a scar on her face. You both have brown eyes."). Thank each child for their good work at noticing similarities and differences.

Be careful to rephrase any observations that come from assumptions or knowledge that cannot be gleaned from the self-portraits. For example, if a child says, "We both have two ears, but I look like my mom and Jimmy is adopted," you might ask, "Hmm. I can't see that in your two self-portraits. You both have two ears, yes, and I notice that Jimmy has a striped shirt on in his picture and you are wearing a tank top."

## Variations

If you have time and the children are still engaged with comparing their self portraits, count off "ones" and "twos," ask all the "ones" to move to a new place in the circle, and go around again. Another variation is to ask a volunteer to hold up their self portrait, and invite others to name a similarity and a difference between the volunteer's self portrait and their own.

End the activity by affirming that accepting other people means we have to notice how they are the same as us as well as different. Tell the children,

We accept ourselves, just as we are, with our brown hair, blonde hair, blue eyes, brown eyes, green shoes, or no shoes at all. And these are all beautiful self portraits.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Leader Resource 1, [Platypus Picture](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Display the Wonder Box poster in the meeting space.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Print out Leader Resource 1, Platypus Picture
- Customize, print out, and photocopy Taking It Home for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle and show them the Wonder Box poster. Explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us of our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the picture of the platypus to the poster. You may say:

Today we talked about the gift of acceptance. We accept ourselves and each other. We also appreciate the gifts that each of us offers.

Invite some comments about what the children learned today.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember how important it is for us, as Unitarian Universalists, to learn how to accept ourselves so that we really understand how to accept others. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either

side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — Acceptance!"

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: MUSICAL PRIDE PARADE — ANYONE CAN MAKE MUSIC

### Materials for Activity

- Percussion instruments for all participants
- Optional: "Animal ears" headbands or other simple costume prop for a donkey, a cat, a rooster and a dog

### Preparation for Activity

- Arrange with your religious educator, minister or lay worship leaders for the children to make a scheduled appearance during worship to present a musical pride parade, perhaps as a "Story for All Ages."
- Gather drums, shakers, rattles and other percussion instruments for all the children to distribute to some congregants if you wish.
- Gather the animal props for the children to represent the Brementown Musicians, such as a flowery hat for Donkey, a dog bone for Dog, etc.

### Description of Activity

The children will lead a musical pride parade as a "Story for All Ages" or as another segment of congregational worship. They will demonstrate with pride that anyone can make music, especially together.

You can have the children make music to accompany the chalice-lighting words you use each time you meet in Wonderful Welcome. Or, have the children perform the refrain from the story, The Brementown Musicians:

On the road to Brementown

Musicians they would be.

Adapt the refrain for your own congregation or community:

On the road to First Parish Malden ,

Musicians we will be.

Or, the group can make up lyrics and music of their own — as long as it is easy for the children to teach and lead the congregation comfortably.

Introduce the children by explaining that the Wonderful Welcome group learned about the intangible gift of

acceptance and how important it is for Unitarian Universalists. Tell the congregation that the children heard the story, "The Brementown Musicians," and had a chance to have a musical band of their own. If some children are dressed as Donkey, Cat, Dog and Rooster, introduce them and invite them to show their special sounds.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*"When you find peace within yourself, you become the kind of person who can live at peace with others." — Peace Pilgrim, born Mildred Lisette Norman, an American pacifist and peace activist*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children explored the intangible gift of acceptance — a cornerstone of Unitarian Universalist faith, yet a gift that UUs of all ages probably need practice understanding and giving. Unitarian Universalists are proud of our tradition of accepting people who have been marginalized by other communities. Our congregations strive to welcome people who have felt unwelcome in other faith communities, perhaps because of their sexual orientation or their rejection of religious doctrine. Unitarian Universalism explicitly embraces and values people who stand outside the mainstream in order to honor their own truths and heartfelt beliefs.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** what it means to accept people in our families. Discuss what you have in common and ways that you differ. At this age, you can point out differences such as who likes pasta plain and who likes it with sauce. If there are significant physical or ability differences in your family, talk about these, too. Talk about how acceptance of our differences helps in family relationships. Present acceptance as meaning accepting ways we are different from others, as well as accepting ways others are different from us. Realize that your child is noticing physical, familial and other kinds of diversity among their peers.

The children made self-portraits in today's session and observed physical differences between themselves and their peers. Help them process their feelings about physical diversity.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

### **A FAMILY GAME**

Play the Same Game. Invite each person to take a turn and name someone they think is very different from themselves. Then, other family members list all the ways they notice the first player and the person they named are the same. Take turns naming a person everyone in the family knows. After naming that person, list all the ways you are the same. Each person thinks of someone. Some of the issues that may come up may be diversity in skin color, size, income, gender and many others. Take issues as they arise as teachable moments to affirm acceptance. If someone makes a comment about another's weight being too much, affirm that acceptance means knowing we are different and keep the focus on how we are the same.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: MAKE A UNIQUE CREATURE (20 minutes)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Modeling dough in various colors
- Optional: Construction paper and/or plain paper plates, and markers

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Set modeling clay on work tables.
- Optional: Arrange to display the children's unique creatures on a table in your meeting room or in a common area of the congregation.

### **Description of Activity**

Invite children to use the modeling dough to create an animal with parts that are useful. Tell them their creature can be a real animal, but doesn't have to be. It can be a creation of their imagination.

Walk around and ask each child what their creature is called and how it functions. You may wish to give each child a sheet of construction paper and/or a paper plate to display or transport their creation. Encourage the children to invent names for their creatures and help them write the names on the construction paper or paper plate. Invite volunteers to share about their unique creatures.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEARNING ABOUT THE PLATYPUS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Preparation for Activity**

Gather books, pictures and information about the platypus. If you have access to a computer during the session, plan to share multimedia resources. Your local library may have *Platypus!* by Ginjer L. Clarke, illustrated by Paul Mirocha ( New York : Random House, 2004), as well as other books.

- Here are some online sources:
  - A YouTube [clip of real platypuses](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNoQvJlmGdk) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNoQvJlmGdk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNoQvJlmGdk))
  - Factual information and a simple, annotated line-drawing on the [Enchanted Learning website](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals/platypus/Duckbillprintout.shtml) (at [www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals/platypus/Duckbillprintout.shtml](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals/platypus/Duckbillprintout.shtml))
  - A comprehensive U.K. website, [The Complete Platypus](http://www.platypus.org.uk/) (at [www.platypus.org.uk/](http://www.platypus.org.uk/))
  - On the B.B.C. website — information and images in both its [Mammals — Up Close](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals/mammals/up_close/) (at [www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals/mammals/up\\_close/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals/mammals/up_close/)) and [Wildlife](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/wildfacts/factfiles/681.shtml) (at [www.bbc.co.uk/nature/wildfacts/factfiles/681.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/wildfacts/factfiles/681.shtml)) sections, including video of a platypus searching for food

### **Description of Activity**

Lead a learning session about the platypus based on information and materials you have gathered. The platypus is a mammal which mostly lives in the water, native only to the eastern Australian continent. Point out the animal's features and what they are used for.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 12: STORY – THE BREMENTOWN MUSICIANS

The story, "The Bremen Town Musicians," was told by the brothers Grimm in Germany, in the early 1800s. The version in this session comes from Gail Forsyth-Vail's book, [\*Stories In Faith: Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales\*](#) (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2007).

*Read or tell the story.*

A farmer once had a donkey who was growing old and unable to work. Thinking that it was no longer worthwhile to feed the old donkey, the farmer became determined to put an end to that donkey. The donkey, sensing that something was amiss, ran away. The donkey was thinking they would go to Bremen and become a musician. The donkey was:

On the road to Brementown.

A musician they would be.

After traveling a ways, the donkey came upon a tired dog lying beside the road and panting. "What are you doing lying there, my friend?" the donkey asked.

"Alas, I am old and weak and can no longer hunt, so my owner decided to do away with me. I ran away, but now I don't know how to make my living. The only thing I can still do is bark."

"Well," said the donkey, "you and your bark can join me. I'm off to become a town musician in Bremen ." And when the dog joined the donkey, they were:

On the road to Brementown.

Musicians they would be.

It was not long before the two came upon a cat sitting in the road, looking mournful. "What's the matter with you?" said the donkey. "Why are you looking so sad?"

"Oh," meowed the cat. "How can I be cheerful when my life is in danger? I am growing old and would rather lie about by the fire than chase mice, so my owners resolved to drown me. I ran away from them, but I don't know what I shall do to earn my food."

"Well," said the donkey, "you are certainly a good singer! Come and join us. We're going to Bremen to become town musicians." The cat quickly agreed, and they were:

*On the road to Brementown.*

*Musicians they would be.*

Soon enough, they came upon a rooster perched on a farmer gate, screaming for all he was worth. "Cock-a-

doodle-doo! Woe is me! Tomorrow they will put me in the soup pot. Whatever am I to do?"

"You can certainly add something to a concert," said the donkey. The donkey invited the rooster to join the group. In short order, they were:

On the road to Brementown.

Musicians they would be.

The animals could not reach the town in one day, so they decided to settle in the forest for the night. The donkey and dog lay under a tree, and the cat in the branches. The rooster flew to the topmost branch and had a look around. "There must be a house not a far way off," said the rooster, "for I can see a small light."

Hungry and cold, all four agreed to go and see if they might find food and shelter. When they arrived at the cabin, they arranged themselves to peek in the window. The donkey put their front hooves against the side of the cabin; the dog climbed on the donkey's back. The cat sat on the dog's shoulders and the rooster flew up to sit on the cat's head. When he looked inside, the rooster reported seeing some robbers sitting and making merry in front of the fire. There was a table spread with all manner of good food.

The foursome made a plan for getting rid of the robbers. At the donkey's signal, all four of the Brementown musicians began to sing. The donkey brayed, the dog barked, the cat meowed, and the rooster screamed. The frightened robbers ran from the place, leaving the wonderful feast to the four friends, who happily ate their fill and settled down to sleep.

After a time, the most courageous of the robbers decided to come back. All was quiet now. Maybe the robbers had left too hastily. The robber crept cautiously into the dark cabin. There the robber saw the cat's open eyes, looking like two live coals. The robber took out a match to strike, and the cat sprang at the robber's face and gave it a big scratch. The robber ran for the back door, and the dog jumped up and bit that robber in the leg. The donkey helped the robber cross the yard with a hefty kick, and all the while the rooster screamed, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

The robber returned, shaken, to their companions and hastily explained what had happened in the cabin: "A horrid witch scratched me with their bony fingers, then a killer with a knife stabbed me, a monster with a club beat me, and the devil sat on top of the cabin crying all the while calling, "Bring the rascal here!"

The robbers never dared to go back to the cabin again, and the four friends remain together to this day, making music in the woods.



**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 12:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: PLATYPUS PICTURE**



## FIND OUT MORE

### The Brementown Musicians

The story, "The Bremen Town Musicians," was told by the brothers Grimm in Germany, in the early 1800s.

Read or listen to [a version told by the Grimm brothers](#) (at [www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/)) on the National Geographic website. The version in this session comes from Gail Forsyth-Vail's book, *Stories In Faith: Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2007).

### The Platypus

A U.K. website, [The Complete Platypus](#) (at [www.platypus.org.uk/](http://www.platypus.org.uk/)), includes a story called "Why the Platypus is Unique," which begins like this:

Many years ago there was a group of Australian animals arguing about who was the most unique. The magpie started by saying that [they

were] the most unique because [they] had the best colours, which were black and white, and that [they] could fly to the moon and back. The emu had a different opinion. [They] believed [they were] the most unique animal ...

On the same website find a variety of news and information about the platypus, including three recommendations for children's books: *The Adventures of Softbill the Strong* by E. Stodart (Sydney: Envirobook Publishing, 1997), *Platypus* by D. Fanning (Wantirna South, Victoria: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), and *The Platypus* by P. Reilly (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1991).

Find information about the platypus and a simple, annotated line-drawing on the [Enchanted Learning website](#) (at [www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals/platypus/Duckbillprintout.shtml](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals/platypus/Duckbillprintout.shtml)).

# SESSION 13: THE GIFT OF LEARNING TOGETHER

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*'No problem can be solved by the same consciousness that created it. We need to see the world anew.'* – Albert Einstein

This session introduces the intangible gift of learning together. As Unitarian Universalists, we use this gift in affirming and promoting our seven Principles. We cannot strive for justice, equity and compassion in human relations (second Principle), nor work toward the goal of world community (sixth Principle), without being willing to learn what others feel and need. To pursue a free and responsible search for truth and meaning (fourth Principle), and to accept one another and encourage one another's spiritual growth (third Principle), we must be open to what we can learn from one another's experiences, as well as from teachings of other peoples and faiths.

Community creates opportunities to learn with others. This session's story illustrates how a rooster learned something about himself and realized his potential through the support and care of his community. At their best, Unitarian Universalist communities challenge members to bring out the best in each other.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the intangible gift of learning together
- Convey that everyone, regardless of age, has something to teach and something to learn — an affirmation of the first Unitarian Universalist Principle: the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Demonstrate that living our UU Principles depends on our willingness to learn together
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand why learning from one another is an important and valuable gift that helps both individuals and communities

- Practice learning together
- Identify skills they have and teach those skills to their peers
- Engage in opening and closing rituals as a sharing of spirit.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — The Rooster Who Learned to Crow	10
Activity 3: What Do You Know How to Do? We Can Learn It, Too!	15
Activity 4: Learning to Weave Wool	20
Faith in Action: Each One, Teach One	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Scavenger Hunt	20
Alternate Activity 2: All About Roosters and Farms	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Do you like to learn? Always? It can be hard to hear and process new information, to become proficient at a new skill, or to acknowledge when we need others' help to learn something. Most of us can think of times when we were not willing to be learners, yet, learning with and from others is a powerful tool to help us put our Unitarian Universalist Principles into practice. In this session, children experience learning together and why it is an important and valuable gift to share. If you are open, you will be one of the learners today. Take a few deep breaths, and find in yourself your willingness to share the gift of learning together.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Penny jar, created in Session 11: The Gift of Stewardship

#### Preparation for Activity

- Set the penny jar on a table near the entrance to the room.

#### Description of Activity

If you started a penny jar in Session 11: The Gift of Stewardship, invite the children to donate the coins they have brought. You might ask, "Who has remembered the gift of stewardship today?"

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint, and post.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Explain that you start each session with a ritual. You may say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See instructions in Session 1.)
- A wind-up or battery-powered alarm clock

#### Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you know how to make the alarm clock sound. Place the clock inside the Wonder Box.

#### Description of Activity

With the children still in a circle around the chalice, ask them to guess what could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take guesses. Open the box, take out the alarm clock, and activate its sound. Then say:

Who knows what this is? Who has one at home?

Affirm that it is an alarm clock. Say, in your own words:

An alarm clock makes a sound that wakes everyone up in time to start the day. Well, on a farm, one of the animals has a job like an alarm clock. Who knows which animal?

Affirm that on a farm, a rooster — a male chicken — crows and wakes the other animals. Ask the group what sound a rooster makes and allow some "cock-a-doodle-doing." Then say:

I see that most of you know how to make that sound. How did you learn how to do it?

Allow some brief discussion. Then tell the group:

Today we will hear a story about a rooster who was asked to do his wake-up job before he knew how to make that sound. Just like you, the rooster figured it out by learning together with his friends. The gift of learning together is our intangible gift today, and we will find out why it was such an important gift for a rooster and his friends to share.

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE ROOSTER WHO LEARNED TO CROW (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, [The Rooster Who Learned to Crow](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it or read it aloud to the group.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Read or tell the story.

## ACTIVITY 3: WHAT DO YOU KNOW HOW TO DO? WE CAN LEARN IT, TOO! (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Items children can use to demonstrate their skills

### Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Gather "props" to help children demonstrate skills they are likely to have at this age, such as a ball, a yoyo, small musical instruments to play, newsprint for writing or drawing, or shoelaces to tie. A tumbling mat may be useful. If the weather is nice, consider doing this activity outdoors, especially if you have access to playground equipment.

### Description of Activity

The children will identify a skill they have, and teach it to the others in the group.

Gather the group in a circle with "props" nearby. Say:

Each of you will have a chance to show us something you can do. Then, you can try to teach it to us and we will try to learn it. If we already know how to do something like it, we still want to learn your way.

Volunteer to go first. Model a skill that is simple and silly, to make it clear that any and all skills are welcome — for example, use your fingers to stretch your mouth wide and make a scary face, stretch your arms up and then touch your toes, or cross your eyes. Then walk around the circle, showing how you do it and giving advice so others can try it. If you have time, add a step: ask the children, in pairs, to help one another learn the skill they have just seen.

Ask for volunteers to share a skill, or go around the circle. Invite participants to use the props, if needed. Affirm every child for sharing a skill and affirm individuals (not just the group) for helping one another learn and for trying to do something new.

When all have shared at least one skill bring everyone back into a circle and ask (or help) the children to count off. Then say:

[Number of participants] is how many we are together today. Because we learned together, every one of us now knows how to do [same

number] different skills. Thanks to each of you for showing what you can do and thanks to everyone for sharing the gift of learning together.

### Including All Participants

Limited mobility, a learning disability, or developmental delays in fine or gross motor skills are just some reasons a particular child may not be able to learn a particular skill on the spot. Some children may have very simple skills to demonstrate. Be very clear that all skills have value. Keep the focus on being willing to share what they know how to do and being open to learning from and with one another instead of proficiency.

## ACTIVITY 4: LEARNING TO WEAVE WOOL (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- For each participant
  - Four pieces of yarn, each one 36" long
  - Four drinking straws
  - A ball of yarn
  - A piece of stiff cardboard, at least the size of an index card
- Extra yarn
- Scissors
- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [Wool-weaving Illustration](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you understand instructions for the craft, which comes from the book, *Animal Crackers* (page 37, "Wool Weaving"), available from [Heifer International](#) (at [www.heifer.org/](http://www.heifer.org/)). Leader Resource 2, Wool-weaving Illustration, shows how to set up each weaving station.
- Identify a doorknob, chair arm, hook, or similar place for each child to attach their weaving. Make sure every child will have a place to sit comfortably and weave.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, the children have to learn together in order to achieve a group goal — to finish their woven belts. This craft requires different kinds of skills at which different children excel, such as fine motor, perseverance, neatness, understanding (or giving) spoken directions and demonstration, and creativity. As a group, the children will succeed (that is, all finish) when they pool their knowledge and skill.

Give each child four pieces of yarn, four straws, a ball of yarn and a cardboard "shuttle." Help them set up a

weaving workspace. Refer to Leader Resource 2 for instructions and a demonstration for the children to:

- Thread each of their four pieces of yarn through a straw and divide yarn in pairs.
- Knot pairs together and loop both pairs over a doorknob or hook.
- Push all the straws against the knot. To anchor, wrap the loose yarn ends around the slit cardboard.
- Wind ball of yarn onto cardboard shuttle; weave over and under on straws until they are covered.
- Push weaving away from you; pull straws toward you.

Guide the children to continue until their woven piece is long enough to make a belt. Help them remove the straws and knot the yarn ends.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster (Session 1)
- Leader Resource 1, [Rooster](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Display the Wonder Box poster in the meeting space.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show them the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the picture of the rooster to the poster. You might say:

Learning together is the intangible gift we talked about today. What are some of the things we learned together today?

Allow comments.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember how we share the intangible gift of learning together with one another. We are grateful that we know how to bring these gifts

home to share with our families.. Let us say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — "learning together!"

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: EACH ONE, TEACH ONE

### Description of Activity

Arrange for the children to learn something new together. You might invite a volunteer from the congregation or community to lead an arts and crafts activity, teach the children how to plant seedlings, or lead a yoga or dance session. The specific skill is not as important as the process in which the children have opportunities to help one another learn it. If you wish, schedule a second meeting for the children to teach the same skill to another group of children, family members, or an intergenerational gathering of people in your congregation. Invite the same volunteer to lead; this time, engage the children as assistant teachers.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell 'em, 'Certainly I can!' Then get busy and find out how to do it. — Theodore Roosevelt*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children explored the intangible gift of learning together. They heard a story about a rooster that did not know how to do its job—waking up the farmer and the other animals. The other farm animals attempt to teach the rooster what to do. Ultimately, the rooster realizes that he knew how to crow all along, but he needed his friends to help him learn. The children learned a new weaving skill and experienced learning from and with each other.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** what it means to learn together. What are some of the things you learn together as a family? What else would you like to learn together?

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...** Choose an activity that the family has never tried before and learn about it together. For example, if you have never cooked as a family, choose a recipe that could involve all members of the family. You may want to try to weave something together. Use the instructions from Activity 4 of this session to make a belt together. If you give the belt to an extended family member or a friend, make sure you let that person know they are also receiving an intangible gift — the gift of learning together.

### A FAMILY ADVENTURE

Visit a working farm in your area. There might be a dairy barn or goat farm near you that offers tours. When you go, find out how the different parts of the farm work together.

### FAMILY DISCOVERY

Younger and younger children are accustomed to doing research online and this is a great way to learn together. Sit down with your child(ren) at a computer and research a topic together. You might investigate places where you all want to travel, animals you have always wondered about, a sport you would like to learn, the history of your own family's ethnic group(s), or upcoming schedules of family activities in your local area. If you find out about a course you can all take together, such as a local ecology or an ethnic dance course, consider signing up!

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: SCAVENGER HUNT (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1, [Scavenger Hunt Questions](#) (included in this document) , for each pair or small group
- Pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Enlist the help of the junior and/or senior youth group in your congregation. Try to pair each child with a youth or have each youth lead a group of two or three children; if you do not have enough youth, enlist adult volunteers.
- Review Handout 1, Scavenger Hunt Questions. If necessary, adapt it so all the questions apply to your congregation. Print out copies.
- Ask your religious educator for guidance about scheduling this activity and arrange youth participation with youth leaders. To avoid disrupting the worship service, consider doing this activity during coffee hour.

### Description of Activity

Pair each child, or several children, with an adult or youth for a scavenger hunt for information about your congregation. Give each pair or small group a copy of Handout 1, Scavenger Hunt Questions. Tell the participants:

Today we will learn together about our congregation by going on a scavenger hunt. Does anyone know what you do on a scavenger hunt? Well, you find things from a list. Sometimes you have to collect things, and sometimes you have to find out information. Today, this hunt will be to find out information that we will share with each other when we get back. We will have 15 minutes to find out this information. There are ground rules: the first is to remember our group covenant and the second is to be considerate of others by being as quiet as we can, politely asking questions, and not running. Have fun and remember to work with your partner(s).

When everyone returns, read aloud the questions, one at a time, and invite answers. See if everyone was able to find out all the answers. If an answer is disputed, use the situation to learn together the best answer. There is no need to award material prizes. Instead, highlight that the fun of this activity was the opportunity to learn with and from others. You might also want to recognize the person in the congregation who supplied the most answers to the group.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: ALL ABOUT ROOSTERS AND FARMS (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Label a sheet of newsprint, "Roosters and Farms," and post.
- Optional: Gather information about roosters and farms. Try the [Vegan Peace](http://www.veganpeace.com/animal_facts/Chickens.htm) (at [www.veganpeace.com/animal\\_facts/Chickens.htm](http://www.veganpeace.com/animal_facts/Chickens.htm)) website, or go to the [Knowledge Bears website](http://www.kbears.com/farm/rooster/print.html) (at [www.kbears.com/farm/rooster/print.html](http://www.kbears.com/farm/rooster/print.html)) for many helpful facts about roosters, as well as other farm animals and farms.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather children where they can all see the posted newsprint and say, in your own words:

I know a little bit about roosters and farms, but I could learn a lot more if I could hear what you know. I bet each of you knows a bit, and together we know quite a lot. Let us share what we each know.

Start the process by telling the children something you know such as, roosters do not fly, or roosters eat seeds. Then ask for volunteers to contribute information they know about roosters and farms. Write their contributions on newsprint. When all have contributed, read or ask a child who is a confident reader to read the list aloud. Point out that together, the group knows a lot about roosters and farms. Tell the children that the more practice we have listening to what other people have to say, the easier and more fun it is to share the gift of learning together.



## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 13: STORY: THE ROOSTER WHO LEARNED TO CROW

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

*Read or tell the story.*

There once was a farm in a valley that was practically perfect in every way, except that it had no rooster to crow at the crack of dawn, and so everyone was always late getting out of bed. The dog never woke up in time to fetch the newspaper for the farmer. The farmer never woke up in time to milk the cows before the sun rose. The cows never woke up in time to eat the grass when it was still wet with morning dew, which is when it is most tasty. Everyone was always late on that farm, and so everyone was always a bit cranky in the morning, and sometimes that crankiness lasted all day.

Until one day, a chicken arrived at the farm. Everyone was excited because she had four little yellow balls of fluff peeping and cheeping behind her. "Uh, pardon me, Mrs. Chicken," snuffled the pig, who was always exceedingly polite. "But would one of your chicks there happen to be, that is, might one be, a he?"

"Why, yes," answered Mrs. Chicken, and she pointed with the tip of her wing to the last chick in line. "That's my son."

"A rooster chicken!" squealed the youngest of the lambs, and all the other animals squealed (or whinnied or quacked or oinked), too. "We won't be late anymore! We have a rooster on the farm!"

But they didn't. Not yet. They had to wait for the chicks to grow up. And grow they did, from little yellow balls of fluff with legs to bigger yellow balls of fluff with legs. As the days passed, all the young chickens grew fine white feathers and bright yellow feet, and then — finally — young Mr. Rooster Chicken began to grow long swooping feathers on his tail.

"A tail, a tail!" squealed the youngest of the lambs. "Soon you'll be old enough to crow!"

"You look very handsome today, young Mr. Rooster," snorted the pig, who was always exceedingly polite. "A very fine looking fowl, if I so may say."

"Thank you," said young Mr. Rooster, with a bob of his head and a quiver of his cockscomb, but then he walked away, his long tail feathers drooping and his cockscomb down, too.

"What's wrong?" asked his friend, the gray-and-white cat who lived in the barn.

"Oh, nothing."

"Something's wrong," said his other friend, the yellow duck who swam in the pond. The pig came over to listen, too.

"Well," said the young rooster, scratching in the dirt with his strong yellow toes, "everybody's waiting for me to grow up and crow. I'm doing the growing-up part all right, but . . ."

"But what?" asked the cat.

"But I don't know how to crow! I've never even heard a rooster. I don't know what I'm supposed to do!"

"We shall help you," announced the pig, who was always exceedingly helpful as well as exceedingly polite.

"We will?" asked the cat, with every single one of his eyebrow whiskers raised. "How?"

"Yes, how?" quacked the duck.

"We shall teach him," said the pig. "You have heard a rooster crow before, have you not, Mrs. Duck?"

"Yes, I have!" said the duck. "I can show you." She flew to the top of the chicken coop nearby. Then she folded her wings back, tilted her bill up, and crowed. "Quack-a-whack a-whack a-whack."

The cat crouched down and flattened his ears.

"Hmmm," said the pig. "Thank you, Mrs. Duck, though that's not perhaps

quite . . ."

"I hope not!" said the rooster, looking very much alarmed.

"I shall demonstrate," said the pig. "First, one must climb, though you will no doubt fly, to a high point ." The pig climbed to the top of the manure pile. "Then, tilt your head back — Mrs. Duck did that part quite well — clear your throat and . . . crow." The pig tilted his head back and cleared his throat. "Oink a-snuffle, oink a-snort!"

The cat closed his eyes and shook his head.

"Hmmp!" said the duck, not at all impressed.

"Yes, well . . ." The pig climbed down from the manure pile. "That is not quite, uh, that is . . . it does sound a bit . . . you understand . . . with a real rooster . . ."

"I'll show you," said the cat, and he leapt to the top of the fence and curled his tail around his toes. He washed one paw and looked up at the sky. "Meow a-meow-a-meow-a-meow."

"Hmmp!" said the duck.

"Hmmm," said the pig.

"Oh, dear," said the rooster, looking even more alarmed.

"Maybe another chicken," suggested the duck, and they went to fetch one of the hens. But all she managed was

"Cluck a-cluck a-cluck a-cluck!" The dog gave them  
"Woof a-woof a-woof a-woof!" The lamb went "Baa a-  
baa a-baa a-baa!"

The rooster sadly shook his head. "I'll never learn how to  
crow. I won't be any good at waking people up. Nobody  
will like me anymore."

"Sure we will!" said the cat. "I like you right now, and  
you've never crowed a day in your life." All the other  
animals agreed, with baas and moos and stomping of  
feet. "Besides," added the cat, "I don't want you waking  
me up. I like to sleep late."

"You will," said the rooster, as gloomy as a rainy day.

"I wonder," said the pig, "have you yourself ever tried to  
crow, Mr. Rooster?"

"Me?" said the rooster. "But . . ."

"You're more of a rooster than any of us," said the duck.

"And we'll like you no matter what you sound like," said  
the pig.

"Even if you don't make any sound at all!" said the cat.

And so the rooster decided to try. He flew up to the top  
of the chicken coop. He folded his wings back. He tilted  
his head. And he tried to make the same noises all his  
friends had tried to make before. Softly at first: "Cock-a-  
doodle-doo!" and then again, louder, "Cock-a-doodle-  
doo!" and then very loud indeed: "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

After that, no one had any doubt that young Mr. Rooster  
knew how to crow, not even young Mr. Rooster himself.

There is a farm in a valley that is practically perfect in  
every way. It even has a fine young rooster, who crows  
at the crack of dawn, and so everyone always gets out  
of bed exactly on time. The dog always wakes up in time  
to fetch the newspaper for the farmer. The farmer  
always wakes up in time to milk the cows before the sun  
rises. The cows always wake up in time to eat the grass  
when it is still wet with morning dew, which is when it is  
most tasty. Everyone is always wide awake on that farm,  
because they have a rooster whose friends helped him  
learn how to crow, just like this: "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

# WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 13: HANDOUT 1: SCAVENGER HUNT QUESTIONS

Read over all the questions. Ask yourselves:

- What do we need to learn?
- Who could teach us?

Then go find the people who can help. Write down the names of all the people who help the scavenger hunt by giving you information:

How old is our congregation? \_\_\_\_\_

How old is the building? \_\_\_\_\_

Has the building always belonged to our congregation? Who else has used this building?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where else has our congregation met? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Has our congregation ever changed its name? If yes, list the other name(s):

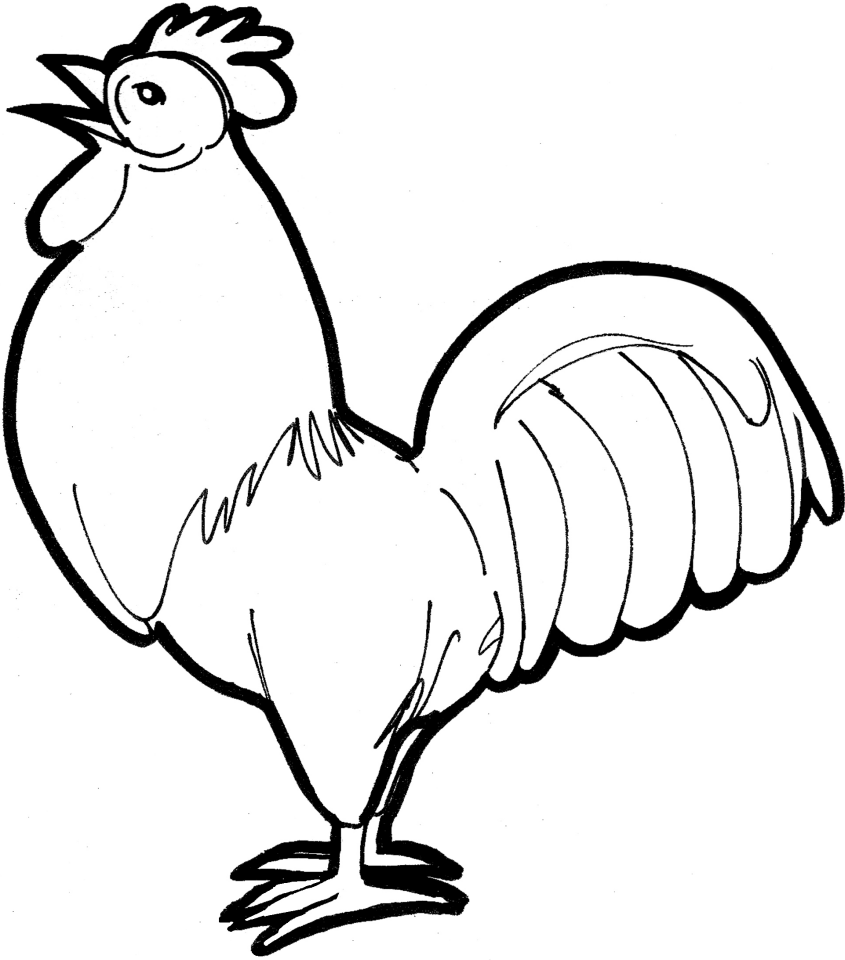
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who has been a member the longest? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is the congregation's board president? \_\_\_\_\_

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 13:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: ROOSTER**



## **WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 13: LEADER RESOURCE 2: WOOL-WEAVING ILLUSTRATION**

The craft, "Wool Weaving," appears in the book, *Animal Crackers*, copyright by and available from [Heifer International](#). Permission pending.

Wool Weaving

### *Materials*

Four lengths of 36" yarn, 4 drinking straws, ball of yarn, pieces of cardboard

### *Method*

1. Thread each piece of yarn through a straw; divide yarn in pairs.
2. Knot pairs together; loop over doorknob or hook; push straws against knot. To anchor, wrap yarn ends around slit cardboard.
3. Wind ball of yarn on to cardboard shuttle; weave over and under on straws until they are covered.
4. Push weaving away from you; pull straws toward you.
5. Continue until long enough to make a belt.
6. Remove straws; knot yarn ends.

## FIND OUT MORE

"A Lamp in Every Corner" is the title story of a [book by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer](#) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=707](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=707))

(Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004). Find more Unitarian Universalist stories here, along with suggestions for using them in worship and religious education programs.

# SESSION 14: THE GIFT OF SPIRIT

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Life becomes religious whenever we make it so: when some new light is seen, when some deeper appreciation is felt, when some larger outlook is gained, when some nobler purpose is formed, when some task is well done.*

— Sophia Lyon Fahs, Unitarian minister and religious educator

This session introduces the intangible gift of spirit, which we give and receive as members of a faith community when we worship together, celebrate together, and support and comfort one another. At its best, a Unitarian Universalist faith community nourishes all members with affirmation of their spirit and acceptance of their unique spiritual paths.

In this session, the children recognize that they each have their own spirit. They learn that when they bring their spirit into their faith community, they are sharing a gift. To many people, this communion of spirits is synonymous with the presence of God or the Spirit of Life.

In the story, A Lamp in Every Corner, people in a Transylvanian village build a church so they can come together for the purpose of sharing their spirit. When the building is complete, the individual lamps they carry to light the way to the church illuminate their gathering.

Think of the group of children as a faith community. Call attention to ways in which they share their spirit during the session. For example, Activity 3: Sharing Joys and Concerns, introduces a ritual that is common in Unitarian Universalism. You will point out that by being open in sharing their joys and supportive of others' concerns, the children give each other the gift of spirit.

Two of the alternate activities require individual photographs of each child in the group. If you plan to lead either of these activities, ask parents ahead of time to provide photos of their children, or arrange access to a digital camera and a photo printer or an instant camera and film.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the intangible gift of spirit
- Provide children with ways to share their spirit, such as singing together and sharing joys and concerns
- Demonstrate how we affirm one another's spirit and spiritual paths when we share our beliefs

and values, and support those of others, even if they are different

- Connect the intangible gift of spirit with the third Unitarian Universalist Principle: acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Experience themselves as people who can give and receive the intangible gift of spirit as they learn ways to do so
- Learn and sing the song, "This Little Light of Mine"
- Affirm each other's spirits and spiritual selves through the beliefs and values continuum game
- Engage in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, sharing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion, with a focus on how these acts express a sharing of spirit.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — "A Lamp in Every Corner"	10
Activity 3: Sharing Joys and Concerns	10
Activity 4: Singing "This Little Light of Mine"	5
Activity 5: "I Believe..." and "I Care about..." Continuum Game	5
Activity 6: Making a Chalice	15
Faith in Action: Sharing the Gift of Spirit with Our Congregation	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: UU Pen Pals	30
Alternate Activity 2: Sharing Our Spirit in Art	30
Alternate Activity 3: Singing "Sing When the Spirit Says Sing"	10

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Being a part of a faith community is a decision one makes as an adult. Whether or not you were born a Unitarian Universalist, it is now the faith community you have chosen. Take a moment and reflect on how, when and where you share the gift of spirit in your faith community.

How does your congregation share joys and concerns? If you are a small congregation, you may have an opportunity every Sunday to stand during the service and speak. If you are a larger congregation, what opportunities do you have to share your spirit with others? Perhaps you share your spirit in song, or by

volunteering your time, or by providing others with the attention, support or understanding they need.

Have there been times when you held back from sharing your joys and concerns, or in some other way resisted sharing your spirit? Children do not enter into community with the same "guards" as adults. They readily share their gift of spirit, even if they do not name it. Allow the gift of spirit the children share with you be part of the joy of this session's experience.

Think about the times you did feel your own spirit affirmed, times you have felt part of a spiritual community. Bring that positive and nurturing energy with you to this session.



## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Penny jar, created in Session 11: The Gift of Stewardship

#### Preparation for Activity

- Set the penny jar on a table near the entrance to the room.

#### Description of Activity

As you welcome arriving children, invite them to donate any coins they have brought. You might ask, "Who has remembered the gift of stewardship today?"

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. You may say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See Session 1 for instructions.)
- A chalice and/or a picture of a flaming chalice

#### Preparation for Activity

- Place the chalice inside the Wonder Box.

#### Description of Activity

Use the Wonder Box to activate participants' curiosity about today's intangible gift: the gift of spirit.

With the children still in a circle around the chalice, ask them to guess what could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then, open the box, take out the chalice, and say something like:

Does anyone know what this is? Have you seen this someplace, before?

The children should recognize the chalice from the sanctuary or their own group space. Say, in your own words:

Today we will talk about the gift of spirit. What does spirit mean?

Elicit responses. Affirm that spirit is something intangible which we share with one another in a faith community. Say:

Our Unitarian Universalist congregation is a faith community. When we are together here in Wonderful Welcome, we are a faith community. We share who we are, what we need, what we believe is important, and how we can help one another. All of that is part of our spirit.

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — A LAMP IN EVERY CORNER (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, [A Lamp in Every Corner](#) (included in this document)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it or read it aloud to the group.

#### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Read or tell the story.

## ACTIVITY 3: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Glass bowl, partly filled with water
- A washable marker
- Stones or marbles for all participants
- A small table
- A colorful cloth

### Preparation for Activity

- Make an altar/centering table by covering a table with a colorful cloth and placing the bowl in the center.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, children experience a common Unitarian Universalist ritual, the sharing of joys and concerns, as a demonstration of sharing the gift of spirit.

Gather the children around the bowl of water. Give each child a stone or marble.

Say:

When we share joys and concerns that are personal for us and when we listen to the joys and concerns of others, we are sharing the gift of spirit.

Ask a child to draw the level of water on the side of the glass bowl. Say:

Watch as each person shares some spirit. You will see how much spirit we are all sharing as the water starts to rise.

Go around the circle, inviting each child to come up to the bowl, say a joy or concern, and drop their stone in the water. You may need to explain:

Joys are things we are happy about. Concerns are things we are sad or worried about.

Some children may not want to voice a joy or concern; allow them to "pass." Thank each child for sharing the gift of spirit.

Now invite the children who did not share a spoken joy or concern to simply bring their stone to the water to add their spirit. Thank each child for sharing the gift of spirit. Then add one more stone, saying, "This is for the joys and concerns still in our hearts that we did not talk about."

Now have another child draw the water level with the marker. Ask the group, "What happened when we talked about our joys and concerns, when we listened to one another, and when we put in more stones for the

unspoken joys and concerns in our hearts?" Affirm the observation that the water rose in the bowl. Say:

You can see how when share the gift of spirit together, the water rises. The bowl is fuller. Look at all the spirit we shared!

## ACTIVITY 4: SINGING THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Percussion instruments

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the song, "This Little Light of Mine," Hymn 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, or enlist a volunteer to lead it.
- Optional: Write the lyrics on newsprint and post.
- Optional: Obtain percussion instruments for the children to use.

### Description of Activity

Children learn a common hymn.

Say to the group:

In some congregations, people light candles as they share joys and concerns. Here is a song about how every person's spirit is like a little light that is inside them. Our light shines when we contribute a part of ourselves. When we sing together, we contribute a part of ourselves — our voice. We will be sharing our inner light with each other when we sing this song.

Teach the song. Some children may already know it. Lead children in singing, with percussion instruments if you have them.

### Including All Participants

Some children may not like to sing. That is okay. Encourage those resistant to singing to use a percussion instrument or clap their hands. Thank everyone for sharing their spirit.

## ACTIVITY 5: "I BELIEVE... " AND "I CARE ABOUT... " CONTINUUM GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

Paper, markers and tape for simple signs

## Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have an open space where children can move to different places to form a loose line.
- Read the statements under "Description of Activity" and add your own.
- Make signs with words or pictures that indicate three opinion positions: "A Lot", "Sort Of" and "Not At All."

## Description of Activity

Participants demonstrate that sharing our beliefs is a form of sharing the gift of spirit.

Gather the children in the open space. Tell them:

When we come to be together in our Unitarian Universalist faith community, we have many ways we can share our spirit, even though we sometimes believe different things and care about different things.

Some people believe in God and some do not. Some people believe in fairies and some do not. Some people love dogs, some people love cats, some people love hamsters or fish, and some people do not like pets at all. In our Unitarian Universalist congregation, we respect everyone's beliefs. Sharing our spirit is about caring about one another even when we don't agree about what to believe. Let us see if we are willing to share our spirit with one another as we show some of the things we care about and believe.

Explain to the children that you will read some sentences and they will go and stand on an imaginary line that shows how they really feel about that statement. Point out the continuum and the signs indicating the opinions from "a lot" to "not at all." Show them where to stand if they believe in or care about something "a lot," "sort of," or "not at all." Remind them that anywhere in between the signs is okay. Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers. In fact, all their answers are the right answer for them. Then, read these statements and/or ones you have created and invite the children to move to a place on the continuum.

- I believe that dreams and wishes can come true.
- I care about video games.
- I believe in magical creatures.
- I care about keeping my bedroom clean.
- I believe that chocolate is the best candy.
- I care about getting lots of exercise every day.
- I believe that learning to swim is hard.

- I care about my toys.
- I believe in coming to church on Sunday.

You may ask for brief comments about why someone took the position they took, but avoid any arguments. Affirm all positions. Watch for put-downs or pressure to conform, and use such incidents as teachable moments to affirm each person's position, and our Third Principle: acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth.

## Including All Participants

Children this age are beginning to compare themselves with peers. In this activity, they are asked to publicly declare beliefs and feelings that may differ from others'. Do not allow a child to stand isolated as they move in response to the statements; have a co-leader take the same position, if needed.

## ACTIVITY 6: MAKING A CHALICE (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Small clay flower pots that come with detached saucers, for all participants
- Tea lights or LED/battery-operated candles for all participants
- Glue gun and glue sticks
- Colorful markers
- Newsprint
- Optional: Paint and paintbrushes

### Preparation for Activity

- Enlist the help of an additional adult to manage the glue gun, keeping it away from the children.
- Lay newsprint on a table where chalices can dry during the Closing. Place tea lights or LED candles on this table.

### Description of Activity

The children make their own chalices to take home the gift of spirit.

Give each child a flower pot and saucer. Show them how the saucer will sit on top of the upside-down flower pot to make a chalice. Tell them you will glue the pieces together after they decorate them.

Invite the children to use markers (or paint) to decorate the pots and the saucers and then bring the pieces to an adult to glue them. Set the completed chalices aside to dry.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- A picture of a flaming chalice, and tape or glue stick
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Display the Wonder Box poster
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Show them the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us of our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the picture of the flaming chalice to the poster.

You may say:

Sharing our spirit is the intangible gift we talked about today. How are you going to share your spirit with others?

Allow comments.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember how we share the intangible gift of spirit with one another. And, we are grateful that we know how to bring these gifts home to share with our families. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or

"Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — "spirit!"

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: SHARING THE GIFT OF SPIRIT WITH OUR CONGREGATION

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Flashlights or LED/battery operated candles
- Percussion instruments

### Preparation for Activity

- Arrange with the religious educator, minister, or lay leaders a time when the children can sing in the service. Explain the session concept to the worship planners and tell them that the children want to share the gift of spirit with the congregation by singing, "This Little Light of Mine."
- Decide which children will hold lights and which will hold instruments. If there are not enough lights and instruments for all children, some can clap during the song.

### Description of Activity

To introduce the song in the service, have a worship leader explain that the children are sharing the gift of spirit with the congregation.

The children will move up the aisle singing in a joyful way, "This Little Light of Mine," clapping, playing instruments and shining lights. When they arrive at the front of the sanctuary, they face the congregation and shine all their flashlights on one spot. Or, if they have the small LED candles, the children stand in a circle to combine their light.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Life becomes religious whenever we make it so: when some new light is seen, when some deeper appreciation is felt, when some larger outlook is gained, when some nobler purpose is formed, when some task is well done.*

— Sophia Lyon Fahs, Unitarian minister and religious educator

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children explored the intangible gift of spirit. They learned about ways they can give and receive this gift with others in our religious education group, in their congregation, and in the larger Unitarian Universalist faith community. The children experienced a ritual of sharing joys and concerns that illustrated one way we give and receive the gift of spirit. They sang together and made a chalice to bring the gift of spirit home.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Help your child understand how the gift of spirit is shared when people intentionally come together in faith.

### EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

Spend some arts-and-crafts time together making individual "spirit posters." Give each family member a blank sheet of poster board or heavy paper, a photo of themselves, magazines to cut up, a glue stick, scissors, markers and stickers. You may like to title each poster, "The Gift of (Name's) Spirit." Invite each person to glue their own picture to their poster and add images that represent who they are, what they care about, and what they believe.

### A FAMILY RITUAL

Try sharing your joys and concerns as a family at home. You will need some stones and a partially filled bowl of water. Have each member of the family hold a stone while they think about their joys and concerns. Then invite family members to drop a stone in the bowl as they share their joys and/or concerns aloud or speak them silently to themselves. Affirm each new stone by saying together, "We accept the gift of (name's) spirit." See how each added stone makes the water in the bowl rise, symbolizing how when each person shares their spirit and others accept it, our sharing of spirit grows.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: UU PEN PALS (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [Spirit Letter to a UU Pen Pal](#) (included in this document) , for all participants
- Markers, pencils and/or crayons

- A digital camera and printer, an instant camera and film, or photographs of each child brought from home
- Glue sticks
- Envelopes and postage stamps

### Preparation for Activity

- With the help of your religious educator, contact the religious educator of another Unitarian Universalist congregation and arrange for the children to exchange "spirit mail" as pen pals with children in another K-1 group. Make a list of the other congregation's children's names, and match them with the children in the group so each participant can give the gift of spirit to a specific child.
- Another way to find UU pen pals for the children is by joining the [RE A CH listserv](mailto:lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/reach-l) (at lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/reach-l). As an RE leader, you can use it to reach out to other congregations who might like to partner with you on this project.
- Obtain photographs of all participants, or obtain a camera to photograph each child — ideally, a digital camera and access to a printer so you can create the photos during the session.
- Print out copies of Handout 1: Spirit Letter to a UU Pen Pal, for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children that one way to share the gift of spirit is to send a greeting to someone their own age who is a Unitarian Universalist in another congregation. Give each child the name of their UU pen pal and tell the group about the Unitarian Universalist congregation(s) of their pen pals. Distribute handouts. Help children fill in the blanks with their UU pen pals' names as well as information about themselves. Help the children glue their photos on their handouts. Collect the handouts when children are done, or distribute envelopes and have the children fold and insert their own spirit letters.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SHARING OUR SPIRIT IN ART (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A large sheet of poster board
- Magazines to cut up
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Glue sticks
- Markers

- A digital camera and printer or an instant camera and film
- Optional: Decorative stickers, such as sticky-backed gems

### Preparation for Activity

- Gather a variety of magazines with positive images that might reflect individual children's spirits, such as *Highlights*, *UU World*, *National Geographic* (children's edition), *Better Homes & Gardens*, and *O!*
- Obtain photographs of all participants, or obtain a camera to photograph each child — ideally, a digital camera and access to a printer so you can create the photos during the session.
- Arrange to display the children's collage in your congregational space.
- Write the title, "The Gift of Our Spirit" and words to identify your group, such as "Wonderful Welcome, K-1," at the top of the poster.

### Description of Activity

Show the children the sheet of poster board. Tell them that together they will make a poster that represents their spirits, to display in your congregation. Invite the children to cut out pictures from magazines that represent their own spirit. You can guide them to look for things they care about and things they believe, as well as things they like to do. As a group hang the poster in the pre-arranged display space.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SINGING "SING WHEN THE SPIRIT SAYS SING" (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Recording of the song, "Sing When the Spirit Says Sing" and appropriate music player
- Optional: A guitar, piano or other instrument

### Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to teach the song, "Sing When the Spirit Says Sing," to the group. If you are unfamiliar with the tune, listen to it online. On [Jay Droz's website](http://JayDroz.com/) (at [JayDroz.com/](http://JayDroz.com/)) hear the tune and see lyrics and guitar chord notation. There are also many performances on You Tube.
- Optional: Obtain a recording of the song to familiarize the children with the tune.
- If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help you teach, lead, and/or accompany the song.

### Description of Activity

Children learn a hymn.

Gather children in a circle. Invite them to stand as they are willing and able. Allow room to move to words such as "shake" and "dance." Tell them this song began as an African American spiritual. You may say:

This song talks about spirit and how it moves inside us. Singing it together gives us some fun ways to move together in spirit.

Teach the song. Add verses with new verbs, or invite children to do so.

Then lead children to sing each verse and demonstrate the action words:

You've got to sing when your spirit says sing,  
You've got to sing when your spirit says sing.

When your spirit says sing, you've got to sing,  
sing, sing.

You've got to sing when your spirit says sing.

You've got to shout when your spirit says shout...

... When your spirit says shout, you've got to shout right out loud...

You've got to wiggle when your spirit says wiggle...

... When your spirit says wiggle, wiggle like a worm...

You've got to shake when your spirit says shake...

... When your spirit says shake, you've got to shake like a snake...

You've got to dance when your spirit says dance...

... When your spirit says dance, you've got to dance, dance, dance...

You've got to sneeze (laugh, clap, move... ),  
when your spirit says sneeze (laugh, clap,  
move... )...

... When your spirit says sneeze (laugh, clap,  
move... ), you've got to sneeze (laugh, clap,  
move... ) right along...

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 14: STORY: A LAMP IN EVERY CORNER

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

*Read or tell the story.*

Many years ago in the land of Transylvania, in a mountain valley watered by quick rushing streams and shadowed by great forests of beech trees, there was a village of small wooden houses with dark-shingled roofs. The people in the village were of the Unitarian religion, and they wanted a church of their own. A church set on the hillside, they decided, looking down upon the village as a mother looks down upon her sleeping child.

So all the people of the village labored long and hard to build themselves a church. The stonemasons hammered sharp chisels to cut great blocks of gray stone, then set the stones into stout and sturdy walls. The glaziers made tiny glass panes and fitted them neatly into the windows with leaded lines. The foresters sawed tall beech trees into enormous beams and laid the trusses for the ceiling, then covered the roof with close-fitting wooden shingles that wouldn't leak a drop of rain. The carpenters carved wood for the pair of wide-opening doors, setting them on strong pegs so that the doors hung straight and square. A bell was brought from a faraway city, then hoisted by ropes with a *heave* and a *ho* to the top of the tower. The weavers wove fine cloths for the altar table, cloths embroidered with flowers and edged with lace. The smiths hammered black iron into tall lamp stands and hammered thin bronze into shining oil lamps.

Finally, when the building of the church was done, the painting of the church could begin. The painters mixed bright colors: royal red and shimmering gold and brilliant blue, and everyone in the village — old and young, women and men, boys and girls — came to decorate their church. They painted flowers. They painted trees. They painted designs around the windows and different designs around the doors.

And at the end of the day, when it was finished — when their church was finally done — all the people of the village stood back to admire it... and then to sing, a song of happiness and praise. Their village had a church now, a church set on the hillside, looking down upon the village as a mother looks down upon her sleeping child.

"We will eat now!" announced an elder of the village, because everyone was hungry after their long day's work. "And later tonight, we will come back to pray."

So the people of the village went down the hillside to their homes and their suppers, all except one little girl

named Zora and her father, who stayed behind. They had brought their own bread and cheese. They ate their food slowly, sitting on the grass on the hillside and admiring their new church with its strong stone walls, its tall tower, and its magnificent bell.

After they had eaten, they went back inside, opening those carved wooden doors to go into the gloriously painted sanctuary inside. "Oh, look, Father!" Zora cried, running from picture to picture, with her footsteps echoing off the stone walls. "See how grand!"

"Yes, it is," said her father, looking around and nodding with pride. "Yes, it is."

"But Father," she said suddenly, "we have not finished!"

"What do you mean?"

"There are tall iron lamp stands all along the walls, but there are no lamps! The church will be dark when the people come back."

"Ah no, little one," said her father. "The light of the church comes from its people. You shall see!" He rang the bell to call the people to worship, then took his daughter by the hand and led her back outside. They waited on the grassy hillside, next to their beautiful church of strong gray stone.

The sun had set behind the mountains, and night was coming soon. Yet in the growing darkness, tiny points of light came from many directions and moved steadily up the hill.

"Each family is entrusted with a lamp, little one," her father explained. "Each family lights its own way here."

"Where is our family's lamp?"

"Your mother is carrying it. She will be here soon."

The many lights moved closer together, gathering into one moving stream, all headed the same way, growing larger and brighter all the time. Zora's mother arrived, bearing a burning oil lamp in her hands. The father lifted Zora so she could set their family's lamp high in its tall iron stand. All around the church, other families were doing the same. Soon the church was ablaze with light in every corner, for all the people of the village had gathered to pray and to sing.

All through the worship service, Zora watched the lights flicker and glow. She watched her family's lamp most of all. When the service was over, her father lifted her high. She took the shining bronze lamp from the lamp stand. Its curved sides were warm and smooth in her hands. Her mother carried the lamp home, with the flame lighting the way.

The lamp flame lit their house when they returned home. Zora washed her face and got ready for bed by the light of that flame. "Mother," Zora began, as she climbed into bed and lay down.

"Yes, little one?" her mother asked, tucking the red wool blanket around Zora's shoulders.

"Father said the light of the church comes from its people."

"Yes."

"But also, the people take their light from the church!" Over on the table by the fireplace, the shiny bronze lamp was still burning. "And we have that light every day."

"Yes, indeed," said her mother. "And even when we are not in church, even when the lamp is not lit, we carry the light of truth in our minds and the flame of love in our hearts to show us the right way to be. That light — the light from truth and love — will never go out."

"Never?" asked Zora.

"Never," said her mother. "And this bronze lamp will last for many, many years. When you are grown, we will give the bronze lamp to you, and when your children are grown, you will give the lamp to them, and all of you will carry it back and forth to church every time."

"But there is only one lamp," Zora said.

"So make another, and let the light grow. And someday, tell your children to make more lamps, too. And now goodnight," her mother said and kissed Zora once on this cheek and once on that cheek and once on the forehead. Zora closed her eyes and drifted into dreams, while her mother looked down upon her sleeping child.

The years passed; Zora grew. The bronze lamp came into her care. She kept it polished and clean, and when the bell rang out across the valley to call the people to worship, she carried the lamp back and forth to the church on the hillside, the flame always lighting her way. When the time came, she made more lamps and gave them to her children, who made more lamps and gave them to their children, and so it went, on through the years, even until today.

And always, the light of truth and the flame of love from that Unitarian church on the hillside continued to grow and show them — and us — the way.



## **ONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 14: HANDOUT 1: SPIRIT LETTER TO A UU PEN PAL**

"Share the Gift of Spirit"

Dear UU Pen Pal, \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite song to sing is...

My favorite game to play is...

My favorite color is...

I believe...

I care about... .

your UU Pen Pal, \_\_\_\_\_

## FIND OUT MORE

"A Lamp in Every Corner" is the title story of a [book by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer](#) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=707](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=707)) ( Boston : Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004). Find

more Unitarian Universalist stories here, along with suggestions for using them in worship and religious education programs.

"This Little Light of Mine" is an African-American spiritual which, in the 1950s and 60s became an anthem of the Civil Rights movement.

# SESSION 15: THE GIFT OF OURSELVES

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Be here now.*

— *Ram Dass (Richard Alpert)*

This session introduces the intangible gift of ourselves. The children will learn that the best gift to give others is to be truly present to them. It is important to stress that the gift of themselves is not their physical selves, but the intangible positive qualities they can give through love and caring. Giving of themselves also does not mean giving away their possessions. When a friend is talking to them, the effort they make to be attentive is the intangible gift of themselves.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the intangible gift of being oneself, and demonstrate how to give this gift intentionally by being aware and present
- Make concrete the concepts of "being present" and "being aware"
- Demonstrate how the connections between being oneself, being aware of others, and being generous in spirit are naturally connected to one another
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand that being themselves and paying attention to others around them are gifts they can offer
- Experience the importance and challenge of being centered in oneself, paying attention to others, and responding authentically.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — "Maya's Questions"	10
Activity 3: Paying Attention	10
Activity 4: "Be Here Now" signs	15
Activity 5: A Wonder Box to Give	10
Faith in Action: Presenting Our Wonder Boxes	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: "Heart Song" Chant	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Like the little girl in the story, "Maya's Questions," both adults and children wonder how to know when they are on the right path. Maya learns to be herself, be aware, and always be kind. When we are present and attentive, we are best able to respond authentically and kindly to the world around us. We then likely feel that we are on the right path and able to give the gift of ourselves — our energy, spirit, and love — to others.

Take a few moments to consider your own experience of "being here now." Think of times you experienced yourself as valuable and generous because you were able to be present and aware. Bring that positive and nurturing energy with you to this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Penny jar, created in Session 11, The Gift of Stewardship

#### Preparation for Activity

- Set the penny jar on a table near the entrance to the room.

#### Description of Activity

As you welcome arriving children, invite them to donate any coins they have brought. You might ask, "Who has remembered the gift of stewardship today?"

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint, and post.

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. You may say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box (See instructions in Session 1.)
- A toy heart with arms and legs, or a picture of an embodied heart Leader Resource 1, [Heart Person](#) (included in this document)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1, cut out the image, and place it in the Wonder Box.
- Optional: Obtain a toy heart figure that resembles a person for the Wonder Box. You can find some online. Likely sources may be a community health clinic, a heart disease prevention organization, or a physician practice.

#### Description of Activity

With the children are still in a circle around the chalice, invite them to guess what could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take guesses. Then, open the box; take out the heart figure and say:

Does anyone know what this is? Why do you think the heart resembles a person?

Allow comments. Then say:

Today we will talk about the gift of ourselves. What does it mean when we give the gift of ourselves? Remember, it is an intangible gift. So we are not talking about giving someone our arm, or our left toe. We give them who we are when we pay attention to the person we are with. Each of us has a heart and when we give our love, caring and attention, we are giving the gift of ourselves.

#### Including All Participants

Do not mention body parts that may be lacking by any child in the group.

### ACTIVITY 2: STORY — MAYA'S QUESTIONS (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, [Maya's Questions](#) (included in this document)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it or read it aloud to the group.

## Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Read or tell the story. Guide the discussion of the story by asking the following questions:

- Why do you think Maya listened to her sister when Annie wanted to play with her?
- Have you ever listened to one of your friends and you didn't really want to?
- Who do you turn to when you are confused about doing the right thing?

## ACTIVITY 3: SILENT INTERVIEWS (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Children play a game to practice being present.

Divide the children into pairs and have them sit facing each other on the floor.

Tell them that they are going to practice being present with another person. Explain that they will ask their partners three questions to learn three things about them. Tell them that when they answer the questions, they may not speak or even make noises. They have to answer silently, using hand signals to communicate. Ask if there are any questions, and make sure everyone understands the exercise. Have them take turns asking each other one of the following three questions. It is best to give the group just one question at a time. Use the following questions or ones of your own choosing.

- What is your favorite thing to do after school?
- What is your favorite animal?
- What is your favorite food?

Give the children enough time to interview their partners. After all pairs have shared, gather the whole group and ask each pair to reveal what they learned about the each other. When all have shared, say:

Whether you were interviewing someone or being interviewed, each person was present and paid attention. Therefore, you both gave the gift of yourself.

### Including All Participants

Be mindful of any child with mobility issues. If someone cannot sit on the floor, have the group sit in chairs facing each other.

## ACTIVITY 4: "BE HERE NOW" SIGNS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- 8 X 11" sheets of card stock or construction paper cut into 5 X 8 pieces

- Magnet strips
- Fine markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils for decorating cards
- Glue, if magnet strips are not self-adhesive
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Write the words, "Be Here Now," on newsprint, and post.
- Set paper and markers on worktables.

### Description of Activity

Remind the children about Maya's questions in the story, "Maya's Questions."

Say, in your own words:

Maya was not sure she knew what was important, who she should listen to, or what she should do. She was worried about all of that. Those are questions that all of us worry about sometimes. In the story, Maya learned that just being Maya was the most important thing. Her grandmother helped her understand that she really did know what was important, all along. All we really need to do is pay attention to what is going on around us and be ready to be kind. Like Maya, we will always know who is important at that moment, and what to do. Buddhists have a simple way of saying this. It is three little words: "Be here now."

Show the children the words you have written on newsprint. Then say:

We are going to make our own "Be here now" signs. We can take them home to remind us and our families that it is important to be yourself and pay attention to what is going on around you. This will help us know what is important and what to do. You will glue a magnet on the back of your sign so you can put it on your refrigerator where the whole family can see it.

Direct the children to worktables and invite them to copy the words "Be here now" onto a piece of cardstock or construction paper. Encourage them to decorate their signs. Help them attach one or more magnet strips to the back.

## ACTIVITY 5: A WONDER BOX TO GIVE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Cardboard shoe boxes or other small boxes with a bottom and lid for all participants
- Plain or construction paper, glue sticks and tape, scissors (including left-handed scissors), colored

markers, and decorating materials such as stars, animals and other fun and colorful images

### Preparation for Activity

- Set paper, markers, tape, glue and decorating materials on work tables.

### Description of Activity

The children will make their own Wonder Box to give to someone special in their lives. In Session 1, The Gift of Love, they pretended to give gifts to one another by passing the empty Wonder Box around. In this session, they "fill" a Wonder Box of their own to give an intangible gift to someone else. You may wish to remind them of the earlier activity to reinforce the meaning of intangible gifts.

Give each child a box with a lid. Say:

Today we are going to make Wonder Boxes. We are not going to fill them with anything we can see. We will fill them with an intangible gift. It will be your choice of which intangible gift you want to give to your special person. You can give the gift of love, caring, helping, learning, or whatever quality of yours you choose, to whomever you want to give the gift of yourself.

Have them wrap the lid and outside bottom of the box with the construction or plain paper. You may have to help them trim the paper and tape or glue it onto both parts of the box. Once the paper is secure, invite the children to decorate their Wonder Boxes.

Invite the children to talk while they are working on the boxes about which gift they will give and to whom.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box poster
- Picture of embodied heart [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Display the Wonder Box poster.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Customize, print out and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children together in a circle and show them the Wonder Box poster. Explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts.

Invite a child to tape or glue the picture of the embodied heart to the poster. Say:

Sharing the gift of ourselves by being present is the intangible gift we talked about today. How are you going to be present and share the gift of yourself with others?

Allow comments.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. Say:

Giving thanks for being together helps us remember how we share the intangible gift of ourselves with one another. And, we are grateful that we know how to bring those gifts home to our families, and share these gifts with them. Let's say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom!" or the name of this session's intangible gift — "Sharing the gift of ourselves!"

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: PRESENTING OUR WONDER BOXES

### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Boxes made in Activity 5

### Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for the children to present their Wonder Boxes which contain the intangible gift of themselves, to a gathering of the congregational community. It could be another religious education group, the religious education teachers, or the entire congregation — whatever is appropriate.
- If you plan to have children participate in a worship service, arrange the details with your

religious educator, minister and/or lay worship leaders.

### Description of Activity

Children will decide to whom they will give the gift of themselves. Help them decide how they will make a presentation — what they will say or sing or do. In front of the congregation, leaders may speak for them, perhaps reading the children's words collected in class. Or each child may say one or two words naming their intangible gift. The children will likely be more comfortable speaking in a more interpersonal setting. In either context, some children may not want to speak at all. Make sure each child participates only in a way they choose.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Be here now.*

— *Ram Dass (Richard Alpert)*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children explored the intangible gift of ourselves. They heard a story, "Maya's Questions," in which a young girl learns to be herself, to pay attention to what is going on around her, and to be kind. When we are present and attentive and our true selves, we are best able to respond to others authentically and kindly. Children learned the phrase, "Be here now" as a short way to remember what Maya learned.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** It is easy for adults as well as children to become distracted, to lose their sense of grounding, to be in a rush and not pay attention to what is going on around them. Talk about the situations and places where each member of the family feels most calm, most themselves, most able to pay attention to their environment and the people in it. Talk about situations where it is hard to simply "be here now."

### FAMILY DISCOVERY

Try being present together by meditating as a family. Even young children can sit still for about a minute.

Gather the family and have everyone agree to sit in silence for at least one minute. If you have meditation chimes, use them to begin and end the meditation. You may wish to use the phrase, "be here now" as a silent mantra. As your family increases its experience with sitting quietly, you may try increasing the time spent in meditation.

Mealtime is a different opportunity to be attentive and present with each other. Think about how family members can "be here now" at meals.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: "HEART SONG CHANT" (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Percussion instruments

### Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Percussion instruments

### Description of Activity

The children learn a simple song and movements that embody being present, being aware, and being authentically responsive to others.

Gather the children in a circle, standing if they are all able. Show them where you have posted the words, and teach them to chant or sing the song, "Heart Song," line by line. Then, teach them the body movements.

Listen, listen, listen	Cup left hand to ear.
To my heart's song.	Place right hand on heart.
Listen, listen, listen	Cup left hand to ear.
To my heart's song.	Place right hand on heart.
I will never forget you.	Shake head "no," from side to side.
I will never forsake you.	Place both hands on heart, then open arms wide.
I will never forget you.	Shake head "no," from side to side.
I will never forsake you.	Place both hands on heart, then open arms wide.

Now invite the children to share the song with a partner. If the group is large, you can have children count off "one, two," and ask all the "ones" to make an inner circle, and turn around to face the children in the outer circle. Pair everyone, using leaders as partners if you have an odd number of children. Say:

Now we are going to sing "Heart Song" again, in a way that acts out how we can give the gift of ourselves to another person. We will do the movements the same way as before, but, this time, say the words directly to your partner, and try to make eye contact with (or focus on) your partner the whole time.

Ask for a volunteer to demonstrate with you. Then, lead the song again, this time with each child singing or chanting to a partner. If you have time, let the children sing or chant the song again, with new partners.

To end the activity, re-gather the group in one circle. Guide the children to reflect. You can use these prompts:

- Did it feel more like you were giving the gift of yourself, or more like you were receiving the gift of the other person? Why?
- Was it easy or hard to keep eye contact with (or, focus on) the other person?
- Sometimes when you are trying to remember the song, it can be hard to focus on your partner. Did that happen for anyone?



## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 15: STORY: MAYA'S QUESTIONS

Written by Elisa Pearmain, this story is an adaptation of the story, "The Three Questions." This Buddhist-like story is often attributed to Leo Tolstoy who included it in his collection, *Fables and Fairy Tales* (New York: New American Library, 1962, originally published in 1903). Many of the stories in that collection are not original tales, but variants found in many countries and predating Tolstoy. Versions of "The Three Questions" appear in *One Hand Clapping: Zen Stories for all Ages* by Rafe Martin and Manuela Soares (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.) and *Doorways to the Soul: 52 Wisdom Tales from around the World* by Elisa Pearmain (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998). A picture book adaptation is *The Three Questions* by Jon Muth (New York: Scholastic Press, 2002).

*Read or tell the story.*

Once upon a time a girl named Maya was playing in her front yard with her big sister and some of her sister's friends, while her father watched from the kitchen window. Soon Maya's friend Annie came along and wanted to join in the game. Maya's big sister and her friends whispered to Maya, "You can play with us, but not Annie, she's too little." So Maya said, "Sorry, Annie. I can't play with you right now." Annie walked away sadly.

Soon Maya's father called her in for some lunch. "Hey," he said, "how do you think it made Annie feel when you wouldn't play with her today?"

"Sad, maybe," Maya answered. "But it was because the big kids told me to say that."

"I know," he said, "but how did it feel to you?"

"Not so good." She replied.

"Right," he said. "I know that you want to be a kind person, but sometimes it is confusing as what is the right thing to do isn't it?"

"Yes," Maya replied. "I don't always know who to pay attention to, or who I should listen to, or what to do."

"I think those are excellent questions to think about," said her father. "Let me see if I can repeat them: Who is the important person to pay attention to? And what is the best thing to do? I think you know the answer to the question of who to listen to, right?"

"Yeah, listen to my heart or ask a grown-up who I know," Maya answered.

"Why don't you take those questions and go ask your grandmother," her father suggested. "She would like a visit from you this afternoon, and she will know the answers to your questions."

So Maya went over to her grandmother's house which was only next door. Grandmom was out back working in her garden. She was transplanting seedlings into the ground in neatly divided rows. Maya could see that she was tired. Grandmom's face was flushed, and she had swipes of dirt across her brow. "Grandmom," Maya said, "why don't I bring you some lemonade and you sit down and watch me work for a while. I want to ask you some questions so that I can be the kindest person possible."

Grandmom settled herself on the steps. Maya went in the house and came out with two glasses of lemonade — one for her grandmother, and one for herself. "Thank you," said Grandmom. "Now, what are your questions?"

"Well, who are the most important people to pay attention to? What is the most important thing to do?" Grandmom smiled, but she didn't say anything. Maya thought that her grandmother was trying to think of the answers so she kept on working. She dug little holes, planted the seedlings, tamped down the dirt and watered each seedling with care as her grandmother had taught her.

After a while she got tired and stopped for some lemonade. "Can you tell me the answers now, Grandmom?" But it looked like Grandmom had dozed off. So Maya went back to the seedlings that still needed to be planted. There were only a few more.

All of a sudden, a cry came from out in the street. Maya ran out the side of the yard and around the house. There was Annie, laying on the sidewalk all tangled in Maya's bicycle with a bloody knee and elbow and tears streaming down her face. "Grandmom!" Maya called, and her grandmother came quickly, too.

They helped Annie into the house. Maya got a wet cloth to clean Annie's scrapes. She was very gentle so as not to hurt Annie, who was still crying. Maya patted her on the back and offered her a cool glass of lemonade. Soon Annie was calm. Maya helped her grandmother put several large bandages on her knee and elbow.

"What were you doing?" asked Maya. She had noticed her bike on the sidewalk.

"I was mad at you for not playing with me," said Annie. "So I took your bike from your driveway. I was going to hide it until you said you were sorry. But I hit a bump on the sidewalk and fell over."

"I am sorry I told you I couldn't play," said Maya.

"I know," said Annie, "And I can see you are a good friend by the way you are taking care of me and helping me feel better. I wanted to hurt you, but now I am sorry."

"I'm glad you know I am your friend. I'm really sorry I hurt your feelings," said Maya.

"Thanks," said Annie. "And thanks for the band-aids and the lemonade."

Maya and Annie picked up Maya's bicycle and leaned it on the side of Grandmom's house. Then Annie went home. Maya and her grandmother went back out into the garden and worked, side by side, for a while, to put the last seedlings in the ground.

"Grandmom, are you ever going to tell me the answers to my two questions?" Maya asked.

"Well I don't need to, Maya," she smiled. "You figured them out yourself."

"I have?" Maya looked confused.

"Yes," said Grandmom. "You asked me, 'Who is the most important person to pay attention to?' When you first came over the most important person to pay attention to was me, and the most important thing to do was to help me because I was tired. Because you stayed

to help me, you were here to help Annie, and she got a chance to see how kind you are. Now she is no longer mad at you and she didn't want to hide your bike anymore!

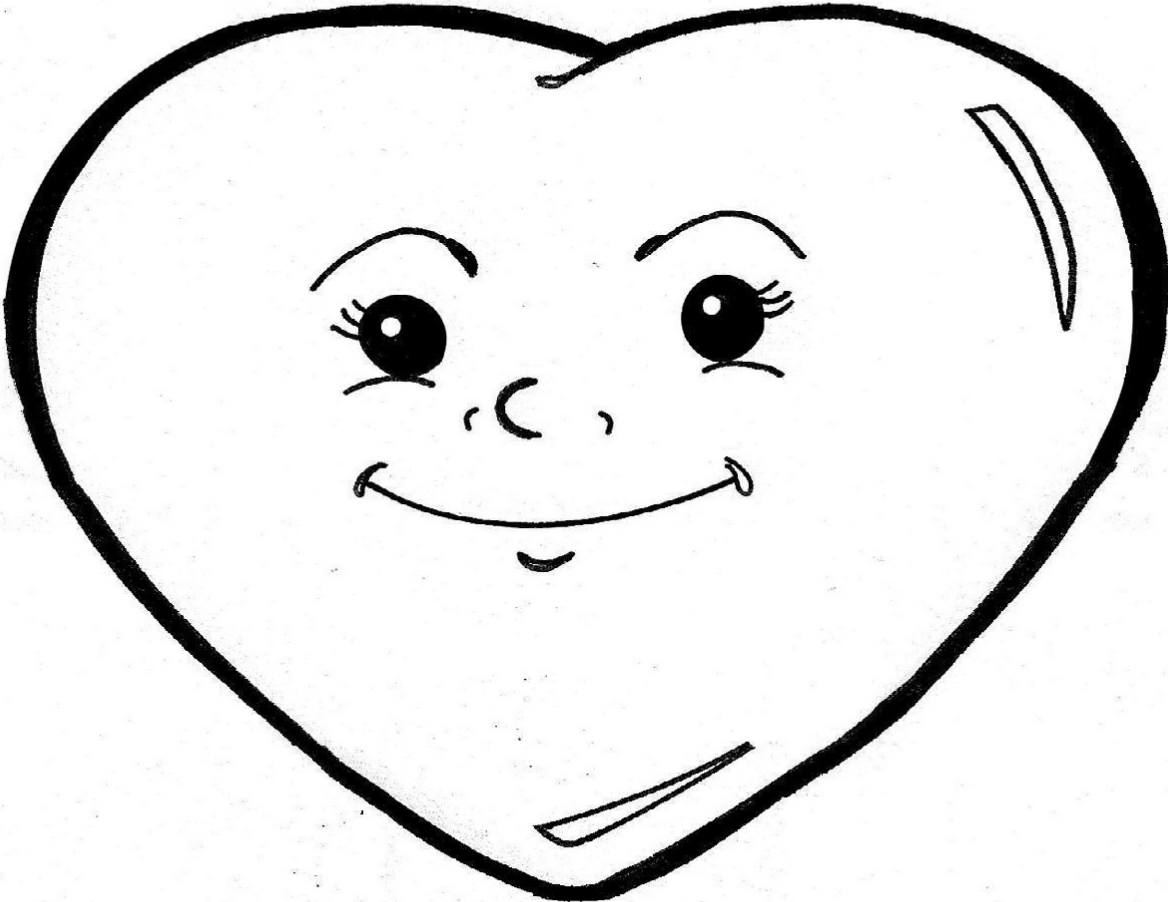
"When Annie hurt herself, she was the most important person to pay attention to," Grandmom continued. "And the most important thing to do was to help her."

"You mean, Grandmom, that the most important people to be with are the ones who need our attention right now? And the most important thing to do is to treat them kindly?" Maya asked.

"Yes," said Maya's grandmother. "If you pay attention to the people who are around you, and be kind, you will always be doing the most important thing. And I think you knew that, all along."

**WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 15:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: HEART PERSON**

*Use this image as the item in the Wonder Box and the icon you attach to the Wonder Box poster.*



## FIND OUT MORE

The author of *Be Here Now* (San Cristobal, New Mexico: Lama Foundation 1971), Ram Dass lives on the island of Maui, Hawaii and continues his work as a spiritual teacher via an [online community](http://www.ramdass.org/)(at [www.ramdass.org/](http://www.ramdass.org/)).

# SESSION 16: THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. — Margaret Mead, 20th-century anthropologist and author*

This session introduces the intangible gift of community. It lifts up the rural, 19th-century American tradition of barn-raising as a demonstration of what a community can achieve together, and the barn dance as an expression of celebration for a shared accomplishment. The activity of building a model for a community playground mimics the communal barn-raising. Consider doing the Faith in Action activity to make the children's playground plan a reality.

As you lead this session, help the children understand how they have given and received the gift of community every day they have been together in Wonderful Welcome.

Large cardboard boxes, empty rolls from gift wrap, empty coffee cans, pipe cleaners, and plastic food storage containers may be useful for children to construct a model of their dream community playground in Activity 4. As you gather items, keep in mind the number of children in the group, the type and size of the meeting space, and the amount of time you will have for building a model playground. If this is not the final session of Wonderful Welcome, you may choose to spend more time on Activity 4, Community Playground, and save the Welcome Celebration (Activity 5) for another meeting.

Plan ahead if you need a volunteer to lead Alternate Activity 2, Square Dance.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the intangible gift of community
- Offer participants opportunities to build something together for their whole community and celebrate their shared accomplishment
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of opening and closing rituals.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn about the rural American tradition of community barn-raising
- Learn about the modern practice of building community playgrounds

- Experience shared work for a common goal and shared celebration
- Understand that they have given and received the gift of community each time they have been part of Wonderful Welcome.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	2
Activity 1: Wonder Box	5
Activity 2: Story — A Barn-raising in the City	8
Activity 3: Barn Dance to "Sing When the Spirit Says Sing"	10
Activity 4: Our Community Playground	25
Activity 5: Welcome Celebration	5
Faith in Action: A Playground for Us All	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Penny Jar	5
Alternate Activity 2: Square Dance	25

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Think about the many communities you belong to, for example, your household, extended family, congregation, neighborhood, and workplace. Our affiliations change over the course of our lives. This ebb and flow are part of modern adult life, yet the possibility of participation and joy in community effort is always available to us.

Think about a time when you have felt part of a community effort that succeeded, and have experienced the joy of shared accomplishment. Acknowledge that working together is not always easy and that conflict and compromise go with the territory. Perhaps you have left a group effort in frustration when the group or its direction did not feel right for you.

This session focuses on the gift of community at its best. Prepare yourself to deal gently with conflicts that may arise as the children work together. Tap into your own positive experiences as part of a community endeavor, and use them to nurture the Wonderful Welcome community in this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### WELCOMING AND ENTERING

#### Materials for Activity

- Penny jar, created in Session 11, The Gift of Stewardship

#### Preparation for Activity

- Set the penny jar on a table near the entrance to the room.

#### Description of Activity

As you welcome arriving children, invite them to donate any coins they have brought. You might ask, "Who has remembered the gift of stewardship today?"

If this is the last Wonderful Welcome session, read Alternate Activity 1, Penny Jar, for guidance on bringing closure to the Penny Jar project.

### OPENING (2 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

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

#### Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint, and post

#### Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. You may say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists can connect to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our opening words.

Light the chalice and invite the children to repeat each line of the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists.

With minds that think,

Hearts that love,

And hands that are ready to serve.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for friendship and peace in our world.

Extinguish the chalice.

### ACTIVITY 1: WONDER BOX (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Wonder Box
- A toy barn

#### Preparation for Activity

- Place the toy barn inside the Wonder Box.

#### Description of Activity

With the children still in a circle, ask them to guess what could be in this big, beautifully wrapped box. Take some guesses. Then, open the box and take out the toy barn. Say:

Who has seen one of these in real life? Who has been inside of one?

Allow some conversation about barns. Then say:

Every time we meet in Wonderful Welcome, we talk about an intangible gift. You might be wondering what kind of intangible gift we will find in a barn. I will give you a clue: Even if you are a very good builder, it is very hard to build a barn all by yourself.

If children have comments or guesses, allow some. Then tell them:

When many people lived in the countryside on farms, a family that had cows, sheep, horses and chickens needed a good barn to house the animals. When a family needed a new barn, friends and neighbors from all around would come together and help build the barn. Someone who could saw would cut logs into boards. Someone who could hammer nails would put the boards together to make walls. Together, a lot of people would lift the big heavy beams up to make the barn roof. The hard work of lifting up the frame for the walls and roof gives this project its name: barn-raising.

Confirm that the children can visualize a barn-raising by asking them what else people might do to help out. For example, some people might make lunch for everyone, or take care of the animals until the barn was ready.

Then tell them:

When the barn was raised, everyone would celebrate. When people work and celebrate together, they are a community. When we are together here in Wonderful Welcome, we are community. We put a lot of pieces together to

help us learn together. It is kind of like a barn-raising.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — A BARN-RAISING IN THE CITY (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, [A Barn-raising in the City](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it or read it aloud to the group.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle. Read or tell the story. Guide the discussion with the following questions;

- Why do you think Amy was so excited that everyone was helping with the playground?
- Do you think the playground would have been possible if just one person wanted to build it by him/herself?
- In your home, or in your apartment building or neighborhood, have there been any times when the people got together to build something?

## ACTIVITY 3: BARN DANCE TO "SING WHEN THE SPIRIT SAYS SING" (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Recorded music and appropriate music player

### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you or a volunteer will lead the song, "Sing When the Spirit Says Sing."
- Optional: Choose a recording of upbeat, American folk dance music with a bluegrass or barn dance flavor. This dance can also be done to "London Bridge is Falling Down."

### Description of Activity

If the children do not know "Sing When the Spirit Says Sing," teach the song before introducing the dance.

Tell the children:

This song began as an African American spiritual. It is about spirit and sharing spirit together, so it is a good one to share to celebrate our community.

Teach the first verse of the song, then tell the group you will change the word "sing" to other actions, such as "shout" or "wiggle." Explain that as they sing, they will

dance and move to the words. When the song says shout, they can shout! Lead the group in singing a few verses until they know the song, inviting the children to move with spirit to the action words. Be sure to move, too!

You've got to sing when your spirit says sing,

You've got to sing when your spirit says sing.

When your spirit says sing, you've got to sing, sing, sing.

You've got to sing when your spirit says sing.

You've got to shout when your spirit says shout...

... When your spirit says shout, you've got to shout right out loud...

You've got to wiggle when your spirit says wiggle...

... When your spirit says wiggle, wiggle like a worm...

You've got to shake when your spirit says shake...

... When your spirit says shake, you've got to shake like a snake...

You've got to dance when your spirit says dance...

... When your spirit says dance, you've got to dance, dance, dance...

You've got to sneeze (laugh, clap, move...), when your spirit says sneeze (laugh, clap, move... )...

... When your spirit says sneeze (laugh, clap, move...), you've got to sneeze (laugh, clap, move... ) right along...

To add a traditional dance, have the children form two rows facing each other. If you have an odd number of participants, a co-leader should join a line so all dancers are paired. Tell the children they will do a simple folk dance, found in many European cultures. Explain:

- The two children at the end of each line join hands and dance down the column formed between the two lines.
- At the end of the line, they lift their joined hands to make an arch.
- One pair at a time, the others join hands with their partners and dance along the column and through the arch. When they come through the arch, they part, turn away from each other, and each go back to the end of their line.
- After all the children have passed through the arch, the first pair breaks the arch. Now the new pair at the ends of the lines dance along the

column together to form a new arch for the others to pass through.

Continue the music until every pair of children has made an arch.

### Including All Participants

Children with limited mobility can participate in this dance. Make sure all children can move in the space you are using, and guide the group to adapt their dancing to accommodate everyone's pace and way of moving.

## ACTIVITY 4: OUR COMMUNITY PLAYGROUND (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Cardboard boxes, empty food containers, dowels, Popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, string, wooden chopsticks and other interesting items for constructing a model playground
- Tape, scissors and color markers
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Toy figures to play on the model playground
- Optional: A piece of rug or a grass mat to serve as the "lot" for the model playground. Online, you can purchase a [grass mat](http://www3.towerhobbies.com/cgi-bin/wti0095p?FVPROFIL=&FVSEARCH=GRAS S+MAT++railroad) (at <http://www3.towerhobbies.com/cgi-bin/wti0095p?FVPROFIL=&FVSEARCH=GRAS S+MAT++railroad>) intended for toy railroad sets. A piece of cardboard painted brown or green would also serve the purpose.

### Preparation for Activity

- Gather the building materials for the model playground and place them and the toy figures on a work table.
- Find a safe place to store the finished playground model.
- Post blank newsprint where all can see it.

### Description of Activity

The children experience the energy of a barn-raising by designing and building a model of a playground that welcomes everyone.

Tell the children, in your own words:

Now we are going to have our own barn-raising here. We are not really building a barn, but we will build something we all will appreciate: a community playground.

Indicate the toy figures you have brought. Say:

Let's pretend these are the children who will play in the playground when we are done. Our

playground will be fun and safe and welcoming for everyone in our pretend community, as well as any of their friends who might like to come and play. What do you think we should have in our playground?

Affirm ideas and write them on newsprint. Fantastical ideas are fine, but guide children away from ideas that are very unsafe or likely to foster violence or exclusion. Lead the children to identify a few specific items that all or most of them want the playground to have (such as a slide, a tower, a sand box) and assign volunteers to make them. Write each child's name by an item they will help to make.

Invite the children to use the materials on the work table to build the items they have been assigned. Circulate among the children and ask them about their work. It is fine if some children work on their own to develop a new idea, but make sure they remain part of the group process.

With about five minutes left for this activity, ask the children to stop their work, bring their creations to the playground "lot," and share with the group what they have made. Welcome the toy "children" to the playground and let the group use the toys for some "play time."

Ask the children what it felt like to build the playground together and why it is a good place for all children. Elicit ideas about how children with different abilities and interests could use the playground, with questions such as:

- If somebody were afraid to climb the tower, what could they do at the playground?
- Do you think more swings, or different kinds of swings, might be good to add?
- What are some different ways the swings (or tower, or monkey bars) could be used?
- If someone came to the playground in a wheelchair, which parts could they go to? What could they do? Where could they play with other children?

Engage the group in cleaning up after this activity. If you are doing Activity 5, Welcome Celebration, explain that clean-up is necessary before the children can have a snack. It will be helpful if you have already designated a safe place to store the playground model and have bins to place unused materials. Reserve a piece of cardboard for the Wonder Box poster.

### Including All Participants

It is important that the children plan a playground that will be accessible, safe and fun for every child in the group, as well as other children. Encourage inclusive thinking with questions like, "How could a child with a



wheelchair use the playground?" / "What could a blind child do at this playground?" / "If somebody does not know how to use monkey bars, how could they play on this?"

## **ACTIVITY 5: WELCOME CELEBRATION (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Snacks and beverages
- Goblet from Session 5, The Gift of Invitation

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find out about food restrictions and allergies in the group before purchasing snacks and beverages. If parents are providing food, be sure they know about food restrictions.
- Set tables or the children's circle with plates and cups. Set an extra place with the goblet you used in the Wonder Box in Session 5, The Gift of Invitation.

### **Description of Activity**

Participants celebrate their Wonderful Welcome experience.

Gather the children in the open space. Tell them:

It is nice to see everyone here today. We need to say "goodbye" today. Not to each other, because we will see each other again at our Unitarian Universalist congregation. But we are going to say "goodbye" to Wonderful Welcome. We will take a moment to remember all the hard work and all the fun we have shared as a community. And we will celebrate.

Distribute food and beverages. Invite participants to share memories of fun activities from previous sessions. Ask if anyone remembers the significance of the goblet and confirm that it is a symbol for inviting someone to join you.

Reserve time to clean up.

### **Including All Participants**

As with all activities that involve food, make sure you are aware of food restrictions or allergies among the children and plan accordingly.

## **CLOSING (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Wonder Box poster
- A piece of left-over cardboard from Activity 4, Community Playground
- Copies of Taking It Home for all participants

- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Display the Wonder Box poster.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.
- Customize, print out and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Choose a piece of cardboard left over from Activity 4, Community Playground, to attach to the Wonder Box.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather the children in a circle. Show them the Wonder Box poster and explain that it looks like the Wonder Box to remind us about our intangible gifts. Invite a child to tape or glue the piece of cardboard to the poster. You may say:

This little piece of cardboard isn't much, is it? But, when we all worked together we put ideas and materials together to make something none of us could have dreamed up alone: a community playground that all our dolls today seemed to like and, if we really built one like it, kids would, too.

We can see our model playground and we could play on a real one, if we built one together. But the intangible gift is the gift of community.

Tell the children you are happy and thankful you all could be together this morning. You may say:

Giving thanks for being together is giving thanks for all that we can be and do when are together, and how good it feels to be a community. Let us say our closing words of gratitude together.

Invite the children to hold hands. Show them where you have posted the closing words. Ask them to say each line with you, and say the lines slowly:

We are thankful.

We are thankful to be here.

We are thankful to be here, together.

We are thankful to be here, together, now.

Then ask one child to very gently squeeze the hand of the person to their left, and have that person continue to pass the squeeze until the squeeze has returned to the person who started it. Tell the person who started the squeeze to signal that it has returned to them by raising their arms, still holding hands with the people on either side. When this happens, instruct everyone to raise their clasped hands, together. If you like, suggest a word for them to say at this moment, like "Good-bye!" or "Shalom," or the name of this session's intangible gift — "Community!"

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

## FAITH IN ACTION: A PLAYGROUND FOR US ALL

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint with children's brainstorming ideas from Activity 5, Community Playground
- Model playground built in Activity 5

### Preparation for Activity

- Building or renovating a playground is an ambitious, but very worthwhile project. Identify allies for initiating a community playground planning process, and plan to meet. Begin with leadership within your congregation, then consider building partnerships with other faiths or community groups.
- Determine whether your congregation or local community needs a new or remodeled playground. One impetus might be the need for a play space inclusive of children with disabilities. Other motives may be the opportunity to develop an unused parcel of land, or growth in your congregation's young family population.
- Go online to learn about community playgrounds. Search for "community playgrounds" to research projects around the U.S. or go to the website of [Leathers and Associates](http://www.leathersassociates.com/) (at [www.leathersassociates.com/](http://www.leathersassociates.com/)), a nationwide consulting firm that helps design and build community playgrounds. Contact other congregations that have built community playgrounds and learn from them.

### Description of Activity

Participants work with the congregation to design a new, accessible playground.

Plan a time to brainstorm ideas and a strategy for creating a real community playground. Talk with congregational staff and lay leadership and appropriate committees such as Social Action and Religious Education. Engage the parents of the children in Wonderful Welcome. Invite the congregation's youth to be involved including in leadership roles. You can involve the Wonderful Welcome families and others in a variety of ways, including:

- For your kick-off meeting, invite the children from Wonderful Welcome to show-and-tell about the model community playground they made. The children can also participate in the discussion about why a playground is needed and what it should have.

- The Wonderful Welcome families and others can become sponsors of the community playground by raising funds.
- Adults may have professional skills to contribute such as grant-writing, construction or financial management. Assess the skills and talents you have.

When the playground-building day comes, conduct it like a barn-raising and make sure everyone has a role and there is an opportunity for celebration of the community and its accomplishments.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What observations about leading the Wonderful Welcome program would we like to share with our congregation's religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

*Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. — Margaret Mead, 20th-century anthropologist and author*

### IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children explored the intangible gift of community. They learned about the rural American tradition of barn-raising, and talked about how in modern communities people work together to build something that benefits everyone, such as a playground. The children engaged in community activities including singing, dancing, and designing and building a playground together. They celebrated their community accomplishments with a snack.

### EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Have a family conversation to identify the various communities you belong to as individuals and as a family. These may include a child's soccer team, a parent or teenager's work colleagues, an adult's book club, children's neighborhood friends, and your Unitarian Universalist congregation. Talk about what it means to be part of each of these communities. How is the intangible gift of community expressed in your family? In your neighborhood? In your child(ren)'s school community? In your congregation?

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...** your own version of a barn-raising at home. You might take different roles to set up a terrarium for a pet turtle, put together a family picnic, clean out a messy closet, or construct a fruit salad with a variety of ingredients. Make sure each person has an important role in completing the project you choose, and that everyone gets to enjoy the results.

### **A FAMILY ADVENTURE**

The organization, [Habitat for Humanity](http://www.habitat.org/) (at [www.habitat.org/](http://www.habitat.org/)), engages groups and individuals in projects to build housing for people in need in the United States. While young children cannot volunteer, unskilled builders are welcome, including teenagers. Room and board is arranged and sometimes subsidized for out-of-town volunteers. Read about Habitat's Gulf Coast housing effort and other projects. Consider helping the organization by raising funds through your congregation or organize a group to help build a home.

### **FAMILY DISCOVERY**

In rural America, after barn-raising, communities might celebrate with a party in the barn they had just built. Listen to some American folk dance music online. Look locally for family opportunities to try barn dancing, contra dancing, square dancing or international folk dancing to capture the sense of community celebration together that your child(ren) experienced in this Wonderful Welcome session.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: PENNY JAR (5 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Penny jar, created in Session 11, The Gift of Stewardship
- Newsprint, markers and tape

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Post a blank sheet of newsprint and write "Penny Jar" at the top.
- Set the penny jar where all can see it.
- Optional: Count the pennies, or allow volunteers to count the pennies, and write the amount collected on the newsprint.

### **Description of Activity**

The children decide what to do with the money they have collected in their penny jar.

Gather the children where they can see the newsprint. Tell them that together they will decide how they would like to give the gift of stewardship. Review with them their understanding of "stewardship." Then ask them to suggest ideas of who they can help with a gift of money.

You might have some ideas ready to help them clarify their wishes. For example, you might be aware of specific animal shelters in case someone says they would like to help animals.

Write all their ideas on newsprint.

Try to reach a consensus decision. The process will depend on the size of the group. Large groups may have to vote to narrow down the ideas to a few before reaching consensus by discussion.

After the session, donate the funds as the group has decided. Make sure the Wonderful Welcome group receives an appropriate acknowledgement for their gift of stewardship.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SQUARE DANCE (25 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Recorded square-dance music and appropriate music player

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Make sure you have a large, open floor space for this activity.
- In square dancing, a "caller" calls out the steps of the dance. Find recorded square-dance music that includes the calls. There are square dancing CDs for use with children; your local school physical education department may be a good source. [Educational Record Center](http://www.erckids.com/summary.asp?id=12) (at [www.erckids.com/summary.asp?id=12](http://www.erckids.com/summary.asp?id=12)) sells CDs for beginning square dancing. A United Kingdom organization, [Folk in Education](http://www.folkineducation.co.uk/home.php) (at [www.folkineducation.co.uk/home.php](http://www.folkineducation.co.uk/home.php)), has information on its website and will ship CDs to the U.S. See "Find Out More" for additional resources. Be sure to choose a simple dance.
- Optional: Enlist a member of your congregation who is experienced in square dancing to lead or help with this activity.

### **Description of Activity**

Tell the children that after a barn-raising, all the people who helped build the barn would have a party — often inside the barn they had just built. Explain that square dancing needs eight people and is a form of dancing the community might have done to celebrate finishing a barn.

Teach the steps for the dance you will do. Then play the music and lead the children in celebratory dancing.

### **Including All Participants**

If any children have mobility challenges, make sure the space is accessible including room to adapt the dancing to accommodate all participants.

Take gender, popularity, dancing "expertise" and other pressures off the children by forming pairs and squares by counting off. You might have all the children count off "one, two" to make two smaller groups for squares and then "one, two, three, four" for positions in each square.

## WONDERFUL WELCOME: SESSION 16: STORY: A BARN-RAISING IN THE CITY

This story is inspired by a true story, reported in the *New York Times* on May 10, 1987, about a Manhattan community that joined together to build a neighborhood playground designed by local schoolchildren. The article, "[On West Side, an Urban Barn-raising.](#)" by Joseph Giovannini, reads, in part:

Young and old, rich and poor, skilled and unskilled have gathered at the park, nested in a valley of brick, in what has been called a community barn-raising. In this case, however, the barn is a new playground, scheduled to open tonight when the first child slides down the long stainless steel tail of an "elephant-dragon."

*Read or tell the story.*

When Amy woke up, she was glad to see the sun shining. Today was the day her family would help build a playground, right in their own neighborhood. An ugly, empty patch of dirt and weeds sat there now, but soon there would be a tree house with swings, a sandbox shaped like a lemon, a bumpy, twisty slide, and even a castle tower. You would be able to climb up the tower on a ladder, and shimmy down on a rope. Or you could roll a wheelchair or a stroller to the top, along a ramp that spiraled gently all the way up.

The playground was going to be right next to Amy's school, in between the tall apartment buildings like the one where she lived, and the stores, and the stone plazas with benches for grown-ups to sit. It would be fantastic!

Amy knew what the playground would look like because she had seen pictures of it. She had even helped to draw and color in some of them. In fact, a lot of the playground's best ideas had come from the children in Amy's school. The children had raised some of the money with a bake sale. Now they were going to help build the playground. Today!

You see, the school had never had a playground, and the parents had been upset about that for a long time. Amy's school had a nice gym inside, and a beautiful art room, and a music room with a real piano, but no place outdoors for the children to have recess. Their teachers did not let them play in the empty dirt yard. There were too many weeds and too much litter. But soon, if enough people came to help, the dirt yard would be a beautiful community playground.

Amy put on her oldest jeans and an old shirt she didn't mind getting dirty. She put on socks and sneakers, too. Then Amy and her mom and dad and her brother Eddie

walked over to the empty dirt yard. Everyone was already busy. There was Dr. Jefferson, carrying some flat rubber squares that looked like big puzzle pieces. He said "Hi" to Amy's family. Sharon and Andy Tran, whose mother owned the little grocery store, were helping some grown-ups stack large purple bricks. Amy knew those were for the castle tower. It had been her own idea to make it purple.

Mrs. Jefferson greeted Amy's family. Right away, she handed Amy a fresh new sheet of sandpaper. "Go over and help Zinnia Goldstein sand those blocks," she said. Zinnia was Amy's babysitter, so Amy was happy to work alongside her. Zinnia showed her how to use the sandpaper to smooth the edges of the blocks. After a while, Eddie came over with a wheelbarrow to get the smooth blocks. Amy saw him carry them to Dr. Jefferson and Ms. Murano, from the library. They were painting the blocks purple. "Wow!" Amy said. "The blocks will be part of the castle tower, too!"

It was getting hot and Amy was feeling tired when Pete and his dad came by in their pizza delivery truck. Pete's dad blew a whistle and the hammers and drills and talking quieted down. "Lunch for everyone who's working!" Pete's dad called.

In the afternoon, Amy and her friend Lucy counted out screws, nuts, and bolts. They were sitting in the shade, next to a pile of wooden boards. Amy was glad to have a job where she could sit down for a while. "What do you think these boards are for?" she asked Lucy.

"I don't know," said Lucy. "Maybe for the tree house."

"Well, if someone paints them purple, we will know what they're for," Amy said.

"The castle tower!" both girls said, laughing.

The walk home seemed long that evening. Amy wished her mom or dad would pick her up and carry her, but they looked tired, too. Her mom said, "So many people came to help today, that the playground might be finished this week."

"Well, it won't be more than two weeks, anyway, if the weather holds out," said her dad.

One week, or two. Amy didn't mind if it took three weeks or all summer. She was going to go and help every day. When school started again in September, recess would be something special. Amy would climb the purple castle tower and look all around. She would see her friends playing in a tree house with swings, a sandbox shaped like a lemon, and a bumpy, twisty slide. That would be amazing! But, the best part was that Amy knew that she would always think of even more people every time she went to the community playground — Dr. Jefferson, Mrs. Tran, Zinnia, Pete and Lucy and more. Everyone who had helped.

## FIND OUT MORE

### Barn-raising

See photographs of a barn-raising in Texas on the [Homestead Craft and Children's Fair](http://www.homesteadcraftfair.com/barn.html) (at [www.homesteadcraftfair.com/barn.html](http://www.homesteadcraftfair.com/barn.html)) website. Another barn-raising, this one to build an [historic "Texas dance hall"-style barn](#) (at [www.texascolor.com/texas\\_barn.html](http://www.texascolor.com/texas_barn.html)) on a family-owned flower farm, is also pictured online.

### Picture Books about Barn-raisings and Community Dancing

*Raising Yoder's Barn*, written by Jane Yolen and illustrated by Bernie Fuchs (New York: Little, Brown, 1998, 2002), tells about an Amish community's reconstruction of one family's barn. *Barn Raising* by Craig Brown (Greenwillow, 2002) also tells of an Amish family's barn-raising from a young boy's point of view. Another picture book *Let Us Raise a Barn* by Robin Lind (Hope Springs, VA: Hope Springs Press, 2006) tells the story of a Virginia barn-raising, and describes the roles volunteers take, such as prayer master or supply master. The dedication reads:

To all the wonderful friends and neighbors who responded to our invitation to come raise a barn — and helped build community in the process.

The book, *Noah's Square Dance*, written by Rick Walton and illustrated by Thor Wickstrom (New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1995), portrays the animals on the ark doing square dance steps to Noah's calls.

### Community Playgrounds

This story in this session is inspired by a true story, reported in the *New York Times* on May 10, 1987, about a Manhattan community that joined together to build a neighborhood playground designed by local schoolchildren. The article "[On West Side, an Urban Barn-raising](#)," (at [query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DEFDD163FF933A25756C0A961948260&n=Top/Reference/Time%20Topics/People/G/Giovannini,%20Joseph](http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DEFDD163FF933A25756C0A961948260&n=Top/Reference/Time%20Topics/People/G/Giovannini,%20Joseph)) is by

Joseph Giovannini. Find out how children, adults, faith communities, sponsors and consultants came together in central Pennsylvania to build [Possibility Place](#) (at [inspiredrecreation.org/news.htm](http://inspiredrecreation.org/news.htm)), a fully accessible community playground. The Manhattan playground and Possibility Place were both engineered by [Leathers and Associates](#) (at [www.leathersassociates.com/](http://www.leathersassociates.com/)), an Ithaca, New York consulting firm that specializes in community playgrounds.

### Contra Dancing / Barn Dancing / Square Dancing for Children

Square dancing is a rural American tradition that can be enjoyed by children as young as five and six — although, small children are safer dancing in groups their own age. More and more states now include square dancing in young children's physical education curricula. Children practice listening to and following instructions, experience appropriate ways to be physical in a social situation and learn to apply a variety of shape, direction, and mathematical terms (circle, right, left, front, back). In fact, the square dance is the official dance of at least two states (Arkansas and Washington). In many areas there are square dance clubs that hold dances with live musicians and a caller; there are many [gay and lesbian square dance groups](#) (at [www.iagsdc.org/main/common/index.php](http://www.iagsdc.org/main/common/index.php)). Recorded square dance music with caller's cues can be purchased online. Vic and Debbie Ceder's [Square Dance Resource Net](#) (at [www.ceder.net/](http://www.ceder.net/)) is a good place to begin research. You can also find square dance DVDs for purchase on the [centralhome.com website](#) (at [www.centralhome.com/ballroomcountry/square\\_dance\\_videos.htm](http://www.centralhome.com/ballroomcountry/square_dance_videos.htm)).

Contra dancing — also called barn dancing — is related to square dancing and is a good choice for a community-wide, intergenerational gathering. Learn more about contra dancing from the website of the Santa Barbara Country Dance Society's "[What Is Contra Dance?](#)" (at [www.sbcdds.org/contradance/whatis/](http://www.sbcdds.org/contradance/whatis/)) page and the website of a New England band, [the Contra Banditos](#) (at [www.contrabanditos.com/dates.html](http://www.contrabanditos.com/dates.html)).