

RIDDLE AND MYSTERY

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children

6th Grade



BY RICHARD S. KIMBALL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
THE PROGRAM.....	4
SESSION 1: THE BIG QUESTIONS	15
SESSION 2: RELIGION TO THE RESCUE	35
SESSION 3: LOOKING TOWARD TOMORROW	54
SESSION 4: THINKING OF GOD	74
SESSION 5: OUT OF NOTHING.....	93
SESSION 6: THINKING OF DEATH	110
SESSION 7: STUFF HAPPENS.....	134
SESSION 8: SPEAKING OF FAIR	150
SESSION 9: RIGHT AND WRONG	165
SESSION 10: TO TELL THE TRUTH	181
SESSION 11: TOUCHING ALL.....	198
SESSION 12: THE FUTURE AND ME	217
SESSION 13: OH MY SOUL.....	238
SESSION 14: LIFE AS MYSTERY.....	257
SESSION 15: WHAT TO BELIEVE	277
SESSION 16: UU ME	295

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

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Rick's Unitarian Universalist credits include *Our Whole Lives: Sexuality Education for Adults* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2000), the Tapestry of Faith sixth grade program *Amazing Grace: Exploring Right and Wrong*, and the words to the hymn "Winds Be Still" in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Rick also wrote *The New You the Creator* (Green Timber Publications, operated by Rick and his wife, Tirrell Kimball), *sUUPER plays* (Green Timber) and the *Sheltering Spirit* series, with Tirrell for the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock and Green Timber.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Where Do We Come From?" (Session 1) is taken from "Where Do We Come From?" by Brian Tate, as included in the Unitarian Universalist Association's *Singing the Journey: A Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Copyright 1999 by Brian Tate. Used by permission.

Tapestry of Faith Core Team

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THE PROGRAM

I would rather live in a world where my life is surrounded by mystery than live in a world so small that my mind could comprehend it. — Harry Emerson Fosdick

A curriculum about the “big questions” must begin with an inquiry: How often do you find yourself asking big questions? Write your answer lightly, with pencil, so you can change it with ease. The frequency of your changes may increase as you move through Riddle and Mystery.

Even without the stimulus of reading this curriculum, it may be every day that you ask what to do with your life. Maybe even more often you wonder whether life is fair—although you already know the answer is “no.” Perhaps every hour, in some way or other, you ponder whether something is right or wrong.

If even adults are uncertain about such matters, how must sixth graders feel? Perhaps sure of themselves sometime, and sometimes totally lost. The purpose of Riddle and Mystery is to assist them in their own search for understanding.

Each of the 16 sessions introduces and processes a Big Question. The first three echo Paul Gauguin’s famous triptych: *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?* The next ten, including *Does God exist?* and *What happens when you die?*, could be found on almost anyone’s list of basic life inquiries. The final three are increasingly Unitarian Universalist: *Can we ever solve life’s mystery? How can I know what to believe? What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?*

Humanity’s list of big questions is not finite, of course, but Riddle and Mystery’s list is. Many sources were consulted to determine the questions most relevant to the faith formation of a sixth grader. What you have here is the result: 16 Big Questions for youth to unpack with a wide range of inquiry, activity and exploration as outlined under Program Structure, below.

Unitarian Universalists of every age may usefully consider life’s big questions. Why focus a curriculum at the sixth grade level? Because sixth graders are at a critical moment of growth, just turning the corner into adolescence. They face a sometimes bewildering world of increasing independence and choice. They are developing new abilities for abstraction and analysis as they encounter new ideas. Sixth graders need the wise counsel a guided Unitarian Universalist investigation can offer. And, sixth graders are typically open to the mix of deep inquiry and playful spirit that big questions prompt.

You will notice words such as “response,” “reaction” and “comment” occurring throughout Riddle and Mystery,

more often than the word “answer.” Unitarian Universalists do not attempt to answer big questions for each other or for anybody else. Instead, we try to give reflective, generous responses that will help all seekers to their own understanding within the philosophical and theological frameworks expressed in the UU Principles and Sources. This is the intent of Riddle and Mystery.

This curriculum is part of the multi-faceted Tapestry of Faith program created by the Lifespan Faith Development staff group of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and works toward all the goals of Tapestry of Faith, nurturing faith development by providing a rich philosophical base and age-appropriate activities to help youth develop the ideas and skills they will need as they move into adolescence and beyond.

Riddle and Mystery does not directly pose one of the greatest questions: What is the meaning of life? Nevertheless, its 16 sessions suggest a response: The meaning of life—of human life, at least—is questions. Without them, the essence of humanity would be absent. Without them, the mystery would be lost. Without them, all would be fully known or not known; all would be dull. Life is, blessedly, in the words of the song introduced in Session 1, “a riddle and a mystery.”

GOALS

This program includes goals shared with all Tapestry of Faith programs:

- Ethical development
- Spiritual development
- Unitarian Universalist identity development
- Faith development.

Riddle and Mystery also aims to:

- Teach participants to accept, appreciate and celebrate mystery, ambiguity and contradiction as part of human life and the starting points of religion
- Explore Unitarian Universalist responses to big questions
- Foster participants own personal, spiritual responses to big questions
- Demonstrate the importance of questioning thought to Unitarian Universalist faith and its value in personal and communal life
- Guide participants to develop and practice the skill of abstract thought.

LEADERS

Special training is not required to lead Riddle and Mystery. The curriculum is a complete program with more activities and ideas than most groups will be able to use and detailed guidance for presenting them to youth. Any lay or professional religious education leaders with the required time and energy can lead this program. Co-leadership is recommended, with at least two committed adults heading the program and sharing both burdens and joys. Many Unitarian Universalist congregations require that at least two adults be present in programs involving children and youth, as per the UUA's Safe Congregations policy.

Experience leading youth programs is, of course, a plus. Anybody hoping to acquire experience by leading Riddle and Mystery is advised to team up with someone who has led programs for this age group before. Your religious educator may have additional resources to prepare leaders to work with this age range.

What characteristics should you seek in a co-leader? An ability to plan a session tight and present it loose is important (see Leader Guidelines). Comfort working with youth is essential. Experience with the Internet is helpful. Compatibility with you and other leaders is significant. A sense of humor can add a lot. Enthusiasm and commitment, plus the time and energy required for the job, are highly important.

One other consideration should be taken into account. Because leaders will coach youth along their faith journeys, they need to understand the power of adult opinions to influence young people. They must be willing to use that power sparingly and lovingly. Adults who hold a particular viewpoint and feel others should hold the same could influence participants too heavily. Leaders should feel free to express their beliefs, but must also be comfortable accepting the beliefs of others—even if those beliefs seem irrational and ill formed. Ultimately, leaders need to respect youth and accept their beliefs as valid and appropriate for their stage of faith development.

PARTICIPANTS

Riddle and Mystery: UU Responses to Big Questions is designed for sixth graders. Think: the end of childhood, the beginning of adolescence. Think of looking back with the knowledge that it is time to move on, and ahead with a mixture of wonder, hope, awe and trepidation. Think of the brink of puberty.

In *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd discusses characteristics of young adolescents. These include:

- Seek support for self-esteem and body image as they transition into an adult body
- Engage in abstract and hypothetical thinking
- Concentrate on self and others' perceptions of the self
- Engage actively with peers and social relationships
- Try to reconcile the inner self with the outer self
- Explore gender, racial and ethnic identities through affiliations
- Express criticisms of self and others
- Seek belonging and membership; are concerned with social approval
- Take on others' perspectives; understand that sharing perspectives does not necessarily mean agreement
- Express interest in religion that embodies values
- Sustain faith development by engaging with a community that allows questioning
- Seek love, understanding, loyalty and support.

When leading Riddle and Mystery, take advantage of opportunities to support the young adolescent in these ways:

- Promote their self-esteem
- Affirm and support the adolescent's many physical, emotional and cognitive changes
- Model respect
- Be flexible and responsive
- Provide opportunities for complex thinking and the pondering of big questions
- Respect and take seriously the adolescent's self-consciousness
- Recognize that challenging authority provides an outlet for new cognitive skills
- Maintain clear expectations to enable adolescents to make independent decisions
- Keep some routines or rituals that provide continuity from childhood to adulthood
- Be a sounding board for youth's exploration of ideas
- Encourage involvement in multiple settings
- Actively support the adolescent's exploration of identity

- Encourage participation in a faith or religious community
- Provide outlets for questioning faith, religion, and creed
- Facilitate youth's work in the community
- Celebrate both change and continuity.

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

Unitarian Universalism is an inclusive religion and Riddle and Mystery is an inclusive curriculum. No one should be excluded from the program or its activities by real or perceived physical or other limitations. As you plan sessions, be aware of activities that might pose problems for youth who are differently abled.

Inclusiveness sometimes requires adaptation. Suggestions for adapting specific activities appear under the heading "Including All Participants." Make changes or use alternate activities to ensure that every session is inclusive of youth with a range of physical and cognitive abilities and learning styles, food allergies and other sensitivities or limitations.

All spaces, indoor and outdoor, need to be accessible to anyone in the group. Check the width of doorways and aisles, the height of tables and the terrain of outdoor landscapes. When an activity requires forming small groups, ensure the accessibility of all meeting spaces.

When activities involve reading, such as the Kid for the Day's announcement of each session's Big Question and some roles in each session's scripted WCUU broadcast, routinely offer participants the opportunity to "pass." Be prepared to support young people who wish to read, but need assistance. It would be a good practice to regularly offer volunteer readers the words of a Big Question or a scripted part ahead of time, so they can get comfortable by practicing. Always be alert to group dynamics. Plan how you will make Riddle and Mystery a safe place where participants who need assistance can ask for and receive it.

Find out about participants' medical conditions and allergies, particularly to food. Session 16 suggests a celebration with food. Make sure all the youth can eat the food you plan to offer.

The program mixes active and quiet, expressive and listening, and whole group and individual activities. Each session offers alternate activities you can substitute for core activities if you feel they better suit your group. You can also extend each session with alternate activities if you have more time. As you recognize different interests and learning styles among participants, let this

knowledge guide your selection of activities for the group.

A helpful resource book is Sally Patton's [Welcoming Children with Special Needs](#).

FAMILIES

Families are the primary influences on the faith development of their children and youth. As a program leader, you take on a special role: supporting families in your congregation as they guide their children in Unitarian Universalist faith development. By involving parents in Riddle and Mystery, you can deepen the religious experience of both youth and their families.

Involving families in the faith development of youth can be a more delicate process than involving families in the faith development of younger children. As youth attain and protect the increasing independence that appropriately comes with growth, they may insist on the freedom to develop and hold their own ideas and to pursue their own spiritual practices. Religious educators and parents should respect and nurture the increasing maturity of youth and the independence it earns, even as they continue to offer solid guidance and careful oversight. Help parents to see that youth who remain on spiritual paths through adolescence are usually cause for celebration, even if the paths sometimes lead where parents themselves do not wish to go. The test is not whether a youth agrees with their family, but whether the youth's choices are thoughtful, positive and safe.

Each session offers Taking It Home resources that include conversation topics and other activities to extend the session at home. Among them are suggested trips, photo challenges, and family faith in action projects to help others in some way connect to the Big Question. Some sixth graders will be as open and sharing with their families as they were in earlier years. Others may be moving into new views of self and fresh expressions of independence, and so be less receptive to familial exchange. While sixth graders are still too young for great independence, most have already started along the way. Encourage parents to respect increasing youth needs for privacy when doing so is safe and appropriate, yet also to remain open and available for those times when their youth step back toward the family for a moment of renewed closeness and support.

Invite families into the sessions. Adult or older youth volunteers can be very helpful with art and craft activities and small group work. Parents who bring musicianship, storytelling or artistic skills will help foster participants' sense of connection between their families and their religious education experience. Faith in Action activities offer ideal opportunities to engage parents and other congregants in youth projects.

Session 6, Thinking of Death, specifically suggests engaging family members. Use the session as a model for others to which you might invite parents and/or siblings.

The WCUU/KCUU studio broadcast activities in all sessions offer the option of making a real video, which could be edited and shared with family members or the wider congregational community.

The leader/parent relationship is very important and must be both welcoming and reassuring. When parents bring their youth to experience Unitarian Universalist religious education, they need to feel confidence not only in the safety, fun and learning you will provide, but also in your faith leadership. As a religious education leader, you can support and inspire parents to bring intentionality and excitement to their critical role in their youths' faith development.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

All sessions follow the same structure. Each revolves thematically around a single Big Question. In between opening and closing rituals, participants react to the question, hear a story connected with it, create a television broadcast presenting UU responses to it, and explore their own ideas about it. The sequence of activities is carefully designed to intersperse action with reflection and to offer a variety of ideas about the Big Question before asking participants to articulate their own. You may, of course, change the order of activities and replace some with others, but be mindful of sequence, variety, and flow as you do.

Every session provides Faith in Action activity suggestions. Many involve working for economic justice, a frequent and direct UU response to Session 8's Big Question, "Is life fair?" While Faith in Action activities are not included in the 60-minute core session time, they are an important element of the overall Tapestry of Faith curriculum program. Some Faith in Action activities can be completed in one meeting. Others are longer-term. Many require the involvement of congregational or community members and/or meetings outside the regular gathering time or location. Co-leaders may wish to review and select the program's Faith in Action activities before beginning Riddle and Mystery.

Every session offers alternate activities. Depending on your time and interests, you might replace one or more of a session's core activities with an alternate activity, or add an alternate activity to a session. You can also use alternate activities outside the Riddle and Mystery program at multigenerational gatherings, family retreats or other events involving youth.

As you design your program, decide whether the group needs extra meetings to incorporate additional activities or to complete a long-term Faith in Action project. Before you commit to an extended program, make sure you obtain the support of both your congregational leadership and the children's families.

Quote

A quote introduces the subject of each session. A few sessions suggest sharing the quotes with youth. Others provide the quotes primarily for leaders. Co-leaders may like to discuss the quote as part of preparation for a session. Quotes are also included in Taking It Home sections.

Introduction

The Introduction gives an overview of the session's concepts, explains and offers suggestions about various activities and describes the session's thematic connection to other sessions. The Introduction will also alert you to special preparation or inclusion adaptation needed for 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 overall goals of Tapestry of Faith: faith development, Unitarian Universalist identity development, spiritual development and ethical development. As you plan a session, consider your youth, the time and space available, and your own strengths and interests to determine the most important and achievable goals for the session. Select the activities that will best serve those goals.

Learning Objectives

The Learning Objectives describe specific participant outcomes which activities are designed to achieve. They describe what a youth will learn, become or be able to do as a result of participating in the session. Think of learning objectives as the building blocks used to achieve the larger goals of Riddle and Mystery.

Session-at-a-Glance

This table lists session activities in their suggested order and provides an estimated time for completing each to conduct a 60-minute session. The table includes all core activities from the Opening through the Closing. It also shows Faith in Action activities and alternate activities, with estimated times as appropriate. (Note: You will need to adjust or extend the 60-minute session to present Faith in Action or alternate activities.)

Session-at-a-Glance is merely a guide for your own planning. Many variables affect the time needed for an

activity, including the size of the group and the enthusiasm of the participants. Remember to leave time to move participants from one space to another and to clean-up.

Time estimates do not include leader planning and preparation time. Some activities, especially Faith in Action activities, require advance arrangements to involve families, other congregants and members of the wider community.

Spiritual Preparation

Take time in the days before the session to reflect on its content and take time in the moments before the session to center yourself. Each session offers a spiritual preparation exercise that will guide you to call forth your own life experiences, beliefs and spirituality. It can help you enjoy your time with youth and provide the best possible learning experience for each session.

Session Plan

The Session Plan presents every session element in detail, including the core activities, a Faith in Action activity, Leader Reflection and Planning, Taking It Home, Alternate Activities, the full text of the Story(ies), Handouts and Leader Resources, and a Find Out More section for additional resources.

If you are reading Riddle and Mystery online, you can skip around easily among a session's elements: Opening, Closing, Faith in Action, Activity 4, Story, etc. Each element occupies its own web page. You can click on "Print This Page" at any time to print individual activities, stories, etc. in hard copy.

However, if you click on "Download Entire Program" or "Download Session," you will have a user-friendly document on your computer that you can customize as you wish, using your own word-processing program. Tapestry of Faith is designed to be used in this way. Once you plan a session or program, you can format and print only the materials you need.

Opening. Each opening includes several parts:

- Greeting of youth
- Selection of Kid for the Day by drawing a name at random
- Lighting of the chalice led by Kid for the Day
- Introduction of newcomers and (optional) very brief sharing
- Announcement of today's Big Question, led by Kid for the Day
- Extinguishing the chalice by Kid for the Day.

Note: As the program moves forward, a youth may be chosen as Kid for the Day more than once. The participants will examine this possibility in Session 8, when they consider whether life is fair. If youth object before Session 8 that the selection process is unfair, ask them what they would like to do about it and try to reach a consensus. One possibility, of course, is to remove from the bag the name of each youth who has already been Kid for the Day. The group's decision, too, can be revised in Session 8 or another time.

Activities. Four to six core activities are suggested for each session. Each activity presents materials you will need, preparation you must do, and step-by-step guidance for leading the activity. Under "Including All Participants," some activities offer adaptation ideas to meet special needs.

Three recurring activities deserve special mention:

- **Story and Discussion.** A central story is presented each session. Some stories are written to be interactive. All include discussion prompts.
- **WCUU.** The letters stand for Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists and function as the call letters of an imaginary television station. (For congregations west of the Mississippi, change the call letters to KCUU, Knowledge of the Community of Unitarian Universalists.) WCUU is central to each session. It leads youth to have fun discovering Unitarian Universalist responses to the session's Big Question. Each WCUU activity offers a script. Some scripts are complete; others ask youth to create their own roles from information supplied. WCUU offers opportunities to youth who enjoy speaking and acting and to others who might prefer a crew or audience role. You can decide how simple or complicated to make your WCUU segments. (It is not necessary to create a real video program, though if your congregation has the equipment and skills, you may wish to. If you do create videos, plan to view them with participants and their families at the close of the program.) Especially in the first sessions, you might have youth just sit in a circle and read the scripts aloud. In later sessions, as they get the idea, you might add props such as a camera—cardboard or real—plus a microphone or two and lights. It will be helpful to have supplies on hand throughout Riddle and Mystery to make name cards for each of the On-Air People in a WCUU program. Keep WCUU broadcasts under control. Some youth may become so intrigued that WCUU begins to take up more time than is

allotted. To prevent that, you might designate a participant—perhaps the Kid for the Day, or the WCUU director—to keep track of time during the sessions.

- **WIT Time.** WIT stands for “What I Think.” In WIT Time, youth consider their own responses to the session’s Big Question. WIT Time is often suggested as the final core activity so youth have plenty of ideas from earlier activities to help them shape their opinions.

The sequence of activities has been carefully thought out. You may certainly make changes, but in general you should look through the entire session before deciding how to adjust it.

Each session, too, has been intentionally designed to mix quiet and active activities, and to engage a variety of skills and learning styles. Keep this balance in mind as you adapt a session to your group’s needs.

Alternate Activities. Each session provides several alternate activities you may substitute for a core activity, incorporate into a core activity and/or use to expand the session (possibly outside the regular meeting time).

Three alternate activities recur throughout the program:

- **Notable Thoughts** asks youth to write or draw their thoughts about the session’s Big Question.
- **Challenge Question** guides a deeper inquiry into the session’s Big Question.
- **Song** introduces a UU hymn related to the session’s Big Question.

Faith in Action. Faith in Action ideas offer practical ways for youth to realize and apply their learning and their developing faith for the betterment of the world and their own communities.

Faith in Action in Session 1 introduces the concept of economic justice, a recurring though not exclusive Faith in Action theme in Riddle and Mystery. Session 2 guides the selection of an ongoing project and/or a specific one-time action the youth can do.

Faith in Action activities, like core and alternate activities, provide lists of required supplies and preparations and may suggest adaptations to include youth with diverse abilities and needs. Faith in Action is not calculated into a core, 60-minute session, but the group can easily do Faith in Action activities on a regular basis if you meet for more than an hour. You could substitute them for other activities, or use them outside the program.

If you want the group to commit to a long-term Faith in Action project, consider using the brainstorming

suggested in Session 1. However you structure the Riddle and Mystery program, do include some form of Faith in Action. As we know, actions can speak louder than words.

Closing. Closings include a summary of the day’s activities, a chalice lighting with ritual closing words, Taking It Home suggestions and appropriate announcements about future sessions.

Leader Reflection and Planning. Leaders will find it very helpful, immediately after a session, to spend a few minutes reviewing what they have done and planning what they will do next. Each session suggests a few discussion ideas.

Taking It Home. Taking It Home suggests ways youth can extend the session’s ideas and projects on their own and with family and friends. It may include games, family trips, photography, discussions, and family faith in action projects.

In Tapestry of Faith programs for younger children, Taking It Home addresses parents. In programs for older youth, it speaks directly to youth. In this program for sixth graders—the oldest of children and the youngest of youth—Taking It Home is designed to engage both the youth and their parents. Suggest this opportunity to families as you correspond with them about Riddle and Mystery.

Stories, Handouts and Leader Resources

- **Stories**—The full text of the session’s story(ies).
- **Handouts**—Pages you will give youth to use in the session.
- **Leader Resources**—Resources the leaders may need such as a recipe, a puzzle to print out and cut into pieces, or an illustration to show the group.

Find Out More. This section offers book and video titles, website URLs and other selected resources to further explore the session topics. It is recommended that you scan Find Out More before leading a session.

LEADER GUIDELINES

Here are some suggestions to help you build and lead a successful program:

- Engage youth the moment they walk through the door, and help them shed outside concerns so they may focus on your program. Suggested welcoming activities will help you do that.
- Before you begin, spend some time in the company of sixth graders to refresh your memory of this age group.

- Plan tight and present loose. Know how you will fill every minute of your hour together, and how you will move from one activity to the next without leaving large gaps for youth to fill in. Have all materials ready and available. Be very familiar with the stories and discussion points, ready to present them without stumble or apology. Having planned carefully, make adjustments as you go. Be flexible. If one activity is a flop, move on to another. If another activity wins great attention and produces great ideas, consider extending it.
- Learn from your group. The better you know the youth, the greater your chances of picking the right activities and effective ways to lead them.
- Be a leader, not a buddy. You are the adult in the room. Your chances of good relations with the kids are best if you do not try to be a friend on their level. Remember that youth appreciate firm control, but not dictatorship. They want to learn and have fun, and they cannot do that in a group that is out of control.
- Offer quiet discipline. Too many side conversations? Use a talking stick or other implement, saying that only the person holding the stick may speak at any one time. Too much energy in the room? Call for a quick stretch break. Too many opinions on what to do when? Remind the group that time is limited and then gently move it forward through your agenda. Posting a written session plan can be helpful. Too little experience working with kids? Team up with somebody more experienced. Ask for suggestions and assistance from your religious educator and others.
- Group youth carefully when forming small groups. You can select the groups most simply by a random method such as counting off around the circle. Consider being more intentional. If an activity calls for specific skills—verbal, leadership, artistic or other—include somebody you think has the right skills in each group. If some youth already have good friends in the group and others are new or less connected, mix them up. If some are quiet and some are loud, mix them up, too. A little care in setting up groups can help insure spark and success for most activities.
- Be aware that discussions around why bad things happen (Session 7) or issues of right and wrong (Session 9) could lead to disclosure by a youth of a wrong they have committed or a

wrong done to them. Before the program begins, discuss with your religious educator how to handle such a situation. Make sure you understand your congregation's guidelines and the laws that mandate reporting in your community. *The Safe Congregation Handbook*, edited by Pat Hoertdoerfer and Fredric Muir (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005) might be helpful.

- Most importantly be comfortable with the language of Riddle and Mystery, which offers some traditional religious vocabulary and concepts like "God," "faith" and "soul." Some Unitarian Universalist adults struggle with such terms, which may remind them of difficult periods in their own religious pasts. However, the experiences of adults are not the same as the experiences of young people in our congregations. It is good for Unitarian Universalist youth to hear and understand such traditional ideas, which remain essential to the lives of others in the community beyond the congregation. There is value in religious language we can claim as people of faith. After all, the Unitarian Universalism of today is not many decades removed from faith ancestors who engaged in spirited debate about Trinitarianism and salvation. By presenting and explaining the traditional words, you are not asking youth to give up their own ideas and understandings. You are helping them to know the larger world and the roots of our faith. Unitarian Universalists can, and do, embrace multiple Sources without embracing all the ideas of all the Sources.

IMPLEMENTATION

Every congregation has its own approach to structuring religious education. You can implement Riddle and Mystery with any model your congregation uses. For example, you might need to offer it to an age group wider than sixth graders in order to assure a group of reasonable size. If that is the case, seventh and eighth graders might benefit more from this program than younger children.

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

You may not have much choice of a space for Riddle and Mystery. If you do, choose a room large enough for

youth to move actively without worrying about damaging fancy congregational furniture. Ideally, the space will allow you to leave the WCUU/KCUU studio in place from session to session.

BEFORE YOU START

As soon as your program is scheduled, prepare a calendar with the dates for each session. Look through the entire curriculum to get an idea of how it moves and which parts you wish to use. Look for activities, especially Faith in Action activities, which need assistance from other adults in your congregation, and note them on the calendar so you can schedule them well in advance. Post your calendar in your shared meeting space, and duplicate it for leaders, youth and families. If possible, make it available electronically.

Communication with parents and families enriches Riddle and Mystery and strengthens its impact. Keep everyone informed of what you are doing by postcard, email or in person. Establish a regular way to distribute Taking It Home – on paper or by email. Share your enthusiasm for Riddle and Mystery with youth as well as with their families.

WCUU/KCUU Broadcasts

Decide how you will present WCUU to the group. You want to engage youth input—especially if the group includes skilled artists, musicians, videographers or video editors—but, you will not be able to support every idea participants have for a studio broadcast. Before the first session, research your access to cameras, microphones and other equipment and the availability of adults or older youth with the skills to assist in actual videotaping editing for later viewing. Think, too, about where you can store technical equipment and reusable studio materials between sessions, and how long it will take to set up and “break down” the studio each time the group meets. Will you have a reliable group of volunteers who can do this work before and after each session? Present realistic opportunities and parameters at the first discussion.

Hymnbooks

If you plan to use the alternate activity “Song,” collect enough hymnbooks for at least every pair in the group. Keep these in your meeting space, if possible, so you do not need to gather them before every session. If the congregation is short on hymnbooks, purchasing copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* or *Singing the Journey* might be a good fundraising goal for a youth group.

Extraordinary Advance Planning and Special Materials

Though most activities call for materials that are readily available, a few require special materials or advance planning. Several suggest the use of a computer with Internet access. If this is not feasible, leave yourself enough time to access websites and print out material before the session.

PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

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 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;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

RESOURCES

Quiet Music

Use soft guitar or other instrumental music to open sessions and as background during craft activities. Find recordings of specific Unitarian Universalist interest at [inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop](#). Avoid loud, bouncy music that may energize youth instead of helping them settle. Some CDs with quiet tracks include:

Scott August, *New Fire* (Cedar Mesa Music, 2005)

Baraka (Milan Records, 2005), a reissued movie soundtrack of international religious music

Cesar Berlanga, *Music for Relaxation* (The Relaxation Company, 2002), quiet guitar music

Empire Brass, *King's Court and Celtic Fair* (Telarc, 1996)

Paul Winter, *Greatest Hits* (Living Music, 1998).

Bells, Chimes and Sound-makers

Openings and a few other activities suggest tingsha chimes. You can purchase tingshas and other bells, chimes and soothing sound-makers online from [The Light and Harmony Shop](#), [Zanzibar Trading](#), [Bells Online](#), and many other websites.

Tapestry of Faith Resources

Tapestry of Faith offers two multi-chapter resources online to help you use the arts effectively in children's religious education. [Spirituality and the Arts in Children's Programming](#) is by Dr. Nita Penfold, creator of the Spirit Play program. [Making Music Live](#), by Nick Page, provides guidance for incorporating music into religious education, including how to teach songs even if you are not a musician.

[Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook](#) by Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D. (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), a Tapestry of Faith Toolkit book, may help you shape your expectations and plans for this age group.

Additional Books

More books that might be useful are:

[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).

FACILITATOR FEEDBACK FORM

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

Faith Development Office
Ministries and Faith Development
Unitarian Universalist Association
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1409
religiouseducation@uaa.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

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

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

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

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

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

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

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

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM

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

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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 BIG QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Being religious means asking passionately the question of the meaning of our existence and being willing to receive answers, even if the answers hurt. — Paul Tillich

Big Question: Where do we come from?

This first session introduces the concept of big questions. Youth explore the importance of big questions to humankind, investigate their first Big Question and learn the purposes and practices of the Riddle and Mystery program.

Two activities introduced here will recur in each subsequent session. WCUU asks youth to simulate a television show exploring Unitarian Universalist responses to the session's Big Question. (WCUU stands for Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists; you may use KCUU—Knowledge of the Community of Unitarian Universalists—if you are west of the Mississippi River.) WIT Time ("What I Think" Time), elicits personal exploration of the Big Question.

This session allots ten minutes for an Opening, instead of the five minutes suggested in subsequent sessions, and five for the Closing instead of the standard three. Use the time to introduce youth to one another and help them settle into the program. The Opening offers writing a group covenant as a possibility.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the concept of big questions
- Unfold the importance of big questions to humankind and in Unitarian Universalism
- Present the purposes and practices of the Riddle and Mystery program, including regular WCUU and WIT Time activities
- Pose the Big Question "Where do we come from?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses to it
- Tell a story about where everything comes from.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand big questions as universal and important
- Explore Unitarian Universalist approaches to big questions, using a variety of approaches including song and chant
- Consider various responses to "Where do we come from?"
- Learn the purposes and recurring practices of the Riddle and Mystery program
- Get to know one another
- Optional: Produce a group covenant.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	10
Activity 1: Big Questions in Song	15
Activity 2: WIT Time — Our Own Answers	5
Activity 3: Interactive Story — Turtles	5
Activity 4: WCUU — First Broadcast	20
Faith in Action: Economic Justice	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	10
Alternate Activity 2: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 3: Turtle Shell Art	30
Alternate Activity 4: Questioning Fun	10
Alternate Activity 5: Corner Questions — Sorting Questions Out	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

With everything set to go, carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths.

Explore your understanding of where we come from. Then search your sixth grade memories. How would you have answered the question then? How have your ideas developed since? Why? How can you lead participants into their own moments of questioning and thought?

Enjoy knowing that to join youth in their search of life's mysteries will be good and rewarding.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player

Preparation for Activity

- On newsprint, make a sign that says "Today's Big Question." Post the sign, and post a blank sheet beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet newsprint, and post.
- Review Handout 1 and print out one copy. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Obtain a bag or box from which you will randomly select the name of one participant to be Kid for the Day each time the group meets. Label the bag or box "Kid for the Day." If you know most of the youth who are coming, you may write each participant's name on a small piece of card stock and place all the names in the bag or box. Or, prepare to distribute uniformly-cut pieces of card stock and pencils or markers for youth to write their own names. Keep extra card stock pieces for new participants. (Or, if you prefer, establish a different way to select the Kid for the Day and make the appropriate preparations.)
- Optional: Make nametags for participants you know are coming. Set out supplies for additional participants (or all) to make their own.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.

- Optional: Prepare and post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. Ask each youth to write their name on a small piece of card stock and place it in the Kid for the Day bag or box. Hand out nametags you have made in advance or ask participants to make their own.

Sound the bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument to signal the youth to be silent. Tell them lighting a chalice when we gather is a rich Unitarian Universalist ritual, one the group will use each time it meets. Say, in your own words:

In Riddle and Mystery, the program we are beginning today, we will choose a Kid for the Day to light the chalice each time we met. Then, a bit later, because the program is about big questions, the Kid for the Day will announce the day's Big Question.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the paper back in the bag or box. (If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.)

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search through the riddle and the mystery."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. Explain that you will use this same ritual—chalice lighting, followed by silence—at each session.

If participants do not already know one another, ask them each to say their name and where they live. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused to avoid losing session time to long descriptions of movies seen or video games conquered.

Give Riddle and Mystery a positive introduction. Affirm that Unitarian Universalists often enjoy and even celebrate asking big questions. You might say:

Participating will be an interesting and fun way to think about the big questions people have been asking since the beginning of time. In Unitarian Universalism, asking the questions is just as important as getting answers.

Give any brief logistical or other information you wish to provide about the program.

If you want the group to create a covenant, post a sheet of newsprint. Ask the group, "What do you want this group to be like? How do you think we should act when we are together?" Write "Covenant" at the top of the newsprint. Explain that a covenant is an agreement people make with each other. Ask how the youth wish to agree they should act. Write down the ideas on which they seem to agree. Keep this activity brief, post the covenant in plain view and move on. Plan to keep the covenant posted for the duration of the program or repost it each time the group meets; you can lead the group to revise the covenant in future sessions, if that seems useful.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions (calling for a drum roll, then announcing the question dramatically—after this first session, the procedure should become routine). Write the question on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice. Move the chalice table aside as necessary to allow movement in the room.

Set aside the "Today's Big Question" sign and the Kid for the Day bag or box, with the names and extra pieces of card stock, for re-use.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

Use this opening session to assess any special needs among the youth. Plan to speak with parents, your director of religious education, or the youth themselves about those needs, as appropriate and as required so you can adjust activities to the satisfaction of all.

ACTIVITY 1: BIG QUESTIONS IN SONG (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Timepiece
- *Singing the Journey*; the supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song, and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- On a sheet of newsprint, write: "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" Post the newsprint.
- Obtain copies of *Singing the Journey* for participants to use. Or, prepare another sheet of newsprint with the words to Hymn 1003, "Where Do We Come From?" (Do not post it yet.)
- Prepare to lead the group in singing "Where Do We Come From?" The song is meant to be sung as a round. If you are unfamiliar with the song or uncomfortable teaching it, you might invite a musical volunteer to come help you lead the song or ask a musician to prepare a recording for you to use. See if your congregation's music director could ask choir members to record the song as a round. (Make sure you have equipment to play any recording you have brought.)

Description of Activity

This activity introduces this program's first three Big Questions and engages youth to have fun with rhythm and chant and learn a great Unitarian Universalist song.

Indicate where you have posted the questions. Explain that Paul Gauguin, a French painter and thinker (1848-1903), once asked three famous big questions: "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" The first, of course, is today's Big Question.

Invite participants to form small groups and create a rhythmic chant or song, in five minutes, using the words of the three questions. Tell them songs may include one part or more, in any musical style. When they have finished, groups will share their creations, then learn a musical version from a Unitarian Universalist song book.

Provide newsprint and markers and help groups gather in spaces separate enough so they will not interfere with each other. Monitor the groups.

Give a two-minute warning. Then, call them back together. Let them perform their songs for each other.

Explain that Gauguin's questions have been used in lyrics for a song in *Singing the Journey*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook supplement. Post the words, if you have written them on newsprint. You might say:

UU songs and hymns tell us a lot about what Unitarian Universalists think and believe. This one shows us that UUs think the big questions are important.

Sing or at least read the words from Hymn 1003, "Where Do We Come From?" If you have enough song books,

lead the song as a round. If you have a recording, play it for the group.

Explain that the song's composer, Brian Tate, added the third, "Mystery" line. Ask what participants think about that line. Do they agree that life is a riddle and a mystery? Do they think the mystery can ever be totally solved?

Conclude with words like these:

Unitarian Universalists do not always agree about the answers to the big questions. Nevertheless, they think that searching for the answers is important, and they celebrate the idea—in the words of the song—that "life is a riddle and a mystery."

Including All Participants

Be sure that small groups meet in spaces accessible to all youth.

ACTIVITY 2: WIT TIME — OUR OWN ANSWERS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Timepiece that shows seconds
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument

Preparation for Activity

- Read about WIT Time in the Riddle and Mystery program Introduction.
- Post several sheets of blank newsprint. On one, write "WIT Time."

Description of Activity

Announce that it is WIT Time. Indicate the newsprint you have posted and explain that WIT stands for "What I Think." Tell the youth they will use this time to think about their own answers to today's Big Question. You might say:

WIT Time is the time to use our wits and think about what we think.

Ask participants to pair up by turning to a person next to them. Discourage attempts to scurry around the room finding best friends. Tell them this activity will help them get to know one another better. If the group has an odd number of participants, pair one with a co-leader.

Explain that this is a timed activity. Say:

When I give the signal to begin, one partner will ask the other, "Where do you come from?" The second will answer and then ask their partner

the same question. Continue asking the same question back and forth. You must each give a different answer each time. After 90 seconds, I will signal you to stop.

Offer that youth might answer with the school they come from, the address they live at, and so on.

Give the signal to begin. After 90 seconds, signal the pairs to stop.

Invite participants to call out the types of answers they gave each other. Record responses on newsprint. You will probably get answers like street addresses, towns, schools and family names or countries of origin.

Ask if anybody answered the question as if they were speaking for the whole human race. In other words, did they try to say where the whole human race comes from?

Say that most big questions like "Where do we come from?" can be asked and answered at different levels. If somebody asks where you come from, your town or street address is a good answer. However, saying where the human race comes from is a good answer, too. The bigger the answer can be, the bigger the question seems to be.

Say in your own words:

When religions ask "where we come from," they usually do not mean towns or street addresses. They mean something larger.

Explain that you will speak more about how the human race began in a later session. Today you are going to hear a story about one very big answer to the question of where absolutely everything came from.

ACTIVITY 3: INTERACTIVE STORY — TURTLES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Turtles](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Print out the story. Practice reading or telling it aloud, paying attention to the leader instructions.

Description of Activity

Present the story. As you read aloud or paraphrase the script, follow the leader instructions for making the story interactive with the group.

ACTIVITY 4: WCUU — FIRST BROADCAST (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Newsprint or a large roll of paper
 - Color markers; or washable paints, paint brushes, and clean-up supplies
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece
- Optional: Music recording and playback equipment for recording and playing a theme song
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Read about WCUU in the Riddle and Mystery program Introduction.
- Decide where and how to make your WCUU studio, and how elaborate it should be. The space can be anywhere. You will need a place for the Anchor to sit and locations for the First Roving Reporter and the Second Roving Reporter to sit or stand to conduct their interviews. The NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst can sit with the Anchor.
- If you plan to record WCUU, obtain and test your equipment.
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling... " followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.

- Make enough copies of the leader resource for everyone who will have a role in the broadcast. The script has six On-Air People. If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Description of Activity

In this two-part activity, participants first set up their WCUU studio, then present a brief WCUU report on where we come from.

Explain that WCUU (or, KCUU) are the call letters of a television station run by the group. The letters stand for Wisdom (or Knowledge) of the Community of Unitarian Universalists. Say that today you will spend a few minutes setting up the studio, then the group will present its first WCUU news report on Today's Big Question.

Point out the space and any equipment the group will use for WCUU.

Tell the group there are a variety of jobs to do before and during the WCUU broadcast. Explain the jobs and then ask for volunteers.

Before the Broadcast

1. Ask volunteers to create a very brief theme song—ideally, 10 seconds—for the WCUU shows. If you have an audio recorder/player, have them record the song to use each time the group meets. (If you have recorded music from Activity 1, it could be the theme song, but having the youth make a new one will be more fun for them. You might suggest the youth sing or simply chant the words.)
2. Make a backdrop. While the recording is being done, invite other participants to design and make a backdrop for the show. Consider having them draw a variety of question marks on newsprint, then taping the newsprint on a wall. Or let them suggest their own design, perhaps featuring the WCUU call letters. If you have time, invite them to use heavier paper and paint, for a more durable backdrop.
3. Set up the studio, including the real or simulated equipment. Ask volunteers to arrange chairs for the Anchor, the NUUs Analyst and designate where the Roving Reporters will stand, and position cameras, microphones, lights and any other equipment. If you are using real equipment, show volunteers how to use each item properly. Youth operating unfamiliar equipment should work with an adult who knows the equipment well.

4. Additional jobs could include writing and/or drawing a short station break announcement and making name cards with On-Air People's roles (especially useful for longer WCUU segments when you may wish to switch roles midway to include more youth as On-Air People).

The Broadcast

When the theme music and backdrop are ready, ask for volunteers to staff your first show. If the group is small, co-leaders will take the Studio Crew roles. If the group is large, expand the Studio Crew as needed and/or set up seating for an in-studio audience.

Explain that you will need On-Air People and Studio Crew. On-Air People will include an Anchor, two Roving Reporters, two Typical UUs and a NUUs Analyst. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Consider giving your Kid for the Day first chance at being the Anchor. The script for this WCUU broadcast is quite short; most sixth graders will be able to read it easily. Also, this script is complete (although you may invite youth to add to it, if you have time). WCUU segments in some later sessions will ask youth to create their own dialogue.

If you are using real equipment, give technical roles to youth who know how to use the equipment; if you have a recorded theme song, choose a sound engineer familiar with your music player. You should probably be the director for this first WCUU broadcast. You might ask a youth to assist you. Consider using youth directors in later WCUU segments.

Give scripts to all who need them.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

After the Broadcast

Make sure technical equipment is shut down and put away properly. Engage volunteers to "break down" the WCUU studio and store reusable equipment and materials.

Including All Participants

Try to place youth in roles they want and which will best engage them. Most youth need an active role to be fully engaged, yet some can have a meaningful experience as an audience member. Adapt the roles as needed, to give every youth a chance to try roles that interest them.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session with words like these:

Today we talked about big questions and we focused on one: "Where do we come from?" We heard a UU song that asks that question and says "life is a riddle and a mystery." In WIT Time, we thought about our own answers. Next, we heard a story about where absolutely everything comes from. Finally, we did our first WCUU broadcast, and heard some typical UU ideas about where we come from.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , UU Principles and Sources
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , Economic Justice Continuums
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Paper and pens/pencils for seated variation of continuum activity

- Optional: Poster board, markers and additional arts and crafts supplies
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Supplies for iron-on t-shirts

Preparation for Activity

- See if your congregation has posters of the Unitarian Universalist Principles. If not, you may order [posters from the UUA Bookstore](#). Or, find the text of the Principles on the Unitarian Universalist Association website or in Leader Resource 1.
- Optional: Obtain a copy of the UU Principles in children's language. Find a variety of resources on [inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop](#).
- Print out Leader Resource 3.

Description of Activity

Among the big questions most young people eventually ask are two related to economic justice: Why is the world so unfair, and what should and can I do about the injustice I see? The Faith in Action segments in the Tapestry of Faith curriculum series offers a wide variety of answers to those questions.

In Riddle and Mystery, economic justice is a recurring Faith in Action theme. Consider three possible approaches:

1. Identify a long-term social justice project that your group can work on in some way during every session.
2. Have the group participate in the specific Faith in Action activities provided for each session.
3. Combine the first two approaches.

If possible, directly involve your youth with the people they are trying to help. However, this is not always easy or even possible. In some communities, soup kitchens are welcoming places where young people can assist, while in other communities they may be less safe than you would like, or difficult to access. Some wonderful projects involve people in need in faraway communities, even on other continents.

The more hands-on the project, the better. It is valuable for youth to ask others in their congregation for money to fund a project, but it is better if the youth earn the money with car washes, bake sales and other activities. It is good for youth give money to Habitat for Humanity, but it is better—more rewarding for all and more fun for many youth—if they can help build homes.

For this first session, you might explain Faith in Action simply with ideas like this:

Many Unitarian Universalists practice faith in action. This means we try to make their actions fit their beliefs. Through Faith in Action projects, we can help make the world a better place. Faith in Action is part of the answer Unitarian Universalists give to Paul Gauguin's third question, "Where are we going?" In other words, "What are we and the world going to become?" We believe our own actions make a difference.

Explain that Riddle and Mystery often suggests that youth do Faith in Action projects connected with economic justice. Ask what the group thinks "economic justice" means. (Simply put, it means giving everybody a fair share of Earth's resources—enough to be safe, healthy and comfortable.) Then move into the activity.

Economic Justice Continuums. Help your youth explore their ideas about economic justice by offering the questions on Leader Resource 3, Economic Justice Continuums. Explain that a continuum in this case means a range of possible answers to a question. Invite the youth to stand. Indicate one side of the room to represent "yes" and the other to represent "no." Ask them to move to the answer that they think is best, or stand somewhere in between if they have reasons to answer both yes and no. Suggest they imagine a line stretching from one wall to the other with the numbers one to ten. One is for yes, and ten for no. Seven means mostly no, three means mostly yes, and so forth. Say that when youth have taken their positions, you will ask them to explain why they are there.

Economic Justice Meditation. Ask the youth to sit in meditative quiet and try to imagine a world with complete economic justice. Say that the meditation will begin when you sound the bell or tingshas the first time and continue in silence (except for meditative music if you are using it). Tell them the second ring of the bell or tingshas will signal them to quietly speak aloud some of their ideas about what full economic justice would be like. Their answers should be short—maybe one word, like "peace," or a few words like "everybody having equal health care." The third ring of the bell or tingshas will signal the end of the meditation.

Economic Justice Slogan. Ask youth to turn some of their ideas from the meditation into a punchy slogan. Process ideas by writing all contributions on newsprint, then helping youth reach a consensus.

Decide how to use the slogan. Point out that a slogan has power only when people act on it or spread it so other people will also act. How will youth share their slogan? Should they make a poster to leave in their meeting space for others to see? Make a series of smaller posters to place around their congregation's

meeting space? Organize the group to take action right away.

A second, inexpensive option is to give youth simple nametag supplies and have them write their group slogan instead of their names on them.

A third, more complex option is making t-shirts. You can prepare a design in a computer program, such as Photoshop, then print out the design on iron-on transfer paper or have a specialty printer produce the t-shirt. Your group can decide together on the t-shirt design, but probably a leader or a parent will need to follow through from there. On the Computer Arts website, find out [how to use Photoshop for t-shirt design](http://www.computerarts.co.uk/tutorials/2d__and__photoshop/photoshop_t-shirt_design) (at www.computerarts.co.uk/tutorials/2d__and__photoshop/photoshop_t-shirt_design).

Including All Participants

Adapt the continuum activity to include youth of limited mobility. You might have the group remain seated, write a number on a piece of paper to indicate their response to each question and hold up their paper when you give a signal.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. How was your mix of discussion and action? Did you involve all youth fully and meaningfully in your sessions despite any limitations they might have? Do you feel the youth have a sense of the importance of big questions?

Identify and assign preparations for the next session. Session 2 looks at the relationship of religions, especially Unitarian Universalism, to the big questions; its Faith in Action activity suggests a visitor speak with your group about congregational social action work.

TAKING IT HOME

Being religious means asking passionately the question of the meaning of our existence and being willing to receive answers, even if the answers hurt. — Paul Tillich

Talk about the quote. Paul Tillich was a religious philosopher who lived from 1886 to 1965. He seems to be saying that being religious means asking and trying to answer big questions. Do you agree with that? Do you think most Unitarian Universalists agree with that?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

We talked about big questions in general and one in particular: "Where do we come from?" We heard a song that includes the question and says "life is a riddle and a mystery." We talked about some of our own answers,

and we heard a story that explains everything by saying it is "turtles all the way down." We set up our WCUU television studio and did a WCUU broadcast about some UU ideas about where we come from.

ANSWERING TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

What do family members and friends have to say about the question: "Where do we come from?"

HAVE FUN

Find your own way to have fun with questions. Play a question-based game, like Jeopardy. Try some riddles. Or, play Twenty Questions: One player thinks up the name of a person, place or object that others have to guess by asking "yes" or "no" questions. Whoever gets the answer (by asking "Is it so-and-so? (or such-and-such?)") is the winner and gets to think up the next challenge. Consider a round or two of Twenty Questions about people and things connected to your religion and congregation.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something that makes you ask a question. What might that be? A grand piano in the middle of a field would make you ask, "What is that doing there?" Maybe you look out a window and see a bird feeder that makes you ask, "What kind of birds come there?" or "Does it need to be filled?" Bring your photo to the next session of Riddle and Mystery.

SHARED SEARCH

Visit a place that can help you answer big questions. What will it be? A church? A museum? Where else can you go?

FAMILY RITUALS

The sessions of Riddle and Mystery all begin with a chalice lighting ritual. Many other UU events also include rituals. Rituals are not just for religions. Families have rituals, too — ways they usually act together on certain occasions. You might have rituals that you follow together on holidays like Hanukkah or Christmas. Some families share the ritual of beginning each meal by saying grace, or thanks. What are some of your rituals? Where did they come from? Are they connected with your religious ideas? Do they help your family affirm or celebrate something else?

NIGHT WALK

Take a family walk to look at the sky on a nice, clear night. What do you see? What questions come to mind? Think if you were a cave person who lived many centuries ago and never saw a science book. Would your questions be different? Would the places you looked for answers be different?

TEACHING THE SONG

Share the song from the session with your family. It is "'Where Do We Come From?" Maybe you can borrow a copy of Singing the Journey to look at the music together; the song is Hymn 1003.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION

Look around your home for images of people working for economic justice. Include books, magazines and newspaper articles, as well as congregational and community service projects that involve your family members.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small notebooks for all participants
- Pencils/pens
- Masking tape
- A large bag or box to store notebooks

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain inexpensive notebooks (or, folders and loose paper) and a bag or box to hold them between sessions.
- Determine a safe place to keep the notebooks between sessions.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity offered in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Participants record their thoughts about today's Big Question in notebooks you provide and keep in your meeting space. In most sessions, five minutes will be enough time. This session suggests more so you can distribute notebooks and have youth write their names on them.

Distribute notebooks and pens or pencils. Invite participants to write their names on the notebook covers. Tell them the notebooks are a place to record their own thoughts, in words or drawings, about each session's Big Question. Say the notebooks will be private. You will keep them between sessions but not look at them. Youth can take them home at the end of Riddle and Mystery. They may wish to use them in an activity suggested for the final session.

Remind them of today's Big Question: "Where do we come from?" Say that if they have nothing to record, they should feel free to doodle or relax.

Give them about five minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal

their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups.

Remind the group of the last line spoken by the woman in the story:

It's turtles all the way down.

Say that two men named Thomas Cathcart & Daniel Klein wrote a book called *Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar*. They tell the turtle story in the book, then talk about what philosophy is like. They say:

Questions beget questions, and those questions beget another whole generation of questions. It's questions all the way down.

Ask:

- What do Cathcart and Klein mean when they say, "It's questions all the way down"?
- Are they right? Once you get started with big questions and answers, is there any end in sight?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: TURTLE SHELL ART (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper plates—two for each participant
- Narrow-tipped, washable markers in a variety of colors
- Stapler or tape
- Newspaper to protect work surfaces
- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , Turtle Shell Art

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Set art supplies at work tables.
- Optional: Search the Internet for "turtle creation myths" and "turtle folktales" to gather examples to briefly share with the group.

Description of Activity

Have youth create paper-plate turtle shells with thoughtful and artistic content and use them to explore the idea of "turtles all the way down." You can have the youth work individually or in pairs.

Show the youth where to get supplies and where to make their turtle shells. Distribute Handout 2 and review the instructions with the group so everyone understands what to do.

When all have finished their turtle shells, let volunteers share with the group. Give special attention to the inside art—the items youth would want in their own turtle-shell homes, and the big questions they think turtles might ask.

If you have time, ask the group to make a turtle tower by stacking all their turtle shells together. Remind them of the story's idea of "turtles all the way down." Lead a discussion with these questions:

- If it's "turtles all the way down," how many turtles would it take to get all the way down?
- Why does the story talk about turtles? Why not bears standing on top of each other's shoulders "all the way down?"
- What animal would you choose if you were writing the story?

Mention that turtles are found in the creation myths and folktales of many cultures; share any examples you have found.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: QUESTIONING FUN (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Collections of riddles and other jokes involving questions, as well as UU jokes

Preparation for Activity

- Gather examples of riddles, games and other amusements that involve questions. You might do an Internet search to collect a few "kid jokes" or "knock-knock jokes."

Description of Activity

This light-hearted activity makes the important point that questions can be fun as well as thought-provoking and reinforces that questions are a vital part of life.

Invite youth to talk about fun with questions. Explain that we can have different feelings about different questions. Some questions may cause us to say "Huh?" Other

questions might cause fear. Ask for examples of scary questions. (Some possibilities: What is that hairy thing crawling up your leg? Did you hear what happened to so-and-so? Are you ready for a test on yesterday's homework?)

Point out that people spend lots of time and energy on questions that are meant for entertainment. Ask for some examples and record them on newsprint. Responses might include quiz shows, games like Jeopardy and Twenty Questions, riddles and other jokes.

Ask why question-and-answer jokes are so popular. (One reason might be that the question makes you think before you hear the punch line, and while you are thinking, you are expecting something funny, so you tend to laugh even at jokes that are not very funny.)

Ask youth to describe any questioning games they like. Invite them to share any jokes they know involving questions. Point out that they are in a religious exploration program, and request that they share jokes that are on the clean side and do not make fun of other people. You might say:

The rule is: If in doubt, keep it to yourself. Some jokes that you and your friends find harmless and fun may not be appropriate here.

If nobody has mentioned knock-knock jokes, mention them yourself and give an example. (Knock knock. Who's there? Ben. Ben who? Ben knocking so long my hand hurts.) Ask for other examples. Then challenge the group to complete this sequence: "Knock knock. / Who's there? / UU. / UU who?" Possible completions include: "You, you usually are," and "You, you UU." The completions do not have to be great.

If you have time and feel comfortable, mention that there are jokes about Unitarian Universalists which involve questions. One of the best known begins: "Why did the UU cross the road?" One answer is: "To support the chicken in its search for its own path."

As time allows and as appropriate, contribute additional questioning jokes of your own.

End by asking if participants are surprised to realize how questions bring fun, connection to others and maybe even a sense of meaning to our lives.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: CORNER QUESTIONS — SORTING QUESTIONS OUT (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, and markers and tape

- [Leader Resource 4](#) (included in this document) ,
Corner Questions

Preparation for Activity

- Make four large signs: RELIGION / SELF / SCIENCE / FRIENDS & FAMILY. Post the signs in the room's corners, high enough to be seen throughout the room.
- Print out Leader Resource 4.

Description of Activity

This activity gives participants a sense of how human questioning relates to religion.

Point out the four signs (RELIGION, SELF, SCIENCE, FRIENDS & FAMILY) posted in the corners. Explain that you will ask a series of questions, and that after each one, youths should go to the corner showing the best possible source for good answers. You might say:

For example, if the question asks, "What causes lightning?" and you believe the explanation is entirely scientific, you might go to the science corner. Or, if you think thunderstorms might come from God to punish or reward people, you might go to the religion corner.

Sometimes you may think there are two or more sources that could answer a question. In that case, go to the corner of your first choice, and point to the corner or corners of your other choices.

Have the group stand. Then ask any of the questions from Leader Resource 4, Corner Questions, and let youths move to the corners of their choice. When all are in place, ask volunteers to explain their reasoning. Why have they chosen to stand where they are? Say they can move to another corner if somebody else convinces them that the new corner is a better place to be.

Ask as many of the questions as you have time for, in any order you wish. Add some questions of your own, if you like. When youth stand in one corner and point elsewhere, ask them to talk about why more than one source might provide a good answer to the question.

With three or four minutes remaining, lead the youth to discuss what types of question each of the sources is best at answering. Use these questions:

- Is any one of the four sources better than the others?
- How do science and religion relate? Are they in conflict or can you believe in both? Point out that many scientists are religious people. Linus Pauling, a great chemist, was also a Unitarian Universalist.

- What is a question that science might never be able to answer?
- Are there some questions only religion can answer?

Conclude with words like these:

Most Unitarian Universalists agree that you need to go to different places and use different tools to answer different questions. We will see that all through Riddle and Mystery. In fact, Unitarian Universalists have a list of sources we use to help answer questions—especially the big ones. We will talk about our Sources more in another session.

Including All Participants

Modify the activity so youth with limited mobility can participate fully. Instead of standing and moving, participants might point to the corners of their choices. Or, give each youth four cards with 1, 2, 3 and 4 on them, and invite them to hold up a card to make their choices.

STORY: TURTLES

Adapted from an anecdote told in *A Brief History of Time* by Stephen Hawking (Bantam, 1988), *Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar* by Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein (Penguin Group, 2007) and other sources. The [Wikipedia website](#) presents the story in a variety of versions.

What if I ask you where everything comes from? What will you say?

Leader: Invite responses. You might repeat the questions to elicit multiple responses and sustain the conversation for few moments.

There's a well known story about a famous person who was explaining how things got started. Some people say the person was Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher and mathematician, but that doesn't really matter. Whoever it was spoke for a time about stars and planets in orbit and comets and things like that, then finally stopped and asked if anybody had questions.

An older woman stood up at the back of the hall and objected. She might have used words like these: "That sounds good. But it's just plain silly. It's gibberish. It's poppycock. That's not at all how things are."

"Well how are they?" asked the lecturer.

"The earth is a flat plate," said the woman. "And it's resting on the back of a giant turtle."

Leader: Ask what the youth would have replied if they had been the lecturer. Accept some ideas and then continue with the story.

The lecturer smiled. "I don't see how that can be true," he said. "Because if the earth is a flat plate being held up by a turtle, what is holding the turtle up?"

"You are a very clever young man," the woman replied. "But the fact is that it's turtles all the way down."

Leader: Ask for comments on her response. Accept a few. Then continue, allowing further comments as time allows.

The lecturer and the old woman were both trying to answer some of the oldest and biggest questions: How did everything start? How does it work?

The old woman's explanation is something most of us do not believe in. We think that if we sent a rocket ship out as far as it could possibly go, then asked it to take a picture, we would not see a big turtle holding everything up. If we went back to the beginning of time we might see a big bang, but not a turtle suddenly holding up a flat plate with everything on it. But somebody—maybe the old woman in the story—might say, "You cannot go back through time. And the rocket has not gone far enough out into space yet. Forever is a long way away, and if the rocket could really go forever you could see the turtle. But you cannot ever quite get to forever, so you will just have to believe what I say about the turtle."

There are many different stories about where everything comes from. The Bible, for example, says that God created everything.

Leader: Ask participants if they know any other creation stories. Note that a later session of Riddle and Mystery asks how life began and talks about evolution.

That's the thing about a lot of big questions. It is difficult, and maybe impossible to prove the answers. We are still asking the big questions that millions of people asked before us and that billions of people will ask after us. That is one reason we have religions, to help us think about the big questions and possible answers. You might say that big questions are the ones that religions are best at helping us answer.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

Where do we come from?

HANDOUT 2: TURTLE SHELL ART

Here is how to do your Turtle Shell Art project:

1. Get two paper plates and drawing supplies like markers.
2. Think ahead to what your completed turtle shell will look like: As you finish, you will put the hollow sides of your two plates together and staple or tape the rims together in one spot so people can open them up and look at the insides. But before you do that, you need to draw and write on the plates.
3. On the inside of one plate, draw pictures of "must-have" items you could not do without and would have to have in your house if you carried it with you wherever you went, the way a turtle does. You might draw a computer, for example, or a pet dog—if you think these are really "must-haves."
4. On the inside of the other plate, write three or four big questions that you think a turtle might ask about life.
5. Now decorate the other sides of the two plates (the sides that will show when you put the plates together) to look like a turtle shell. One plate will be the top, and the other the bottom. Feel free to create a unique turtle.
6. Do anything else you like to the plates.
7. Now, fasten them together. Use tape or staples to hold the plates together in only one spot so you can open them and show other people.
8. You are done.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: UU PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

Create a poster of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and another poster of the Unitarian Universalist 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
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

These Principles and Sources of faith are the backbone of our religious community.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WCUU SCRIPT

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU program is a news report about Unitarian Universalist ideas on where we come from. Your job is to read your lines and keep the show moving as this script describes.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name]. I am here in the WCUU newsroom with a UU report on one of the biggest questions ever asked: "Where do we come from?" Today we will hear two roving reporters interviewing typical UUs about their views. Our report will conclude with a brilliant comment by WCUU's brilliant NUUs Analyst. That is NUUs with two big Us. We take you now to our First Roving Reporter.

[Director: Cue the First Roving Reporter.]

First Roving Reporter: Hi there, Anchor. Hi there, world. I'm standing on a street corner talking with the morning's First Typical UU, and I am just about to spring Today's Big Question. So tell me, First Typical UU, where do we come from?

First Typical UU: That's an easy one. We come from stardust. That is where it all began in the huge Big Bang a long time ago. First there was nothing. Then there was stardust. Then there was everything. Science explains it all from then on, and that's where we come from.

First Roving Reporter: Thank you, First Typical UU. Now back to you, Anchor.

Anchor: And now it's on to our Second Roving Reporter. Hey there, Second, what have you got for us?

[Director: Cue the Second Roving Reporter.]

Second Roving Reporter: I have the Second Typical UU, and I'm asking Today's Big Question right now: So what do you think, Second Typical UU, where do we come from?

Second Typical UU: Mostly from mystery, then from a million different places after that. I come from here, and I come from there, and I come from my parents, and I come from everywhere, and I come from mystery. How did life begin? That's a mystery. Did a god get it started? That's a mystery. I love a good mystery, don't you?

Second Roving Reporter: Now wait a minute, I am asking the questions around here.

Anchor: Wait a minute both of you, you are getting ahead of us. WCUU will talk about the beginning of life and whether there is a god on later programs. Right now Today's Big Question is "Where do we come from?" So let's turn to our NUUs Analyst to hear what UU wisdom says.

[Director: Cue the NUUs Analyst.]

NUUs Analyst: Thank you, Anchor. As we have just heard, UUs respond to Today's Big Question in many ways. In fact UUs respond to all big questions—and little ones, too—in many ways. Some people say that UUs can believe anything they want. That is not really true. UUs do not believe that humans appear out of space ships that pass by in the night. Science tells them otherwise. But UUs love exploring mysteries. That's why our theme song talks about life "as a riddle and a mystery." UUs look to science for their answers, and they look to all the world's great sources of ideas and information. Like books, like different religions, like stories about turtles all the way down. UUs . . .

Anchor (interrupting): Thank you, NUUs Analyst. I am sure you have more to say, but we are out of time today. All you viewers out there will just need to keep watching our future reports to find out more about big questions and UU responses to them.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Anchor: This is WCUU now going off the air. That is WCUU for Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists. Tune in again—same time, same station. This is [your real or stage name] signing off.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: ECONOMIC JUSTICE CONTINUUMS

1. I believe one of the biggest questions people should ask is how to achieve economic justice in the world.
2. I think there is economic justice in the world right now.
3. I believe it's everybody for themselves. Everybody should work to get as much money as they possibly can and keep it for themselves.
4. Economic justice means my little brother (pretend you have one even if you do not) should give half his toys away to a kid who has nothing.
5. Economic justice means the government should take my iPod or cell phone or camera or bicycle away from me and give it to some other kid who has nothing.
6. It is the job of governments to create economic justice.
7. If one country is poor and another country is rich, the poor one should attack the rich one and make it share its wealth.
8. It is the job of religions and congregations to create economic justice.
9. It is the job of individuals like you and me to create economic justice.
10. There should be a law that limits how much money any one person can have.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: CORNER QUESTIONS

Should I go out for the soccer team this year?

Why does the universe exist?

Why does water boil when you heat it?

What happens when you die?

Why doesn't so-and-so like me?

Why do I look the way I do?

Should I believe in God?

What's the best way to cut sandwiches? Side to side or corner to corner?

Should I watch that show even if my parent said not to?

Where do dreams come from?

What am I allergic to?

What should I be when I'm an adult?

Why do airplanes crash?

Why do roses smell so nice?

Was Jesus the son of God?

What's the name of that dog over there?

What does "faith" mean?

How tall am I going to be?

Will the world ever end?

What's my favorite color?

Should I take that bicycle that somebody left on the street?

Why do wars happen?

FIND OUT MORE

Read "[Home grown Unitarian Universalism](#)," an article in *UU World*, Spring 2008 by William J. Doherty, for more ideas to extend this session at home.

The National Public Radio program, "Present at the Creation: The Quiz Show," offers [information on the history of quiz shows](#). For more about quiz and game shows, visit [The Museum of Broadcast Communications](#) website.

SESSION 2: RELIGION TO THE RESCUE

INTRODUCTION

This is my living faith, an active faith, a faith of verbs: to question, explore, experiment, experience, walk, run, dance, play, eat, love, learn, dare, taste, touch, smell, listen, argue, speak, write, read, draw, provoke, emote, scream, sin, repent, cry, kneel, pray, bow, rise, stand, look, laugh, cajole, create, confront, confound, walk back, walk forward, circle, hide, and seek. — Terry Tempest Williams

Big Question: What are we?

Understanding and describing their religion can be a challenge for young Unitarian Universalists. Activities center on exploring Paul Gauguin's second big question—"What are we?"—and offer participants "Unitarian Universalists" as one answer. The session delves further with a second question: "What is Unitarian Universalism?" Religions exist, the session says, in part to help people join together in a search for answers to big questions. Children investigate the words "religion," "faith" and "spirituality" and learn how each relates to Unitarian Universalism.

Note: The Faith in Action activity suggests inviting a guest to speak about your congregation's social action activities.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "What are we?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses to it
- Offer a brief "recess speech" for describing Unitarian Universalism
- Posit that there are "answering" religions and congregations and "questioning" religions and congregations, and examine where Unitarian Universalism fits
- Present a brief introduction to the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources
- Offer brief explanations of faith, religion and spirituality and how they relate to one another and Unitarian Universalism
- Explore the meaning of faith in action.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify "Unitarian Universalist" as one identity they may hold
- Learn one way to describe their religion to friends
- Appreciate Unitarian Universalism as a religion where questioning is valued
- Understand how the Principles and Sources can help them explore their own answers to big questions
- Explore the meaning of and relationships among faith, religion, spirituality and faith in action
- Discover that Unitarian Universalism is a religion of action as well as belief and thought.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: WIT Time — Alien Brainstorm	5
Activity 2: Story — The Big Question	7
Activity 3: Q&A Church Murals	15
Activity 4: Principles and Sources	7
Activity 5: Then What is a Religion?	5
Activity 6: WCUU — Acting out Faith	13
Faith in Action: Saving Lives	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — We Are...	10
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Punctuation Debate	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Make a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Reflect on today's Big Question: "What are we?" How many ways might you answer that question? Consider how sixth graders might approach the question. "We" to a sixth grader may mean a group of friends; some may be troubled by being left outside some groups. Perhaps you can help them recognize your congregation as a place where all who come are accepted as part of "we."

Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their search of life's mysteries will be good and rewarding today.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant from Session 1

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and post a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants to make their own.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant, generated in Session 1.

- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to (make and) wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the paper back in the bag or box. (If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.)

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. Explain that you will use this same ritual—chalice lighting, followed by silence—at each session.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

If you have posted a covenant made by the group in Session 1, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process any suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—What are we?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice. Move the chalice table aside as necessary to allow movement in the room.

Set aside the "Today's Big Question" sign and the Kid for the Day bag or box, with the names and extra pieces of card stock, for re-use.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: WIT TIME — ALIEN BRAINSTORM (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Timepiece that shows seconds
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument

Preparation for Activity

- Post sheets of blank newsprint where youth can easily gather and write on them—approximately one sheet for every several participants.

Description of Activity

Announce that it is Wit Time. Remind the youth they will use this time to think about their own answers to today's Big Question. Remind them that the question is "What are we?" Then continue with words like these:

Imagine you are home alone when a little green alien suddenly floats in. You look at the alien and say "Who and what are you?" The alien looks back and says "You go first. Who and what are you?" You are a bit nervous about this alien. You do not know how it got into the house and you do not know what its powers are. You decide you had better do what the alien says, and go first.

Without speaking, write on the posted newsprint how you might answer the question "Who and what are you?" Write as many answers as you can. One answer can be your name. But you are more than your name. You are also "a this and a that and a something else"—maybe a student, or a world famous young movie star, for example. Make at least one of your answers about all of you, not just one—say what and who you, the youth in this room, are as a group.

Give the youth about three minutes to write. When most have finished, ask them all to stand back and read what everyone wrote. Focus on the words "Unitarian Universalists" if somebody has written it down. If nobody has, ask if these words are another good answer for the question "What are we?" for the group. If they agree, write "Unitarian Universalists" on the newsprint.

Now say:

Imagine that you gave the alien a whole bunch of answers. The alien did not react until you identified yourself as a Unitarian Universalist. Then the alien looked puzzled and said "What is a Unitarian Universalist?" How would you answer that? How can you explain Unitarian Universalism?

Allow a few responses. Then say that you want to share a story about young person who had to answer that question.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE BIG QUESTION (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[The Big Question](#) (included in this document)"
- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and print it out.
- Optional: Post blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Gather the group. Read or tell the story. When you are done, ask a few volunteers to sum up Milo's description of Unitarian Universalism.

Mention that adults sometimes talk about having an "elevator speech" to briefly explain a complicated topic. An elevator speech can be said in just a minute—about as long as it takes to ride a few floors with someone in an elevator. Milo's recess speech about Unitarian Universalism is like an elevator speech.

Ask if participants have ever been asked by friends to explain Unitarian Universalism. How have they responded? How would they respond? Allow a few volunteers to share.

If you have time, record phrases from volunteer contributions on newsprint. Invite the group to suggest modifications to one another's ideas and shape a "recess speech" together.

ACTIVITY 3: Q&A CONGREGATION MURALS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A roll or two large sheets of blank mural paper, and masking tape
- Oil pastels and (optional) additional drawing, coloring and arts and crafts materials
- [Handout 2](#), (included in this document) Q&A Congregations

Preparation for Activity

- Print out a few copies of Handout 2.
- Attach mural paper with masking tape on two walls, two tables or the floor, positioned so a group can work independently on each mural.

- Set out oil pastels and any other drawing, coloring or arts and crafts materials.
- Decide how you will form two groups. One way is to have youth count off by twos.

Description of Activity

In this activity, youth consider the difference between an "answering religion" and a "questioning religion," then place Unitarian Universalism on a continuum between the two.

Say in your own words:

There are thousands and thousands of religions in the world. All of them think about big questions like who or what we are, and where we come from, and whether there is a god. In fact, one reason religions exist is to bring people together in their search for answers. You could say the religions come to the rescue and help keep people from getting lost in their search.

Different religions help in different ways. Some religions give their members definite answers to accept and believe. Some religions give people a place to take their questions and perhaps find people who are asking the same ones, to help them come up with their own individual answers.

Imagine that there is a new, answering religion in town. This religion provides all the answers to its members' questions. Let's call it "The Congregation of the Awesome Answer."

Write that name on one sheet of mural paper. Then say:

At the same time, another congregation is starting up. It is part of a new, questioning religion and it is called "The Congregation of the Quantum Question."

Write that name on the second sheet of mural paper.

Then pose the challenge: "What do you think you would find if you attended one of these two congregations?"

Tell the youth they will work in two groups to represent what people might find at these two congregations. Form the groups, and direct each group to one of the murals. Tell the groups they will have about ten minutes to complete their murals. Indicate where you have placed oil pastels and any other arts and crafts materials they may use.

Distribute the handout. Suggest youth use its prompts to get started; you may wish to have an adult lead each group through the handout's prompts.

When time is up, ask the youth to clean up, examine both murals and then return to their chairs. Lead a discussion with questions like these:

- What do your murals show? Tell us some of your ideas.
- How are the murals different?
- How are the murals the same?
- What about our UU congregation? Is it more like the Church of the Awesome Answer or the Church of the Quantum Question? (You might remind the group what the story about Milo said: UUs decide many things for ourselves. Our religion helps us think about questions; it does not give us answers.)
- Have you been to a congregation where the religion seems to give more answers than ours does? What congregations or religions? What are some of their answers?
- Do you have friends whose religions seem to give them answers to big questions? What questions? What are the answers? Are the youth expected to believe the answers in order to be part of the congregation or religion?
- Are there times when a religion that gives all the answers seems attractive? Why or why not?

Encourage participants toward original ideas. Be alert for any suggestion that one approach is the "right" approach. Point out that being encouraged to ask a question and being encouraged to accept an answer can each have value for some people. Reinforce the concept of Unitarian Universalist tolerance for many different religions and beliefs. Guide youth to use tolerance in expressing their negative reactions and critical opinions. Do not allow religion bashing.

Mention that Unitarian Universalism is a "liberal religion." Liberal religions are like the Congregation of the Quantum Question. Liberal religions are more tolerant of different answers to the same question. "Conservative religions" are like the Congregation of the Awesome Answer. Members share the same answers to the big questions.

To conclude, say in your own words:

The names—Awesome Answer and Quantum Question—make these congregations seem extreme and very different. But most congregations do not really offer an answer for every single question. And, even questioning congregations have guidelines to help people who are looking for their own answers. That is true with UU congregations.

Give youth a stretch break before moving on.

ACTIVITY 4: PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A poster of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and a poster of the Unitarian Universalist Sources
- Optional: A copy of the UU Principles in children's language

Preparation for Activity

- See if your congregation has posters of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and/or Sources. If not, you may order [posters from the UUA Bookstore](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/showproducts.cfm?FullCat=138). Or, use Session 1, Leader Resource 1 to create posters. Display the posters; if possible, leave them posted for the duration of Riddle and Mystery.
- Optional: Obtain a copy of the UU Principles in children's language. Find a variety of resources on the [UUA Bookstore website](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/showproducts.cfm?FullCat=12).

Description of Activity

This activity introduces the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles and the six Sources from which Unitarian Universalism draws, as they relate to big questions. If the youth may be unacquainted with these resources, take a little extra time, but do not push the presentation to the point of group boredom. It is best to present the Principles and Sources in small doses. Future sessions will provide further opportunities.

Point out the posted Principles. Ask if youth are familiar with them. Read quickly through them, offering, in addition, simpler language, if you feel the group needs it. If you have time, ask for volunteers to come to the poster and point out a favorite Principle.

Ask if youth agree with this idea:

Here is something you can say to an alien or anybody else who wants to know what Unitarian Universalists are. You can say "Look at our Principles. They will show you who we are."

Explain that the Principles are a covenant—or agreement—among the congregations of Unitarian Universalist Association. Though they were not written to guide the behavior of individuals, most UUs think the Principles can help us know how to act.

Pose a question:

Imagine somebody asks if God exists, and someone else answers, "Yes, there is a God and that God cares most about the people who believe in God." Would that be a good UU answer?

Affirm:

No, it would not—see the first Principle.

You might also say that some people believe there is a god that has opinions, for example that people of a certain color are special, or that people in certain religions are special, or that men, for example, are more special than women. Those are not Unitarian Universalist answers to questions about God. If you believed them, you would not be comfortable in a UU congregation (and the congregation might not be comfortable with you).

Then move on to the Sources. Explain/remind that Unitarian Universalism looks to many places for answers to our big questions. Review the list quickly, simplifying the language as needed. If you have time, ask for volunteers to come to the poster, point out a favorite Source and give an example—or give one yourself. You might share a quote from Mahatma Gandhi as an example of "words and deeds of prophetic women and men."

Point out that even glancing at the list of our Sources tells a lot about Unitarian Universalism—because it shows UUs look in many different places for answers to big questions.

Pose this question:

What if the big question is "How do I know what to believe?" and someone answers "I know what to believe because the Bible tells me what to believe and the answers in the Bible are the only ones anyone should believe." Would that be a good UU answer?"

Affirm:

No, because Unitarian Universalists agree that answers can be found in many different sources, like all the ones on the list. Many UUs think the Bible is a good source for answers, but it is not the only one we should use.

ACTIVITY 5: THEN WHAT IS A RELIGION? (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review your own understanding of the terms faith, religion and spirituality.
- Review this activity. Be ready, if time is short, to bring the group quickly to the explanations of the three terms provided in the Description of Activity. Make sure you do not skip the conclusion, which connects these terms to youth's UU identities.
- Post three sheets of newsprint and title them RELIGION, FAITH and SPIRITUALITY.
- NOTE: If the group will do Session 16, UU You, you may want to re-use this Description of Activity and any notes you make on newsprint. Identify a place to store these materials where you or a co-leader can retrieve it later.

Description of Activity

Faith, religion and spirituality are all parts of a Unitarian Universalist experience. Exploring these concepts and their inter-relationships within a Unitarian Universalist identity will help youth more deeply understand their "UU" answer to the question "What are we?"

Say in your own words:

We have been talking a lot about religion in this session, and that makes sense, since Unitarian Universalism is our shared religion. You could say that religion brings us together here today. But, what is religion? What does the word mean?

Direct the group's attention to the newsprint you have titled RELIGION. Invite participants to contribute one- or two-word ideas they associate with the word. Have them call out their ideas, or ask them to raise their hands. Record all contributions on the newsprint without editing or commenting.

Now turn to the newsprint titled FAITH." Ask the group, "What comes to mind when you hear this word? What do you think it means?" Record all responses.

Finally, ask the group to consider spirituality: "What does this word mean to you?" Record responses on the sheet titled SPIRITUALITY.

Invite the group to consider all three sheets of newsprint. What phrases or ideas appear on more than one sheet? Circle the similar and repeated items, using a different color marker, to help the group visualize.

Now focus on the ways the three words differ. Ask: Which items appear only on one sheet?

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- What is the difference among religion, faith and spirituality?
- In what ways are they related?
- (for each word) In what ways do we bring it with us when we come to our congregation?
- (for each word) In what ways do we find it when we come here?

Affirm contributions that are in tune with these explanations. As needed, draw from these explanations to help the group understand each term:

- Religion: A religion is a tradition or organization that provides guidelines for how to approach the big questions and how to live an ethical life. A religion has ritual practices and traditions to reinforce shared beliefs and to celebrate belonging. Within a religion, people who share beliefs come together according to agreed-upon procedures and rituals. Religions have leaders to support or enforce the beliefs and practices, and have sacred texts or oral traditions to serve as a foundation for beliefs and practices. Religions often also have sacred or special meeting spaces (churches, temples, synagogues) and other sacred places (rivers, mountains, birthplaces of prophets, etc.).
- Faith: The word "faith" is used in more than one way. Some people use the word "faith" to mean the same thing as "religion." For example, someone might say "the Catholic faith" meaning "the Catholic religion." Some use the word "faith" to mean "beliefs." For example, "the Buddhist faith" meaning "the Buddhist belief." In Unitarian Universalism, we share a faith even though we do not all have the same beliefs about the big questions. We do all believe in the freedom to seek our own answers to the big questions in a responsible search for truth and meaning. Faith includes beliefs, but it is much more. Faith can be defined as "making meaning." Faith also includes finding purpose in our lives, determining what is right and what is wrong, and knowing what is true about life and the universe. Faith is about what we trust, and what we most value. Whether we are aware of it or not, we act on our faith all the time — on what we trust and believe to be true. You do not need to be part of a religion to have faith and make meaning in your life. But when we are part of a religion, a congregation — a faith community — we have each other's support in exploring and expressing our faith; we have other people and an inspiring tradition to help us seek answers to

big questions and live our lives with meaning and purpose.

- Spirituality: Spirituality is a human quality inside everyone. It is the capacity inside you to experience wonder, mystery and awe, and a feeling of *connection*, whether to the universe, to nature, to other people, to all living things, to God or the divine. Each of us experiences spirituality in our own way. Meditation, walking, gardening, running, praying, singing, marching for civil rights, working in a homeless shelter, yoga — the variety of spiritual experiences is unlimited. Elements that seem common to a spiritual experience are the acts of paying attention, being in the moment, and reflecting on the experience. Your religion can nurture your spirituality by providing knowledge and experiences that are helpful. But like faith, humans can experience spirituality without a formal religion.
- The concepts of religion, faith, and spirituality are all both simple and difficult at the same time. They are simple because you can give easy definitions and think that you know what they mean. They are difficult because other people will understand these concepts differently and they also think they know what they mean. Communication about these words may be complicated.

Conclude by saying that the way in which each of us is a Unitarian Universalist combines religion, faith and spirituality in some way. The combinations and even the definitions of these words will be unique for each of us and will likely change over our lifetimes.

ACTIVITY 6: WCUU — ACTING OUT FAITH (13 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece

- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling..." followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Make enough copies of Leader Resource 1 for everyone who will have a role in the broadcast. The script has three On-Air People and an unlimited number of Pantomime People (who will not need scripts). If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Description of Activity

Explain the roles in this WCUU broadcast: three On-Air People (Co-Anchor 1, Co-Anchor 2 and NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst), as many Pantomime Players as you care to use and a Studio Crew. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Assign roles or invite volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might offer the Kid for the Day a chance to be a Co-Anchor or the NUUs Analyst. Ask other members of the group to be Pantomime Players. Explain that they will follow the instructions of the Co-Anchors; they will be asked to act but not to speak.

Distribute scripts to all who will need them. You may wish to read through the script together with the On-Air

People if not all participants are fluent readers. Other youth can finalize the studio set-up while the On-Air People prepare—but, do not encourage a lengthy or detailed rehearsal.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

Afterward, ask participants how it went. Lead a discussion with this question:

The broadcast offered a few beliefs that Unitarian Universalists share. Can you name any others?

Affirm that Unitarian Universalist Principles and values are strong and clear, yet broad enough to embrace most Unitarian Universalists' individual beliefs, even when they conflict with one another.

Mention that as Unitarian Universalists we share a religious heritage that goes back more than a thousand years. Our history is another way we can answer the question, "What are we?"

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session with words like these:

Today we asked the Big Question "What are we?" We imagined that we were talking to an alien, and gave a bunch of different answers, including that we are Unitarian Universalists. We heard a story about how one child explains Unitarian Universalism and we talked about how different religions handle big questions and answers. We saw that ours does not give people all the answers, but helps us find our own. We have Principles that can help guide people in their search for answers, and a list of Sources people can use when they search. We talked about how religion connects to spirituality and

faith. We saw that congregations and religions are groups of people who help each other answer big questions—just as we are doing in Riddle and Mystery.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use it to continue exploring the themes of today's session with their friends and their family.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on, in each of us, as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: CHANGING LIVES

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Newspaper ads and flyers, especially those with items appealing to sixth graders
- Paper and pencils/pens
- Optional: Information about prospective borrowers, from the Kiva website
- Optional: Computer with Internet connection
- Optional: Information about congregational and other local social justice programs

Preparation for Activity

- Post blank newsprint.
- Optional: Invite a member of your congregation's social justice committee to meet with the group.
- Optional: Explore the [Kiva website](http://www.kiva.org) (at www.kiva.org).

Description of Activity

Remind the group of today's Big Question: "What are we?" Say in your own words:

Unitarian Universalists answer that question partly by their actions. When UUs work for economic justice, they are acting out the second UU Principle. When UUs help save human, animal and plant lives, or work to keep balance in the environment, they are acting out our seventh Principle.

In this session, you could initiate plans for an ongoing Faith in Action project and/or engage the youth in conversation with a social justice activist in your congregation. You may find ideas that will work for the

group below under the heading "Changing a Life with Twenty-Five Dollars."

Ongoing Faith in Action Project

If the group will do an ongoing Faith in Action project during Riddle and Mystery, brainstorm possibilities now and choose one to pursue. Perhaps your congregation already supports an appropriate project. Working on a long range project with others in the congregation is a great way to strengthen multigenerational community.

Social Justice Visitor

Ask a member of your congregation's social justice or social action committee to join the group and talk about their projects. In advance, prepare the visitor to focus on activities that promote economic justice, particularly projects in which the youth might assist. Suggest that the visitor bring any printed material that may interest the group. If you wish, prepare the visitor to also share their own approach to Big Questions. Set a specific date and time for the visit and confirm a few days ahead.

When the visitor arrives, introduce them to the youth and explain that the visit will give them ideas for Faith in Action projects they can do during Riddle and Mystery. You might post blank newsprint and offer to assist the visitor by writing projects they mention and/or ideas, for the group to discuss. Allow time for youth to ask questions. Consider asking, if youth do not, why your visitor has become personally involved in social justice work. Ask also that the visitor respond to some big questions: Why do they think there is so much economic injustice in the world? Whose job is it to make the world more just? See if they will share their own approach to big questions like these.

Changing a Life with Twenty-Five Dollars

Challenge participants to think of ways \$25 could be important in saving or dramatically changing a human life.

Form small groups of two to four. Say you want each group to think up a story about how \$25 might be enough to help save a human life. When the stories are ready, the small groups will share them with each other.

Give each group paper and pencils to record their ideas if they wish. Say the stories do not have to be written or perfectly told. You are interested mostly in the general idea. Let the groups work in places where they will not overhear or interfere with each other. In ten minutes or so, bring them back together to share their ideas.

Looking at Ads. Ask whether twenty-five dollars seems like a lot of money to your youth. Point out that, whatever their answers, twenty-five dollars seem like a lot more money in some parts of the world than it does

in western countries. After all, about half the people in the world live on less than two dollars a day. Hand participants recent fliers and newspaper ads describing goods that might interest many sixth graders. Ask them to spend a few minutes looking through the ads for items that cost somewhere around twenty-five dollars and are more important than changing a life. (The assumption is that they will find none. However, they might identify items, like food or medicine that can be useful in saving a life.)

Changing Lives through Kiva. Introduce the youth to the Kiva website. Consider using a laptop with Internet connections in your workshop so your group can see how the site works. Or print out and bring to the group descriptions of a few people who are looking for Kiva loans. Explain:

Kiva is an organization that lets people like you and me lend small amounts of money to others who need it to operate small businesses in other parts of the world. Kiva accepts money in amounts as small as twenty-five dollars. So Kiva is one way that twenty-five dollars can dramatically change a life.

Use a laptop or the printouts you have brought to tell the group about some of the people currently hoping to borrow money. Ask for the group's reactions. Would they like to raise money for a Kiva loan? Could some youth speak to their families about lending money through Kiva? Do some of their families already support Kiva, or another similar organization? Later, talk with your co-leaders about whether and how to follow through with the responses you have heard.

Including All Participants

Do not assume all participants or their parents think of \$25 the same way. Some may think of it as "nothing" while others might view it as a considerable amount of money. Make sure you lead the group away from assumption and toward sensitivity about different financial resources in your group, the congregation and the wider world.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. How was your mix of discussion and action? Have you successfully found ways to involve all youth fully in your sessions despite any limitations they might have? Do you feel the youth understand the general approach of Unitarian Universalists to big questions, and how the Principles and Sources can help people find their own answers?

TAKING IT HOME

This is my living faith, an active faith, a faith of verbs: to question, explore, experiment, experience, walk, run, dance, play, eat, love, learn, dare, taste, touch, smell, listen, argue, speak, write, read, draw, provoke, emote, scream, sin, repent, cry, kneel, pray, bow, rise, stand, look, laugh, cajole, create, confront, confound, walk back, walk forward, circle, hide, and seek. — Terry Tempest Williams

Talk about the quote with family and friends. During which activities do you feel a greater sense of faith? Of spirituality? Of religion?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question is "What are we?" We said that one possible answer to that is that we are Unitarian Universalists. We asked another question that is big for us: "What are Unitarian Universalists?" We answered that partly with a story and partly with our own ideas. We thought about what religion, faith and spirituality have in common, how they are different, and what each might mean to us as a UU.

We made murals about answering congregations and questioning congregations. We said that the Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religion because instead of telling people all the answers, it supports the individual's search for answers and accepts that we all do not have to share the same beliefs about everything. We discussed some of the beliefs UUs do share and how we put our Faith in Action.

ANSWERING TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

What do family members and friends have to say about the question: "What are we?"

SHARED SEARCH

Go together to a place that is special to your family. Sit quietly together at the place and talk about what the place would tell a stranger about your family. You might try the same thing with some of your friends.

REFLECT ON YOUR RELIGION

What do people in your family mean when they use the words "faith," "religion" and "spirituality"? Ask them. The definitions may be different from those we heard and shared in the group.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something that shows what you are as a person—an item you like to have, or a place outside your house that feels like another home to you.

FAMILY MUSIC

Do something musical. Try making music by singing, or playing instruments together. Go to a concert that everybody will enjoy. Talk about any musical rituals your family has. Do you listen to certain songs at special times or holidays? Do a family's musical rituals help show who and what the family is?

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION

Another way to answer the question "What are we?" is that we are citizens of the world. What does your family do to help others in the world? If you need a place to start, share the [Kiva website](http://www.kiva.org) (at www.kiva.org) and read about opportunities to make small loans that may help save lives.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve participants' Big Questions notebooks begun in Session 1.
- Set out supplies for any new participants to start an individual notebook.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide any new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "What are you?" Suggest they write or draw about who and what they are as individuals, as members of their family, as Unitarian Universalists or as humans. Their ideas can be different from what you have talked about so far. If they have nothing to record, they may doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — WE ARE... (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: Recording of "We Are . . .," Hymn 1051 in *Singing the Journey*, and music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song—reading the words, singing together or playing a recording. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Say that the songs and hymns Unitarian Universalists sing help us answer today's Big Question, "What are we?" In fact, our UU hymnal supplement has a song called "We Are... "

Play a recording or read the words aloud to introduce the song. (You might also sing it, of course, or ask somebody else to do so.)

Ask for the group's reactions. Do participants like the song? Does it answer today's Big Question as well as they have in other activities? Better? Point out that the song is more poetic. It talks about who we are in terms of our ancestors, relatives and the "spirit of God," rather than in terms of our religion.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups.

Remind youth that their spirituality is their own capacity to seek answers to big questions and to feel connection with other people, the interconnected web of life, the universe and a larger, greater force or, if you believe in God, God. Ask:

Where does your spirituality come from?

Explore the question with the group, using these prompts:

- Does everyone have spirituality, whether they think they do or not?
- Does spirituality require any particular beliefs?
- How do spirituality and thought work together?
- How do spirituality and religion work together?
- Where do inner feelings of spirituality come from?
- Can we increase or decrease our spirituality? If so, how?
- Can we share it with others? If so, how?

If the group uses notebooks (Alternate Activity 1 in each session), you may wish to give them a few minutes to write or draw about the challenge question.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: PUNCTUATION DEBATE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Timepiece that shows seconds
- Optional: A coin

Description of Activity

This activity extends the conversation about answering and questioning religions (Activity 3) by asking youth to debate the relative importance of exclamation points and question marks. It should be popular with verbal youth.

Form two teams to debate this issue: Which is the more important punctuation mark, the question mark or the exclamation point? Set up any rules you like, but consider these: Let a representative from each side toss a coin to see who begins. The first speaker on the first side is allowed one minute to talk. The first speaker on the second side then gets one minute to talk. Then the second speaker on the first side gets a minute, and so forth until time runs out or everybody has spoken at least once. Everybody on each side must have a chance to speak, but anybody who wants to can pass. If one team has more members who wish to speak than the other, then the members of that team can speak more than once.

If the group is small (eight or fewer) consider asking one volunteer to play the role of question mark and the other to play the role of exclamation point and debate each other. The rest of the group can ask questions, offer ideas of their own and judge the contest—which is likely to end in a tie.

STORY: THE BIG QUESTION

"The Big Question" by Betsy Williams is taken from *uu&me*, Summer, 2006 (Church of the Larger Fellowship). Used by permission of the author.

Milo liked numbers. He often found himself counting people when he stood in a line, and he always checked how many pages there were in a book before he started reading it. For Milo, numbers were a way of connecting to the world. So when Milo's family moved halfway across the country, the first thing he did was to Google his new town and check out the numbers. Here's what he found:

Population: 9,248

Schools: 2 elementary schools, 1 middle school, 1 high school

Grocery Stores: 2

Pizza Places: 3

Movie Theaters: 1

Roman Catholic Church: 1

Lutheran Church: 1

Neighborhood Christian Church: 1

Zero Unitarian Universalist churches like the one his family used to go to.

On the first day at his new school, his social studies teacher, trying to be friendly and welcoming to Milo, asked him what church his family went to. He answered, "Unitarian Universalist."

Everyone, including his teacher, looked at him with the same blank expression. Then the teacher asked, "What's that?"

Milo's head flooded with numbers—the number of kids in his Sunday school in his old congregation (56), the number of Unitarians who have been presidents of the United States (5), the number of UU congregations (1,042)—numbers that he knew wouldn't answer the question. So he just answered, "It's a religion," and sighed with relief when the teacher didn't ask the big question: "So what do you believe?"

But Milo knew it was only a matter of time. So Milo and his parents came up with an answer for him—they called it his "recess speech." It had three parts: 1. Unitarian Universalism is an old religion that grew out of Christianity. 2. UUs decide for themselves what they believe about religious ideas like God and Jesus and life after death. 3. UUs believe we have a responsibility to make the world a better place, and that starts with treating people and the earth with love, kindness, and respect.

Milo liked that—he could remember three parts, and three was a lucky number for him!

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

What are we?

HANDOUT 2: Q&A CONGREGATIONS

What if you went to the Congregation of the Awesome Answer or the Congregation of the Quantum Question? What would you see there? Help your group make a mural showing some of what you think you might find. Here are some ideas to get you started. (You can get more ideas by remembering what you have seen in your own congregation and other religious meeting places you have visited.)

Symbols: Some congregations have crosses, some have chalices, some have other symbols. What will yours have?

Special words on the wall: What will they say?

Fancy windows—maybe stained glass: What will they show?

Books: What will some of the titles be?

Pictures: What will they show?

The building where the congregation meets: What will it look like? Will it have a steeple? If so, what is on top of the steeple?

A sign out front with a brief message: What will it say?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: WCUU SCRIPT

To the Co-Anchors:

Today's WCUU program is a news report about Unitarian Universalist ideas on where we come from. Your job is to read your lines and keep the show moving as this script describes.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue Co-Anchor 1.]

Co-Anchor 1: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Co-Anchor 2: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name].

Co-Anchor 1: And I am [give your real or stage name].

Co-Anchor 1: Today's report will help viewers explore UU responses to the big question that asks "What are we?"

Co-Anchor 2: One way UUs respond to that question is very logical. They say, "We are Unitarian Universalists."

Co-Anchor 1: And Unitarian Universalists are people who believe in putting their faith into action.

Co-Anchor 2: How can you act out your faith? A well-known author and naturalist named Terry Tempest Williams has some ideas about that.

Co-Anchor 1: Williams is a Mormon, not a UU. But she is a source who can help UUs explore ideas that we are going to share now.

Co-Anchor 2: Share with the help of the famous UU Pantomime Players. As we call out some of the ways Williams says you can act out your faith, the Players will do the acting.

[Director: Cue the Pantomime Players. As the Co-Anchors call each word, cue the next Player in line to step in front of the camera and act it out.]

Co-Anchor 1: The first word is "question."

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: The next word is "explore."

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Walk.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Run.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Dance.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Eat.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Taste.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Touch.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Smell.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Listen.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Speak.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Write.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Read.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Cry.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Kneel.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Pray.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Bow.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Rise.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Laugh.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 2: Circle.

[A Pantomime Player acts out the word.]

Co-Anchor 1: Those aren't all the words that Williams gives us. Here's her full quote: "This is my living faith, an active faith, a faith of verbs: to question, explore, experiment, experience, walk, run, dance, play, eat, love, learn, dare, taste, touch, smell, listen, argue, speak, write, read, draw, provoke, emote, scream, sin, repent, cry, kneel, pray, bow, rise, stand, look, laugh, cajole, create, confront, confound, walk back, walk forward, circle, hide, and seek."

Co-Anchor 2: Wow! That's sure a lot of ways to act out our faith. Now let's hear what our WCUU NUUs Analyst has to say about all this.

NUUs Analyst: Thank you, co-anchors. This is your NUUs Analyst with a comment on what you have just seen. Today's Big Question asks, "What are we?" UUs say, very logically that they are Unitarian Universalists. What are they? UUs are people who believe they should put their faith into action. In other words, it's not enough simply to believe something. You need to let your beliefs shape how you live your life. UUs have many different ideas about the big questions and their answers. But UUs do agree about some very important ideas. They agree on the UU Principles. They agree about the Golden Rule. They agree that wisdom can be found in many Sources. And they agree that we should focus on making our world a better place for everyone to live.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Co-Anchor 1: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

Co-Anchor 2: That is W-C-U-U for Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists. And this is [your real or stage name] signing off, too.

FIND OUT MORE

Doubt by Terry Tempest Williams (Pantheon Books, 2000) is a personal reflection centered on "The Garden of Delights," a triptych by the medieval Flemish artist Hieronymus Bosch.

The Spiritual Lives of Children, by Robert Coles (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990) contains many fascinating conversations with children about their faith.

In the summer, 2006 edition of *UU World* magazine, find a [uu&me! supplement](#) from the Church of the Larger Fellowship which includes "The Big Question" by Betsy Williams.

SESSION 3: LOOKING TOWARD TOMORROW

INTRODUCTION

I am always more interested in what I am about to do than what I have already done. — Rachel Carson

Big Question: Where are we going?

The past: Where do we come from? The present: What are we? The future: Where are we going? This session takes up the final question of Paul Gauguin's trilogy. It introduces the idea that Unitarian Universalism is a humanistic religion: We believe humans have the potential to greatly shape our mutual destiny. The session's central story presents Rachel Carson, one person who caused a shift in humanity's journey toward our future. In WIT Time, participants consider the increasing control they will gain, with time, over their own decisions and lives—and the responsibilities and opportunities which accompany that control.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "Where are we going?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses to it
- Introduce "Humanism," "cosmic," "quotidian" and "the butterfly effect"
- Invite participants to formulate questions about the future
- Explore our individual control over our own lives and our shared destiny with others
- Tell a story of Rachel Carson and her impact on human history
- Present Unitarian Universalist ideas about where we are going and human goals for the future.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Consider who and what controls the future
- Discern their own ability to shape their lives and human history
- Understand how quotidian events can effect cosmic outcomes

- Appreciate how Rachel Carson affected our shared future
- Recognize Unitarian Universalism as a humanistic religion
- Explore a Unitarian Universalist perspective about where humanity should be going and our role in moving ourselves forward into our future.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Questions about Tomorrow	10
Activity 2: Story — Rachel Carson Shapes Tomorrow	8
Activity 3: WCUU — The GUPUS Group	17
Activity 4: WIT Time — Controlling Our Lives	15
Faith in Action: Action of the Month	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — O What a Piece of Work Are We	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Utopian Mural	20
Alternate Activity 5: Making Decisions	15
Alternate Activity 6: Creating a Cosmic Story	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Explore your own approach to today's Big Question, "Where are we going?" As you prepare to consider humanism with the youth, ask yourself what role humanist teachings play in your life. Consider ways that Unitarian Universalism shapes your answers to the big questions.

Consider how assisting youth on their journey toward tomorrow is one way you help shape the future. By leading youth, you may create your own butterfly effect. Smile in the knowledge that simply joining with youth in their search of life's mysteries will be good and rewarding.

- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box with participants' names, and extra card stock to add the names of newcomers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant from Session 1

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and post a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants to make their own.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant, generated in Session 1.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to (make and) wear one. Add the names of new participants to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the name back in the bag or box. If a Kid for the Day is reluctant, let them pass and draw another name or invite the participant to select one.

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. Explain that you will use this same ritual—chalice lighting, followed by silence—at each session.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

If you have posted a covenant made by the group in Session 1, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process any suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—Where are we going?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice. Move the chalice table aside as necessary to allow movement in the room.

Set aside the "Today's Big Question" sign and the Kid for the Day bag or box, with the names and extra pieces of card stock, for re-use.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: QUESTIONS ABOUT TOMORROW (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Questions about Tomorrow
- Two white and two yellow index cards (or, any two contrasting colors) for each participant

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Leader Resource 1.
- Post a blank sheet of newsprint. Write "cosmic" on one side and "quotidian" on the other."
- Optional: Post newsprint with an explanation of how to use the index cards.

Description of Activity

This two-part activity lays groundwork for youth to learn the concept of humanism. First, teach the terms "cosmic," "quotidian" and "butterfly effect." Next, invite youth to respond to some questions using these terms.

Part 1. Point out the words you have written on newsprint and say:

Let's think again about today's Big Question: Where are we going? There are many, many answers. We'll come up with some that are cosmic and some that are quotidian.

Invite the group to call out answers to "Where are we going?" Identify any answers that are obviously cosmic in focus (existential, pertaining to the future of humankind) and those that are equally obviously quotidian (mundane, concrete, related to daily life). Explain that "cosmic" refers to everything there is—the whole universe, the whole cosmos. "Quotidian" is sort of the opposite. It is a fancy word for "daily" so it refers to something ordinary that might happen every day. Say, in your own words:

A sneeze is a quotidian event. Or is it? Maybe that depends on what happens after the sneeze. Maybe the sneeze wakes up a nearby mouse that runs into a field where it scares a huge elephant... and things build up from there. A chain of events like that is called the "butterfly effect."

Ask if anyone knows what the "butterfly effect" is. Affirm or explain briefly:

The butterfly effect is the idea that a tiny butterfly flaps its wings and changes the air just a little bit in a way that changes something else that

changes something else until in the end something as huge as a hurricane results. That is a quotidian event turning into something cosmic.

Part 2. Say the group now has the vocabulary it needs to answer some questions. Distribute two white and two yellow cards to each participant (other contrasting colors will also work). Explain that the youth are to hold the cards up to respond to the questions. Holding up one yellow card means, "I agree." Holding up two yellow cards means, "I really, really agree." One white card means "I disagree." Two white cards mean, "I really, really disagree." Indicate the summary of this code on newsprint, if you have made and posted one.

Ask the questions on Leader Resource 1, allowing comments and discussion after each. As suggested on the leader resource, note humanist belief in the human role in our own shared future.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — RACHEL CARSON SHAPES TOMORROW (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[Rachel Carson Shapes Tomorrow](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and print it out.

Description of Activity

Tell the group they will hear a story about Rachel Carson, one famous woman who believed she could and should help save the world.

Read or tell the story. At its conclusion, ask youth:

- Does the story of Rachel Carson change your minds about anything they said in the previous activity?
- Is Rachel Carson's work still shaping tomorrow? How will it shape tomorrow's tomorrow?
- How might Rachel Carson have responded to today's Big Question ("Where are we going?") at the time she was writing *Silent Spring*? Even though you did not know Rachel Carson, do you think the work she did might have shaped some of your answers?

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — THE GUPUS GROUP (17 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources (Session 1, Leader Resource 1, or a poster in your meeting space)
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling... " followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Make enough copies of Leader Resource 2 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has three On-Air people—an Anchor, a UU Guru and a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst—and five GUPUS Group members (who will not need scripts). If

the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

- Make five name cards for the GUPUS Group: one G, one P, one S and two Us.

Description of Activity

Explain the roles in this WCUU broadcast: three On-Air People (Co-Anchor 1, UU Guru and NUUs Analyst), a five-member GUPUS Group and a Studio Crew. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Assign roles or invite volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might offer the Kid for the Day a chance to be the Anchor, the UU Guru or the NUUs Analyst.

Have a leader take aside the five members of the GUPUS Group, give each a name card with a letter on it and explain:

You will come on camera in the order G, U, P, U and S. The Anchor will introduce your group. The UU Guru will sort you into a different order, then ask you each to say two goals for the world and the universe—directions most UUs would agree we ought to go. One example might be world peace, and the G in the GUPUS Group can suggest that in the broadcast. What other words can the Group think of now to use later on the broadcast?

Help the Group come up with ten ideas, so each member has two to suggest during the broadcast. Suggest they look for ideas in the UU Principles posted in your meeting space. Possible words include: justice, equality, compassion, freedom, truth, democratic, acceptance, love, health, respect and interdependence. Be sure each member knows which ideas they will offer.

Distribute scripts to all who will need them. You may wish to read through the script together with the On-Air People if not all participants are fluent readers. Other youth can finalize the studio set-up while the On-Air People prepare—but, do not encourage a lengthy or detailed rehearsal.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

Afterward, ask participants:

- Is "Where are we going?" a question that should be decided by one, wise UU or something we decide together, in community?
- Do you have answers to share other than those included in the broadcast?
- How could you summarize a typical UU response to the Big Question "Where are we going?"

Including All Participants

Arrange your WCUU activity with respect for any participants' limitations. If some youth have limited reading skills, review the script in advance of its use with them or perhaps the whole group. If some youth must remain seated during the broadcast, consider having all remain seated.

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — CONTROLLING OUR LIVES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- One hundred pennies or other items for each participant
- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , Controlling the Future

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether to use the basic approach suggested here or use variations provided.
- Adapt Handout 2 as you wish. Print it out and copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Youth sometimes wonder how they can help decide the destiny of the human race if they cannot even control their own lives. This activity demonstrates that they might have more control right now than they think they do, and that they will gain more control in the years ahead. Human destiny is not exactly in their hands, but they can certainly help shape it. You may wish to remind youth of this activity from time to time, in future Riddle and Mystery sessions, as they consider and prepare for various Faith in Action projects.

Gather the group and say in your own words:

Today's big question asks where we are going. We have said that many Unitarian Universalists believe humans can help shape the future. That means that we, all of us, can help direct humanity where we are going. Of course, we cannot stop hurricanes and things like that but we can control a whole lot.

Sometimes youth who talk about helping shape the future ask "How can I control what happens tomorrow? I'm just a kid and I don't control anything at all."

Well, of course we can all control some things. Now we are going to talk about just how much control we really have at different times of our lives.

Let's imagine that every person who is born has 100 units of control to spend during their life. When do they get to spend it? Think of it as 100 pennies. You have 100 pennies to spend on controlling your own life in a way that helps shape the future for everybody. When can you spend that money? Can you spend it on the day after you are born? Not really because you are too small and weak and you have to depend on other people just to stay alive—though you might control the people around you to some extent. Can you spend it when you are one hundred and ten years old? You might have physical limitations, or you might not live that long. So when can you spend it?

Distribute copies of Handout 2. Point out the seven age categories. Invite the youth to imagine they everyone has 100 units of control to spend across all those categories, and to show you on the paper just when they think most people can spend them.

Now give each youth a supply of 100 pennies (or other items) and tell them to pile the pennies on their handouts at the age categories where they would spend them. If they think they would have no control after just being born, they should put no pennies there. If they think they will have a lot of control as teenagers, they should put a lot of pennies there. How many is up to each of them.

Help the youth find places to sit at tables or places to lie on the floor and divide their pennies up. When all have finished, discuss the results. How many pennies did various youth place in each category, beginning with the younger ones?

Point out that there are no right or wrong answers. But, contribute to the discussion. If youth say they have little or no control over their lives at their present age, ask if they can control what they think, how they relate to other people or how much they help with Faith in Action projects?

The discussion should be lively. When it is time to move on, conclude by pointing out that people do have a lot of control over what they do, and some of that affects where the human race will go. Nobody has total control, of course. Adults who seem free to decide everything

they want to do really cannot. They have financial, physical and time restraints. Yet each of us has some control over where we are going together.

Variation

A simpler alternative is to distribute pens/pencils and invite the youth to divide their 100 units of control by writing numbers in the various age categories, being sure that their total is only 100. But this is not as much fun as using pennies or substitutes like small pieces of paper.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asked "Where are we going?" We said that humanists believe people have a lot of control over where we are going and what happens in the future, and that ours is a humanistic religion. We talked about cosmic and quotidian events and the butterfly effect. We heard a story about Rachel Carson, who changed the direction people are taking our world. Our WCUU broadcast showed what many Unitarian Universalists have to say about where we are going. In WIT Time, we talked about we have different amounts of control over where we are going, at different times in our lives.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: ACTION OF THE MONTH

Materials for Activity

- Computer with Internet connection

Preparation for Activity

- Go to the website for Bagala Beads. If the meeting space for sessions does not have internet capability, print out relevant pages to share with the group.
- If the group will be offered the option of pre-selling beads, seek permission from the religious educator, board president, fundraising committee, and any other parties whose permission you might need. Ask for and follow congregational guidelines concerning the selling of merchandise.

Seek support from other adults. Parents of participants would be good choices. Make sure parents give their permission for their children to be involved.

Description of Activity

You can connect any Faith in Action activity to the day's session by reminding the group of Today's Big Question: Where are we going? Say that UUs answer that question partly with their actions. When UUs work for economic justice, they are acting out the second UU Principle. When UUs act out this and other Principles, they are helping to shape tomorrow and determine where we are going. This can be done alone, as an individual. However, often it is done communally, as people of faith.

Choose from the following possible activities.

Option 1: Ongoing Faith in Action Project

If your group has chosen an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Option 2: Bagala Beads For Sale

Selling [Bagala Beads](http://www.bagalabeads.com/welcome.html) (at www.bagalabeads.com/welcome.html) can help contribute to economic justice in a far away place. Visit the website with participants or print out pages to show during the workshop. Point out that Bagala Beads are made from recycled material, so that helps eliminate trash in landfills. The beads are made by women in Uganda and their sale promotes economic independence for these women. All the materials for making beads and baskets are bought locally, so sales help the economy of Uganda, a country in Africa devastated by civil war and a corrupt government. A portion of all profits go to help children in Uganda

orphaned by AIDS. Share the ["Story"](http://bagalabeads.com/thestory.html) (at bagalabeads.com/thestory.html) of Bagala Beads.

If participants are interested, they could help sales of the beads in one of three ways. The group could write a piece for the congregation's newsletter and direct members to the Bagala website or to a local distributor (check the website for retail distributors). If there is no local distributor, participants could urge a nearby fair trade shop to carry the products. Participants could also sell the products directly.

To sell directly, pick a holiday that traditionally involves the buying of presents. The congregation might hold a holiday crafts fair. Valentine's and Mother's Day are two other possibilities. Print out photos, prices, and descriptions of several items to sell and conduct a pre-holiday sale. Make sure you account for shipping and handling charges. You will want a few adults to help with this activity, as you'll need adults to assume fiscal responsibility and help distribute items. Conversely, you could contact Bagala Beads about holding a house party at the congregation.

Whichever tactic is used, follow the action with the following processing questions:

- Is it important to know where and how the things we used are made?
- What are fair trade products? Have you ever purchased fair trade products before? What do fair trade products have to do with economic justice?
- Women make the Bagala Beads. Many studies have shown that families are more effectively lifted out of poverty when women are employed. Why do you think this is true?

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. How was your mix of discussion and action? Does the group have behavioral issues you need to address? Are you able to draw ideas and responses from youth while still respecting their sense of privacy? Is your approach to Faith in Action working, or should you revisit it?

TAKING IT HOME

I am always more interested in what I am about to do than what I have already done. — Rachel Carson

Talk about the quote. Is it true? Does every single person on Earth help decide where we are going together?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question is "Where are we going?" We thought about that in several different ways. We talked about the difference between cosmic and quotidian, and about the butterfly effect. We reacted to some questions about the future, and in the process, we thought about humanism and what it says about our control over where we are going. Our story was about Rachel Carson, a woman who may have changed the whole history of the world. Our WCUU broadcast talked about where UUs think we humans should be going. In WIT Time, we considered how much control we have and how much difference we can make at various times in our lives.

ANSWERING TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

What do family members and friends have to say about the question "Where are we going?"

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Make a chart that shows exactly where everybody in your family will be at every hour, on the hour, tomorrow. The day after, go back to the chart and see how accurate you were. Did you really know where you were going? How sure can you ever be about where you are going to be and what you are going to do at a certain time?

SHARED SEARCH

Go together and check out a place that will be important to your family a few years from now. Maybe it will be the high school you expect to attend. Maybe it will be... ? You decide.

REFLECT ON YOUR BELIEFS

How do you feel about humanism? Almost half of Unitarian Universalists say they are humanist. How about you and other family members? Are you humanists? What does that mean to you? How does being a humanist affect where you are going?

CHANGES

Has anything changed at your school in the past year? Find out who made the change happen and why. Discuss with your friends whether the change has been for the better.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION — PHOTO CHALLENGE

Together, choose something at home or in your neighborhood that you agree is not good and that you can change. Take a photograph and hang it on your refrigerator, a bulletin board or a wall. Work to improve the situation, then photograph the improvement and hang it beside the first photograph. This does not need to be a large project. You might clean up an empty lot on

your street, or groom your pets. You can do this project with friends, too.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve participants' Big Questions notebooks begun in Session 1.
- Set out supplies for any new participants to start an individual notebook.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide any new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: Where are we going? Suggest they write or draw about where they are going as individuals, as members of their family, as Unitarian Universalists or as part of the human race. Their ideas can be different from what you have talked about so far. If they have nothing to record, they may doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — O WHAT A PIECE OF WORK ARE WE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "O What a Piece of Work Are We," Hymn 313 in *Singing the Living Tradition*—reading the words, singing together or playing a recording. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.
- Obtain copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook.

Description of Activity

Say that the hymns in *Singing the Living Tradition* are organized according to the Unitarian Universalist Sources they represent. Hymns 286 through 356 all draw from humanism in some way. Hymn 313 is called "O What a Piece of Work Are We." It celebrates humans and every breath we take.

Introduce your group to the song in a manner comfortable for you—just reading the words, if you like.

Ask for the group's reactions. Do participants like the song? Do they agree with what the words say—that there is no need to look for miracles outside nature when things in nature, like we humans, are so wonderful? Note that the words help answer today's Big Question by saying that humans, if they have room "to move and grow," can do wonderful things. That is a Humanist idea.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

What is fate?

Let youth share their ideas. If they struggle, offer this explanation: Fate is something that is going to happen anyway, and you cannot do anything about it.

Ask participants to respond to a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, a famous Unitarian who lived in the 1800s:

Intellect annuls fate. So far as a [person] thinks, [they are] free."

Explain that "annuls" means "cancels out."

Was Emerson right? If you think hard enough about what to do, can you cancel out some of the things that most people would say are going to happen anyway? Is just thinking hard enough, or do you then need to do something about your thoughts in order to cancel out fate?

Help the group see that some events are impossible to avoid. Everybody is fated to die, for example. But together and even alone we can do a whole lot to shape the future—in other words, to answer today's Big Question and choose "where we are going."

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: UTOPIAN MURAL (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Mural paper and masking tape
- Color markers, oil pastels, paints and brushes or other drawing implements
- Tarp or newspapers
- Clean-up supplies
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player

Preparation for Activity

- Choose a place for participants to work on the mural—on a floor, work tables pushed together or a wall space where it can remain posted—and secure the mural paper with masking tape. Set up supplies during an earlier activity so the group can begin creating quickly. Slip a tarp or newspaper under (or behind) mural paper to protect floor, work tables or wall.

Description of Activity

Ask your group what the word "utopia" means. Affirm that it means "a perfect world." Say that artists and writers have created their own ideas of utopia for centuries. Some people, including some Unitarian Universalists, have established utopian communities where everybody gets along well and things seem to be perfect. These attempts have often been interesting, but most have not lasted very long.

Invite the youth to create a mural showing their ideas of utopia. Connect the activity to today's Big Question:

Our Big Question asks where we are going, and this mural will show your ideas of where we will go if we go to a perfect place.

Invite youth to spend a moment quietly thinking, if they like, before creating their art. Say that their drawing can be realistic or abstract, cartoony or not. It does not need to show scenes of a far distant future; it can show ideas of what a perfect today or tomorrow might be like.

Point out supplies and cleanup material. Start quiet background music if you like, and let creation begin.

Leave time for the group to step back from and observe the mural. Invite them to paraphrase the illustrations they have made to represent "utopia." Do not push individuals to explain the meaning of abstract art; let that speak for itself. End with words such as these:

The world might never become as perfect a place as we have depicted here. Yet, all great changes start somewhere. Sometimes it just takes one person—like Rachel Carson—to get the ball rolling. May you always keep your dreams alive in your heart and in your actions.

Ask the group to clean up together. Have some volunteers post the mural.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: MAKING DECISIONS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Handout 3](#) (included in this document) , Decisions, Decisions
- Pencils/pens
- Optional: Clipboards

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 3 for all participants.

Description of Activity

Ask the group whether they think that a decision we make today can control what happens tomorrow. If the group says yes, as it probably will, does that mean that we should worry about every decision we make? Or are some decisions really unimportant?

Distribute copies of Handout 3 and pencils or pens (and clipboards, if you have them). Read the instructions with the group. Give youth time to follow the instructions. Then ask participants to share their responses to each question. Process the disagreements. You may find the phrase "it all depends" keeps coming up: "What seems an unimportant decision might be important in some situations. It all depends." Remind the group of the butterfly effect. Some things that seem unimportant today can have a large effect on tomorrow.

Ask if youth have ever learned decision-making skills in school. Do they think such skills are needed? What do they do when they face tough decisions?

Invite the group to think about the weather. What is the best way to find out what tomorrow's weather will be? Listen to the radio or television? Call the weather bureau? Send an email to a fortuneteller who your friend says is always right?

Talk about chance. Have participants ever made decisions by flipping a coin? What other ways do they know of deciding things by chance? Why do people sometimes do that? (Sometimes because it seems easy. Also, if two people disagree about a decision and they toss a coin, no one person is responsible for the decision.)

Ask participants how superstition fits into their decision-making. If they predict something good will happen, do they then knock on wood to avoid having it go wrong? Cross their fingers? What else? Do they really think it works?

Ask, "How do you know when a decision you have to make is really important? Are some decisions truly more important than others?"

Including All Participants

If some members of your group have limited reading skills, consider reading the handout aloud before asking the youth to respond to it.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 6: CREATING A COSMIC STORY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , Story Starter Lines

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 3 and cut the starter lines apart. Choose one or more to use.

Description of Activity

Invite your group to create its own quotidian-to-cosmic-effect in round-robin fashion. With everybody sitting in a circle, give the Kid for the Day a line to read aloud to begin a story. Then, invite the youth to the Kid for the Day's left to add a line, continuing around the circle, as many times as needed to build a quotidian event into a cosmic one.

Repeat the process if you have time and youth have enjoyed it. Consider dividing a large group and letting each smaller group create its own story. This will give

individuals more chances to participate. You may need to coach the groups as they create, to make sure the quotidian builds toward the cosmic with enough speed so you will have time for other activities.

When the stories are complete, offer in your own words:

Today's Big Question, "Where are we going?" can be answered in many ways, from the quotidian to the cosmic. As our story(ies) shows, sometimes the quotidian turns into the cosmic. We may be sure where we are going right now, but it is tough to know what will come after that. This is why "where are we going?" is such a big and wonderful question.

STORY: RACHEL CARSON SHAPES TOMORROW

By Greta Anderson.

"Better Living through Chemistry." This was the motto of one of America's leading corporations in the 1950s. Chemicals could make better clothing. Chemicals could improve food—not to mention food packaging. Chemicals could increase farm yields and improve our environment. Chemicals had helped us win the Second World War and would help us win future wars. Magazine and television ads and billboards shouted the message to the public. "Better living through chemistry" was the American way.

Marine biologist Rachel Carson disagreed. But, she was used to going against the tide. Starting out in the 1920s, she was a rarity in the largely male science professions. Yet, she moved up in her chosen field, working as an aquatic biologist at Woods Hole on Cape Cod and then in Washington, DC with the U.S. government. Eventually she became editor-in-chief at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Carson was both a marine biologist, and a writer. As much as she was fascinated by the creatures of ocean and their intricate, interconnected web, she loved to share her fascination with the public. And the public loved her books, from *Under the Sea Wind*, published in 1941 through *The Sea Around Us* and *The Edge of the Sea* in the 1950s. Rachel Carson took readers on a journey from the teeming abundance of the tide pool to the dark, mysterious ocean depths, a tour of microscopic marine life. Life was everywhere; life was diverse; life was a celebration.

This sense of celebrating all forms of life made Rachel's writing different. People in the United States were used to being told they were at the top of the "food chain," that other life on Earth existed to serve us. According to many religions, Nature was created for "Man," to meet "his" needs—food, shelter or even a beautiful scene to contemplate. Such a view is called "anthropocentric," or human-centered: The world was made for us and we are the most important creature in it. Instead, Rachel's vision was "biocentric," or life-centered. Her books helped people appreciate, joyfully, that we humans are just one part of nature's web of life.

Imagine how Rachel felt when the United States dropped destructive, atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945. Imagine, too, how she felt when the U.S. government began dropping "bombs" on tiny enemies within our own borders: insects such as fire ants and mosquitoes. Before, humans had lived with the inconvenience of nature's insects; now, the corporations

that promised "better living" were manufacturing deadly chemicals such as DDT to eradicate insects completely. Throughout the 1950s, airplanes sprayed these chlorinated compounds over America's bountiful farmlands, pretty suburbs and crowded towns. The government supported it. No one stopped to question it.

Of course, the chemicals only eradicated the pests for a short while. Usually the insects came back, even stronger than before. Worse, the chemicals killed much more than insects. A friend of Rachel's lived next to a bird sanctuary. She wrote to Rachel and told her how, after the government sprayed DDT to kill mosquitoes, she found dozens of dying birds at her birdbath, suffering painful deaths.

Though her own health was weak from stomach ulcers and the early stages of breast cancer, Rachel commenced the fight of her life. She gathered data to show how chemistry was not giving us better living, but harming life. Originally called "Man against Nature," the book she published as *Silent Spring* argued that spraying chemicals like DDT endangered life, including human life. To convince her readers, Rachel included information from hundreds of scientific studies, explained in language the public could understand. She took care to avoid errors or exaggerating. She knew she must be ready to back up every statement, 100 percent, or the chemical companies could discredit her whole work. Rachel Carson knew she had one chance to change the course of history.

Rachel had many friends in the scientific community who helped her fact-check and fine-tune the manuscript. *Silent Spring* leaped onto the bestseller list. Yes, government and industry spokespeople tried to discredit Rachel—for being "sentimental" or "hysterical," for being a "back-to-nature" type and probably a Communist. But the many, many people who saw her on a television show saw a frail, clear-eyed woman with a detailed, objective truth to tell. On the other hand, the government officials responsible for the spraying had very few facts to prove DDT was safe. The public sensed that Rachel was right.

The debate about pesticide use sparked by *Silent Spring* gave momentum to the 1960s' environmental movement. In 1970, the government formed the Environmental Protection Agency. In 1972, the government banned the use of DDT in the United States. The same year, Earth Day was proclaimed.

Rachel Carson died shortly after the publication of *Silent Spring*. One could say "it's a shame" she could not witness the growth of the environmental movement she did so much to create. But, for Rachel, life was not about the individual. It was about diverse communities of

beings that continuously recycle and renew life. In this sense, Rachel's courage, her vision of life and her fierce argument against pesticides have become part of us.

How will we live that vision in our lifetimes? What courage of ours will inform the next generation?

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

Where are we going?

HANDOUT 2: CONTROLLING THE FUTURE

Think about the following human age categories. How much control do you have in each one to help shape your own life and the future of the world?

Age: Just born

Age: 5 or 6 years old

Age: The age you are now

Age: 15 or 16 years old

Age: 21 years old

Age: 45 years old

Age: 90 years old, or more

HANDOUT 3: DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Here are 10 decisions you might have to make at some point in your life. Underline the ones you think are important or very important. Circle the ones you think it is okay to decide by chance or luck. (In other words, would it be okay to decide by flipping a coin or simply doing nothing and waiting to see what happens?)

1. What movie to see.
2. Whether to cheat on a test at school.
3. Whether to go to college.
4. What restaurant to visit for dinner.
5. Who to support for president.
6. Whether to join the military.
7. How to wear your hair.
8. When to go to bed.
9. Whether to be a vegetarian.
10. What religious congregation to attend.

Now, look at the decisions you have underlined. How would you decide each of these? What information would you need? Who would you want to talk with before making a decision?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: QUESTIONS ABOUT TOMORROW

1. The human effect is more important than the butterfly effect.
2. Humans have more control over what happens tomorrow than God does.

(Leader: If you agree with this statement, you may be a humanist. Humanism is the idea that humans play the most important role in deciding what the future will be like. About half of all Unitarian Universalists say they are Humanists.)

3. Our own quotidian decisions control our cosmic futures.

(Leader: This is another Humanist idea.)

4. What I do today is unimportant, because 100 years from now, nobody will know the difference.

5. Unitarian Universalists should think more about the future than they do about the past.

(Leader: Is the present more important than the past or the future?)

6. Quotidian me can help save the cosmic world.

7. People working in groups can do more to help the world than individuals can.

8. If you believe in God, you can stop worrying about your own actions.

9. We can all stop worrying about tomorrow because our government will solve all the problems.

10. I like the idea of Humanism.

11. (Optional question) I know what "eschatology" means.

(Leader: Eschatology is the part of theology (or religious thought) that talks about how the world and the human race may end. Some religions say that life as we know it will end with the second coming of Christ in some sort of judgment day. Although such beliefs are very interesting, most UUs have very different ideas. We say that what happens in the future will depend mostly on people, not a great event ordered by God. Here is Humanism again.)

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WCUU SCRIPT

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU program talks about where Unitarian Universalists think we (the world and universe) should go. When the broadcast begins, you are alone on camera, sitting or standing in front of a microphone.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name]. This morning's broadcast features the UU Guru, members of the world-famous GUPUS Group and our own NUUs Analyst. Now I welcome our first guest, the UU Guru.

[Director: Cue UU Guru to join Anchor in front of the camera.]

Anchor: Good morning, Guru, and welcome to our WCUU broadcast studio.

UU Guru: Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

Anchor: I understand you are wise in the ways of UUs.

UU Guru: You might say so. In fact, I do say so. In further fact, I'm pretty good at it.

Anchor: Then I hope you won't mind a bit of a challenge, Guru.

UU Guru: Not at all. Let's do it!

Anchor: Okay: Bring in the GUPUS Group!

UU Guru: Goofus? Did you just call me a goofus? I object!

Anchor: No, no, Guru. You misheard me. I said GUPUS, not goofus!

[Director: Cue members of the GUPUS Group to join the Anchor and UU Guru on camera, standing so their nametags read G-U-P-U-S.]

UU Guru: It really is a GUPUS Group.

UU Guru: Ah . . . er . . . ah.

Anchor: Try finding two letters that are the same.

UU Guru: I got it! That's UU.

[Director: Cue the two Us to step aside together.]

UU Guru: I see it! I did it! I see it! It's GPS for Global Positioning System. And everything together is the UU GPS.

Anchor: Right you are. Well done, Guru. Now here is the next part of your challenge. Our UU GPS is just like others. It can tell us how to reach our destination. But first we have to tell it what the destination is. That's what we need from you, Guru. What is our destination? Where do most UUs think we, the world and the universe should be going?

UU Guru: Ah . . . er . . . ah. I know! Let's ask the GUPUS Group.

Anchor: You mean the UU GPS Group. Good idea. What about it, Group? Where are we going? What do we want the world and universe to be like in the future?

[Director: Cue the GUPUS Goup, to step forward and say their goals.]

G: My goals are [two goals chosen in advance]...

UU Guru: Great! Where else are we going?

[Director: Cue the other members of the GUPUS Group, in turn, to call out their answers.]

UU Guru: Okay, Anchor, those are the destinations for our UU GPS. I think I have met your challenge beautifully.

Anchor: Well somebody has met my challenge beautifully. Thank you, UU Guru. Thank you, members of the UU GPS Group.

[Director: Cue the UU Guru and the GUPUS Group to move off camera.]

Anchor: Now for today's analysis from American's favorite NUUs Analyst.

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to join Anchor either sitting or standing in front of the camera.]

Anchor: Can you sort this out for us, NUUs Analyst? What is the meaning of the messages we have just received? What are some typical UU responses to today's Big Question, "Where are we going?"

NUUs Analyst: Most UUs say they do not know exactly where we are going. But they think it is up to us humans to decide on our goals and get us there. That is because about half of all UUs say they are humanist. Humanists believe the actions of humans are primarily responsible for the state of the world and we humans should use reason and science, along with other disciplines, to make our world a better place. Most UUs believe we humans will play a huge part in deciding just where the world and the universe and the human race are going. This is what makes Unitarian Universalism a humanistic religion. They agree on a lot of the goals, too. They want the world to be peaceful and just, and equal, and democratic, and all other things the UU Principles talk about.

Anchor: Thank you, NUUs Analyst. That is very, very helpful.

NUUs Analyst: But I have just started. Did you know that the UU hymnbook, Singing the Living Tradition, has four readings and 71 hymns identified as humanist teachings. I am going to sing every one of them for you right now.

Anchor: Thanks for the offer, NUUs Analyst, but I don't think so. We are totally out of time. We have to go right straight to our theme music right now.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: STORY STARTER LINES

I was walking along the sidewalk minding my own business when I stepped on a wad of old chewing gum. My foot kept moving but my shoe . . .

It's funny how the whole thing started. It was just a little, tiny fly that landed right on . . .

I can usually throw a ball pretty well, but that time I did something wrong and the ball went. . .

It wasn't my fault. They should put fire alarm boxes way, high up on the wall, so people can't bump into them. Anyway, there I was in the hall at school . . .

It was just a little thumbtack. And I was going to pick it up later, really I was, but I guess I forgot, because it was still there when . . .

FIND OUT MORE

Rachel Carson

Online, find more information and links to other resources about [Rachel Carson](http://www.rachelcarson.org/) (at www.rachelcarson.org/) and her works, ideas and impact.

Humanism

[HUUmanists](http://www.humanists.org/) (at www.humanists.org/) is the web page of the Unitarian Universalist humanist group.

Online, read the article "[Reason and reverence](#)" (at www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/6558.shtml) by William R. Murry, in the Winter 2006 UU World. It gives short introductions to humanism and religious naturalism as well as a vision of the application of both philosophies.

The book *Humanism, What's That? A Book for Curious Kids* by Unitarian Universalist Helen Bennett (Prometheus, 2005) provides age-appropriate explanations of humanism and humanistic values. It presents some central theological debates in accessible

language. Former UUA president Rev. William G. Sinkford commented, "This small volume holds out the hope and openness of Humanism in a form that can help young people confront Fundamentalist approaches to religion with confidence... [it] embodies the values which are central to my faith and is a wonderful addition to our ministry of liberal religious education." The scripted format of *Humanism, What's That?* might make it appealing to incorporate into a Riddle and Mystery WCUU broadcast segment.

Humanism beyond Unitarian Universalism

The [American Humanist Association](http://www.americanhumanist.org/) (at www.americanhumanist.org/) is a voice for humanism in the U.S. The organization's home page reads, in part:

"Bordered on one side by the transcendental views of traditional religions and mythologies and on the other by atheism and secularism, the values we hold are grounded in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, informed by scientific knowledge, and driven by a desire to meet the needs of people in the here and now."

SESSION 4: THINKING OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

"What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God." — Eleanor Powell

Tell the truth, have you ever found God in a church? I never did. I just found a bunch of folks hoping for him to show. Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me. And I think all the other folks did too. They come to church to share God, not find God. —Alice Walker, The Color Purple

The big question: Does God exist?

Today's Big Question is probably one of the first that pops into our minds when speaking of big questions. Is there a God? The ideas and religious backgrounds of friends, family events like birth, death, divorce, and exposure to religious institutions may all intensify the sixth grade search for answers. Youth whose families never discuss God may pray in time of need. Sixth graders whose families teach and expect belief in God may yearn for concrete proof. The God question may seem more perplexing for Unitarian Universalist sixth graders than for some of their friends, because UUs do not share and preach a common belief. We leave the question of God to individual consideration. Yet our faith offers much guidance to support youth and adults as they seek their own understandings. This session is part of that guidance for our sixth graders.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose a big question and explore UU responses to it: Does God exist?
- Offer spiritual thoughts from young UUs
- Familiarize youth with theological terms and ideas
- Reassure youth that independent thought and doubt are acceptable
- Present Unitarian Universalism as a tent in which people of diverse God beliefs gather
- Help youth explore and develop their own God beliefs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Consider the appropriateness of our national motto

- Internalize terms and ideas that can help them develop personal theologies
- Discover the wide Unitarian Universalist response to questions about God
- Explore their own ideas about God's existence and cosmic understanding.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Being in Touch with God	5
Activity 2: God Talk	20
Activity 3: Story — God Is . . .	10
Activity 4: WCUU — Tent of Cosmic Understanding	20
Activity 5: WIT Time — Your Own Theology	7
Faith in Action: Thinking of Survival	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Spirit of Life	5
Alternate Activity 3: Questions and Gods of Housecats	15
Alternate Activity 4: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 5: Clues about UUs	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflect upon Today's Big Question: "Does God exist?" Be comfortable with your own current ideas about God. Know that you need not share your deep inner thoughts with your group, but that doing so is appropriate as long as youth are not led to think they should move toward your position. Remember that sixth graders are young, and that some may need more concrete beliefs and God images than do many UU adults. Reflect back on what you thought as a youth, and consider how your ideas have changed through the years.

With everything set to go, carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Smile in the knowledge that simply joining your youth in their search of life's mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant from Session 1

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and post a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Leader Resource 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants to make their own.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.

- Optional: Post the group covenant, generated in Session 1.
- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Have quiet background music playing if you like. Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If your group is using nametags, invite everyone to wear one. Retrieve your bag or box of names. If new youth have joined this session, add their names on cards to the bag or box. Sound the tingshas or bell to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and randomly select one name. Ask the selected youth to light the chalice while the group reads the posted chalice lighting words: "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

(If the Kid for the Day is reluctant to take on the role, allow him/her to pass, and to draw another name from the bag or box. As the sessions go by, a youth may be chosen more than once. This possibility will be discussed in Session 8 when the group considers whether life is fair. If the youth object now that the practice is unfair, ask them what they would like to do about it. One possibility, of course, is removing from the bag the name of each youth who has already been chosen. The group's decision, too, can be discussed at a later session.)

Ask the group to be silent for a moment. End the silence by sounding your tingshas or bell.

If new participants have joined the group for this session, ask participants to introduce themselves.

Announce that it is time to hear the question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Leader Resource 1. After the Kid for the Day reads the question, write it on newsprint under the heading "Today's Big Question" ("Does God exist?")

Add the following comments: "Today we are going to talk about God. That can be a difficult topic. We do not always mean the same thing when we say "God". Some people think of a God or Goddess who shapes human destiny. Some people think God is Love. Some think that God is a word that means some force at work in the universe that is greater than us. Others don't find the word "God" useful at all. As we talk about God today, feel free to use the definition and the words you are most comfortable using.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If your group includes youth who have difficulty reading, be sure to allow the Kid for the Day a chance to pass on the reading but still choose to light the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: BEING IN TOUCH WITH GOD (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Dollar bill or other U.S. currency

Description of Activity

This activity asks youth for their thoughts about the motto of the United States: "In God we trust."

Begin with a question like this for the group: "When were you last in touch with God?" In the likely case that you get little or no response, continue on with a comment like this: "I don't know about you, but I seem to be in touch with God every time I put my hands on money. Can you guess what I am talking about?" Accept any answers, and in the course of your discussion produce a dollar bill or other currency and point out the words "In God we trust."

Explain that these words have appeared on at least some forms of American money since 1864. In 1957, Congress and the President passed a law making "In God we trust" the national motto of the United States. It gradually began to appear on more forms of money, and today it appears on all American coins and bills. (For more information about the motto and money, see Find Out More.)

Invite discussion:

What do you think about the motto? What does it mean to say "In God we trust"? What do we trust God to do or to be?

Do you think that all Americans trust in God? What about people who do not believe in God? Does it matter what their money says? What are their choices?

As discussion ends, note that people do not have much choice about what money they use, but they do have a choice about what religion they will join. Unitarian Universalism is one religion that welcomes people with different beliefs about the existence of God.

ACTIVITY 2: GOD TALK (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , God Sources

- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , Godly Words

- Optional: Common pins or transparent tape

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Leader Resource 2, cut the items apart, and place in various and accessible points in your meeting space.
- Copy Leader Resource 3, cut the terms apart, and prepare them by following ideas in the activity description.

Description of Activity

This two-part activity asks youth to use motion to share ideas about God.

Part 1: Asking about God — Ask participants to think about the best people to ask about God's existence. Introduce it with ideas like these: "Most of us do not develop our spiritual and religious ideas all by ourselves. We find that it helps to know what other people think. If you want to know if God exists, who is the first person you would ask?" Point out the choices you have posted around the room, and ask participants to choose one and stand near it. Invite comments about their choices. Continue by removing the sign that was chosen by the most participants, and then ask everyone to choose again. Again, invite comments. Continue as long as the group is having a valuable discussion.

Part 2: Godly Words — This activity asks participants to match terms and definitions associated with the idea of God. Each youth will need one term or one definition from Leader Resource 3; prepare a total number of terms and definitions equal to the number of youth in the group. Choose the terms at the top of the list first; these are most important. If you have an odd number of youth, a leader can participate. Explain that you will pass out a term or a definition to each youth. Then everyone will move around in silence until they find the term or definition that goes with their term or definition.

Consider adding interest by taping or pinning the terms to youths' backs without the youth first seeing what they are. Then tell the group that they need to work in silence to help bring appropriate pairs together.

When all have found their match, review the terms and definitions. You might mention that the original Unitarians were people who felt that God was one, not a trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (or Spirit), as Trinitarians believed.

Say that the mix of words the youth have just considered show that there are many different ideas about God. This is true all around the world. That is why there are

so many different religions and faiths, with many different ideas about God. There can be many different ideas within some religions, too. That is especially true of Unitarian Universalism, as today's story will show.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — GOD IS . . . (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[God Is . . .](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Print and review the story "God Is . . ."
- Decide how to present the story; if you want youth to assist with the telling, make a second copy and cut the entries apart for easy distribution and use.

Description of Activity

Consider introducing the story with words like these: "UUs have a lot of different beliefs about God. This is true of UU youth, and it is true of UU adults. What if somebody asked you to write down some ideas about God? What would you say? A director of religious education of a UU congregation in Portland, Maine, did that. Today we are going to hear what some of the youth in her program had to say.

Read as many of the entries as you like, presenting ideas of both boys and girls of different ages. Or, to have participants share in the telling, simply copy the story, cut the entries apart, and give to participants to read aloud.

After the reading, ask participants their thoughts. Ask:

Do you agree with any of them? Do you hear recurring themes in what the young people said? Do you believe your own congregation has many different ideas about God? Where do they think the youths' ideas about God came from?

Including All Participants

If you ask youth to share in the reading, ask for volunteers. Offer quick and gentle assistance to anybody who struggles with reading.

ACTIVITY 4: WCUU — A UU TENT (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), real or simulated
- Video camera and playback equipment, real or simulated

- Any backdrop made in Session 1
- [Leader Resource 4](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script
- [Leader Resource 5](#) (included in this document) , Belief Notes
- Nametags on strings for On-Air People
- Supplies for making a tent: a bed sheet with 3" or 4" holes, four poles — broomsticks will do — and masking tape or twine for attaching sheet to poles; OR sheets of newsprint on the wall and markers for drawing a tent with skylights
- Restore your WCUU studio if it has changed since the previous use
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: "Studio lights" — flashlights will do

Preparation for Activity

- Restore your WCUU studio if it has changed since the previous use.
- Review Leader Resource 4.
- Decide how the group should make a tent and prepare accordingly.
- Copy Leader Resource 4 for On-Air People and any Studio Staffers who need it.
- Make copies of the script for key participants in the session's WCUU segment. They include three On-Air People — Co-Anchor 1, Co-Anchor 2, Atheist, Theist, Agnostic, Humanist, Mystery Seeker, God as Love-ist, Pagan, and the NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst — as well as Studio Staffers who will need to keep track of what is going on — possibly a camera operator, a sound engineer, a light operator, and a director.
- Copy Leader Resource 5 for seven On-Air People.

Description of Activity

Participants present a televised WCUU segment involving eight On-Air People — Co-Anchor 1, Co-Anchor 2, Atheist, Theist, Agnostic, Humanist, Mystery Seeker, God as Love-ist, Pagan, NUUs Analyst — and as many Studio Staffers as you care to use.

Assign or choose volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Staffers. You might offer your Kid for the Day a chance to be a Co-Anchor or the NUUs Analyst. Make sure volunteers understand that everyone except the

NUUs Analyst will be making up some of their on-air dialogue as they go along.

Distribute appropriate segments of Leader Resource 5 to Atheist, Theist, Agnostic, Humanist, Mystery Seeker, God as Love-ist, and Pagan. Tell them to read them over before the broadcast begins. Say they should not read the segments aloud or try to repeat everything they say, but simply use them for ideas to help them say what they like.

Give all who need to follow the script a moment to look it over. Review it with anyone who needs help with reading.

Let the broadcast begin.

At the end of the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how they think UUs respond to Today's Big Question: Does God exist? Do they like the idea of Unitarian Universalism as a large tent where people with different beliefs can gather? If the show has been taped, make arrangements for playing it back at another time or otherwise sharing it with participants and their families. Do they think non-UU viewers would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing it?

ACTIVITY 5: WIT TIME — YOUR OWN THEOLOGY (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , What Do You Think?
- Pencils or pens

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with Handout 1, and make copies for all participants.

Description of Activity

Many youth, like many adults, may not be sure what they believe about the existence of God. This activity uses a handout to help youth think privately about their beliefs. It invites them to share answers with the group only if they wish, and it does not ask them to turn the completed handout in to you.

Explain the activity with words like these: "Sometimes, people are not quite sure what they believe about God, and thinking their way carefully through the subject can help them decide. In just a moment, I will pass out a page with some yes or no questions that you might find useful. I will not ask you to pass the completed handout in, so you can keep your responses private if you wish to."

Distribute pencils and copies of Handout 1, and ask the youth to spend a few minutes thinking and then answering the yes and no questions. Remind them that the handouts are theirs to keep, and they will not be asked to share their answers if they do not wish to.

If there is time for a brief discussion, invite comments. Does anybody wish to share their answers? Why do they think the first and last questions are the same? (Because answering the questions in between might cause participants to change their minds.) Remind them of the Forrest Church quote given in WCUU; that "God" is not God's name. It is just a word that people use for a higher power. This means you might believe in God but use a different word (like "Mystery," "the eternal" or "divine") to show your belief. Say that some UU adults like to share their ideas about God, but others prefer to keep their ideas to themselves. How do participants feel about that? If most of the group feels one way or the other, will they feel pressured to agree? Or are they comfortable saying that their own ideas are quite different?

If time is short, invite participants to take the handouts home to complete.

Including All Participants

If you have participants with limited reading skills, read through the page with the full group before participants respond to it.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout
- Optional: Posted closing words

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare any Taking It Home suggestions you want to give participants.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session with words like these: "Today we talked about a big question every religion and every person sometime asks, 'Does God exist?' We thought about the use of the word 'God' on United States money. We considered the meaning of some God words. Next, we heard about the God ideas of some young UUs in a UU congregation. Our WCUU report was about the God beliefs you might find in a UU

tent at an international faith camp. In WIT Time, we explored our personal ideas about whether God exists."

Hand out any Taking It Home activity suggestions you have prepared.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to speak these closing words with you: "May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions."

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to). Sound the tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: THINKING OF SURVIVAL

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint and markers
- Paper and pencils
- Watch, clock or other timer

Preparation for Activity

- If your group will do "In Our Rooms," consider finding out about local donation centers in advance so you can tell youth where they can take unnecessary possessions for distribution to people in need. You can then use some of your Faith in Action time to set up a specific plan for following through and making donations as a group. You might also consider asking a representative of a center to speak with your group for a few minutes about the center's work.

Description of Activity

If your group has chosen an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, consider these short-term Faith in Action activities:

Basic Human Needs: Ask your group to brainstorm the essentials of human life. What is it that people absolutely must have in order to survive? Let the group call out possible answers while you record them on newsprint. Then review the list and ask whether every item is truly an essential. If the group agrees that something does not belong, cross it off. Do that in a way that is comfortable for whoever first suggested the idea. ("It might sound essential at first, but when we compare it to some of these other ideas we might find it less important than we thought.")

Explain that psychologist Abraham Maslow described a "hierarchy of needs." It is a list of human needs in order of decreasing importance. At the basic level are the biological needs, which include such things as oxygen, water, food, and warmth. (The other four levels, in order

of most to least important, are safety needs; social needs for love and a sense of belonging; esteem needs, like self-respect and respect from others; and self-actualization needs, or a chance to do what a person was "born to do" or what a person needs to do to lead a meaningful life.) To help participants understand this concept, you might list the categories on newsprint, and ask the group where each of the following fits in the hierarchy: eating (biological), smoke alarm (safety), friends (social), and dancing lessons (self-actualization).

How does the group's list of needs compare with Maslow's? Do participants wish to change their list?

Those In Need: Ask if participants know anybody who has trouble meeting their basic, survival needs. Where have participants seen such people? What about poor people they see begging on the street or sleeping in the park? What about around the world? Ask, how many people in the world do you believe have trouble meeting their basic needs? Mention that about half the people in the world have less than two dollars a day to survive on.

In Our Rooms: This activity leads to ask how many of their own possessions are essential, and to consider sharing some that are not. Give participants paper and pencil. Invite them to prepare for a thoughtful, meditative moment by sitting comfortably, closing their eyes if they wish, or staring out a window or at some special object in the meeting space — the chalice, perhaps. Lead them with words like these: "Go in your mind to the room where you sleep at home. Look around the room at all the things you own. Remember what is in your closet, if you have one, and what is in your drawers. Then roam around in your mind through your house or apartment and look at the things that belong to you — just to you, and not your whole family. Look through the windows at things you may have outside, and then go back in your mind to the room where you sleep. Imagine that you are on your bed, not in bed but on it, just lying down, fully dressed, thinking and relaxing. Suddenly you hear a parent shouting. 'A hurricane is coming!' your parent says. 'We have to evacuate right now! We can't take a lot of stuff! Grab whatever you absolutely must have to survive and grab it right now! Then come join the rest of us! We're out of here in five minutes!' What are you going to grab? What do you absolutely need to survive?"

Ask youth to open their eyes now, to return in their minds to the group, and write down their list of essentials. When they have finished, invite them to call out some of the items on their list. Are they really essentials? There may be disagreement about this, and some may observe "it all depends" on this or that. This is fine — total agreement is not necessary to make the point that most of us have much more than we need.

Now ask the youth to use the back of the paper to write in two timed minutes as many of their non-essential possessions as they can. Announce a start time and call out "time is up" to sound the end of the two minutes. How many items did they list? Did they name everything in their rooms? Did they come close? If you have time, ask the youth to take up their pencils again and put a check mark next to all the items on their lists that they have not used for or even thought about for a long time.

So What? Ask the youth why they think you asked them to make those lists. What do the lists say about economic justice? Is it fair for some of us to have so much when others around the world are starving? Point out that you are not condemning the youth.. They, like you, live in a wealthy society, where most people have more money and goods than they need to survive. The solution is not to sit around feeling guilty about injustice. The point is to do something about it. The next question is: What should the group do? Ask for ideas about what their congregation might do, what their families might do, and what they as individuals might do. As the discussion continues, ask for the simplest possible solution. See if anybody suggests that the simplest thing might be for the people who have too much to give some of it to the people who have too little. If nobody else mentions that idea, do so yourself. Ask: "What about that idea? If we have too much, and others have too little, why not give some of our stuff away? But how do we do that?"

Ask if anybody knows of local places where people can donate clothing, toys, and other items. Do some of the group's families already make use of such centers? Who in the group will volunteer to find out more about the centers and share the information at your next meeting?

If it is practical for your group, conclude by making a plan to follow through with the donation idea. Maybe youth can bring donations to the next session, and a leader or parent can help the youth bring the materials to an appropriate center.

Otherwise, conclude by saying you hope the whole group will work with their families to donate possessions they do not need. Promise that you will do the same, and that you will be on the lookout for ways to do that most effectively..

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. How was your mix of discussion and action? How comfortable do your youth seem to be when sharing ideas about faith? Are you being careful not to push them out of their comfort zones — or do you want to do that from time to time? Note that Alternate Activity 2 for

Session 5 suggests asking a visitor to talk with your class about evolution, which would require advance arrangements.

TAKING IT HOME

What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God. — Eleanor Powell

Tell the truth, have you ever found God in a church? I never did. I just found a bunch of folks hoping for him to show. Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me. And I think all the other folks did too. They come to church to share God, not find God. —Alice Walker, The Color Purple

Talk about the quotes. Does the first seem to work just as well if you substitute "Great Mystery" or another word or phrase for the word "God"? What do you think about the second quote? Why do you come to church?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question is "Does God exist?" We talked a little about the national motto on American money — "In God we trust." We learned about some words connected with God ideas, and we heard the God ideas of some young UUs from Maine. We made a UU tent for WCUU, and talked about the different God beliefs we might find under such a tent. We ended up thinking about our own private "yes" or "no" answers to questions about God.

ANSWERING TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

What do family members and friends have to say about the question: "Does God exist?" Do members of your immediate family share the same ideas about God? How about your extended family? Different family members might define the word "God" differently or might use another word to describe something in the universe that is larger than us. Does your family include theists, who believe in God? Atheists, who say there is no God? Agnostics, who say they do not know? Do you pray as individuals or as a family? Do the different parts of your family talk with one another about God? Think about the family members whose ideas you think you know. Do any of them agree, or are they all different? Does that matter? What does matter about God beliefs? (Being comfortable with your own beliefs? Accepting that other people have different beliefs?)

SHARED SEARCH

Go together to a place where you or someone in your family experiences a sense of the holy or sacred, or very special place that makes you or they think about God, the eternal or the Spirit of Love. That might be your church. It might be a lake, or a mountain that fills you

with awe, or maybe a place in your house where a family member prays or meditates.

TOUR YOUR TOWN

Drive or walk together around your community. Look at the different places of worship or religious buildings. Which say something about God on the outside? How do their messages make you feel? Do you want to go in? Stay away? Why?

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something in your house that makes you think of God. Maybe it is a book, like the Bible. Remember, thinking about God is not the same as believing that there is a God. Everybody has to think about God sometimes, because the idea of God is all around us.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION

Can your family think of a Faith in Action project that has something to do with God? Maybe it is as simple as telling a few other people that you are in a religion where people are free to have their own God beliefs. What else can you think of?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small notebook for each participant
- Pencils or pens
- Optional: Masking tape

Description of Activity

Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about Today's Big Question in their notebooks.

Distribute the notebooks and pencils or pens. Remind participants of Today's Big Question. Tell them they will have about five minutes to write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax. Assure them that the notebooks are private. You will keep them but not read them between sessions. The youth can take them home at the end of Riddle and Mystery, and they may wish to use them in connection with an activity suggested for the final session.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — SPIRIT OF LIFE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song — reading the words, singing, or playing a recording.
- Optional: Ask your music or choir director to make a recording of the song.
- Optional: Music player for sharing the song.

Description of Activity

Tell the group that many songs in *Singing the Living Tradition* and its supplement, *Singing the Journey*, are very popular among UUs. *UU World* says that "Spirit of Life" is better known and loved than any other song. (Ask if participants are familiar with *UU World*, a magazine published by the Unitarian Universalist Association.) Here is what *UU World* had to say in Fall, 2007: "No other song, no other prayer, no other piece of liturgy is so well known and loved in Unitarian Universalism as 'Spirit of Life' by Carolyn McDade." (See Resources for a full listing of the article.)

Ask the group if they are familiar with the song. Unless everyone knows it, introduce the song in a manner comfortable for you —reading the words, singing them if you are comfortable doing so, or playing a recording.

Ask for the group's reactions. Do participants like the song? Why do they think it is so popular among UUs? Does it say anything about Today's Big Question? What do they think is meant by "Spirit of Life"?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: QUESTIONS AND GODS OF HOUSECATS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Supplies for simple drawings — paper, colored pencils, and/or washable markers
- Paper towels and any cleanup supplies appropriate to your media
- Optional: Cat-related background music and music player

Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables or other workspaces for easy access and comfortable drawing.

Description of Activity

This activity asks participants to imagine the Big Questions of housecats, then make drawings showing cats and some of their answers to their Big Questions.

Mention that cats have played a surprisingly important part in human religions. Ancient Romans had a Goddess, Diana, who sometimes took the form of a cat. Some ancient Egyptians worshipped cats, and they sometimes referred to Ra, the sun God, as "the great cat." Throughout history, there are many interesting connections between cats and human religion.

But what about the religions of the cats? What sort of Big Questions might a housecat ask? What sort of answers might it come up with? What sort of religion might a group of housecats form? Invite comments and discussion. If the group has trouble getting started, ask more leading questions, such as: What might a housecat most desire? Most fear? How might a housecat pray if it was hungry? Where would it send its prayer?

Close the discussion and ask youth to make simple drawings to illustrate their ideas. Any style drawing is fine, including cartoons.

Give the youth an idea of the time available, and play appropriate background music if you like. The soundtrack of the musical *Cats* is one possibility.

Allow time for participants to share their drawings. Post the drawings if that is appropriate for your space. Tell the group that though this activity is light hearted, it might help us think about how different religions serve different populations with different concerns. Invite comments or observations.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Browse the Internet and see what you find to share.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions are offered for the more thoughtful groups and individuals participating in Riddle and Mystery. Here is a possibility for this session: If there is a God, where did God come from?

This is another very big question. It is unlikely that your youth will reach agreement on an answer, but they may find it fun and interesting to wrestle with possible answers. You might tell them that some people answer the question simply by saying that God has always

existed. Others might say that time is a creation of God's, so God exists outside of time. They might say also that God created cause and effect, so cause and effect do not apply to God's own existence. Therefore, God simply is.

What do your youth think? As the discussion proceeds, you might ask: Can the existence of God ever be proven, or will it always be a matter of belief?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: CLUES ABOUT UUS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- UU source materials which might include reference to God: hymnbooks (*Singing the Living Tradition* or *Singing the Journey*); several versions of your congregation's publicity, if any; several different congregational orders of service; several newsletters from your congregation; several issues of *UU World*
- Posted UU Principles and Sources

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether small groups of youth can and should leave your meeting space to look around your church and speak with adult members of the congregation.
- Determine what to have each of your small groups do.

Description of Activity

Divide participants into small groups to conduct searches for references and other evidence of God in your congregation's printed materials and meeting space.

Tell participants you want them to be detectives and search for clues about whether Unitarian Universalists believe God exists. Begin by pointing out your posted Principles and Sources. Ask the youth to glance through them quickly to see whether God is mentioned. (The adult version of the Sources does mention God once. When youth point this out, you might note that the reference is to Jewish and Christian beliefs, not exactly to UU beliefs.)

Divide youth into smaller groups and have each look for clues about God in the ways you have decided. One group might search through copies of hymnbooks, a second through orders of service, a third through your congregation's publicity material, and a fourth through past issues of *UU World*. Another group might be assigned to move through your congregation's building to ask adults whether there is a God. Still another could

move through the building looking at art and bulletin boards for clues. Say that the groups will need to work fast — they only have a few minutes to find their clues. Assist the groups as necessary while they are searching. The hymnbook group might appreciate knowing about the topical indices.

After the time allotted for searching, bring the whole group together and ask them to report on their findings. What they find disclose will depend, of course, on the nature of your congregation and what the youth happen to find.

Ask whether their findings indicate a single Unitarian Universalist answer to the God question. Affirm that no such answer exists.

STORY: GOD IS . . .

Compiled by Tirrell H. Kimball of the Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church in Portland, Maine.

Read — or ask volunteers to read — as many entries from this collection as time and interest allow.

Twice upon a time, the religious education leader of a UU church in Portland, Maine, decided to ask the kids in her program what they thought about God. From their answers, she made two different What Is God? books. Here is some of what they said:

From Shannon, age 5, with a picture she drew of squiggly lines: The squiggly lines are the words God told me to say when I closed my eyes to think about her. She also told me to draw a cross. God has lots of words to say.

From Allyson, age 5: I think that God is up in the clouds. I think that he has a long beard.

From Brandon, age 6: Maybe God looks like a tree. God would like us to stop polluting the water.

From Kate, age 7: I think there's a little light of God in everyone. I think God is all the things around us like the sky, the moon, the grass, the trees and the sun and, of course, you always call that nature.

From Lisa, age 8: I think God is a spirit and I think God is our home and the sky and the grass and the trees and the ground. God is everything.

From Taylor, age 9: God is . . . um . . . well . . . I don't really know. It's kind of a secret that only God knows.

Basically, God is everything. It's inside us, it's around us. It's everything.

From Sam, age 10: I think the symbol for God is the Yin and the Yang because that symbolizes everything. And I think God is everything.

From Chris, age 11: It doesn't mean anything really.

From Selena, age 11: God is a feeling, an emotion inside of you. Something to believe will get you through danger safely. God is what some call your conscience. God is a spirit inside everyone. The strength of the god is determined on the capability of the person, determined on the faith, luck, and will to believe in themselves and the god. The attitude is also determined on the person, the attitude of the god. Each god of each person is born and dies with the person.

From Emily, age 12: God is like a small seed of creation.

From Brett, age 12: God is within us. It is a spirit buried inside of our bodies.

From Graham, age 13: God is an idea made to solve the unknown. Therefore, think what you want about it.

From Peter, age 13: God is one big face, not really happy or sad, not male or female, and when you get really close, it is made up of a lot of little tiny faces made of many colors.

From Stefan, age 13: God is Everything.

From Evan, age 14: Personally I don't believe in god or any gods. I believe that every person has their own belief and should stick to it.

HANDOUT 1: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you believe God exists? Yes _____ No _____

If your answer is yes, can you describe the God you believe in?

Yes _____ No _____

If your answer is no, can you describe the God you do not believe in? Yes _____ No _____

Do you believe in any of the following?

There is some sort of power that is higher and stronger than people. Yes _____ No _____

There is a spirit of love that you cannot see but that pulls people together. Yes _____ No _____

A Great Mystery holds all the secrets of the world. It is fun to explore but people can never really understand it. Yes _____ No _____

No power greater than people decides what the future will be. Yes _____ No _____

Do any of these labels fit you?

Humanist — We need to think mostly about people who live on earth, not whatever lives in heaven. Yes _____ No _____

Pagan — The earth, its seasons, and nature are the center of your religion. Yes _____ No _____

Mystic — The truth of the universe is hidden in mystery. Yes _____ No _____

Do you . . .

Rely mostly on reason to solve your problems? Yes _____ No _____

Sometimes pray with words for help to solve your problems?

Yes _____ No _____

Meditate to find peace and joy in spite of your problems? Yes _____ No _____

Do you offer thanks at Thanksgiving? Yes _____ No _____

Do you know where you are sending your thanks? Yes _____ No _____

Do any of these describe you?

Theist (You believe in God.) Yes _____ No _____

Atheist (You believe there is no God.) Yes _____ No _____

Agnostic (You do not know if there is a God.) Yes _____ No _____

Now think about all you have said, and answer again:

Do you believe God exists? Yes _____ No _____

LEADER RESOURCE 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

Hand a copy of this resource to your Kid for the Day at the appropriate time during your Opening.

For the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs: The first is getting your group excited about hearing Today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one side first, then, the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "stop!" Then read Today's Big Question. Here it is:

Does God exist?

LEADER RESOURCE 2: GOD SOURCES

Make a copy of this page with enlarged type. Cut the lines apart so they can be placed in various points of your meeting room.

YOUR PARENTS

YOUR MINISTER

YOUR FRIENDS

YOUR SCIENCE TEACHER

YOUR OWN INNER SELF

LEADER RESOURCE 3: GODLY WORDS

Make a copy of this page with enlarged type. Cut the terms and definitions apart so they can be given to (or pinned or taped on) each youth.

Theist — Believes God exists

Atheist — Believes God does not exist

Agnostic — Says God might or might not exist

Humanist — Says people's responsibilities in this life are most important

Trinitarian — Says God has three parts

Christian — Says Jesus is the son of God

Jew — Says truth is in the Hebrew Bible

Unitarian Universalist — Can believe many different things

God — Supreme being and creator of all

Belief — Something you think is true

Fact — Something you can prove is true

Miracle — Something that happens that cannot be explained

Allah — Muslim name for God

Prayer — Message to God

Theology — Ideas about religion and God

LEADER RESOURCE 4: WCUU SCRIPT

To the Co-Anchors:

Today's WCUU program talks about the beliefs of different people gathered in the UU tent at an International Camp of Faith. Your job is to follow the script, read your parts, and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you are together on camera, standing in front of a microphone.

Co-Anchor 1: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

Theme music

[Cue the sound engineer for theme music if your group uses it.]

The show

Co-Anchor 2: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name].

Co-Anchor 1: And I am [give your real or stage name].

Co-Anchor 1: This morning's broadcast comes to you live from the International Camp of Faith. It is the latest in a series of visits to tents erected by all of the world's great religions — the most unusual tents in all the world.

Co-Anchor 2: That is right, [give your Co-Anchor's name]. Every significant religion in the world has erected tents here to ward off the weather and the bad things that happen and even the blinding light of all truth, a light so hot and powerful that it might frazzle anybody who looked directly at it. Each of these tents is equipped with many mystic skylights.

Co-Anchor 1: As we have seen in earlier visits to the Camp of Faith, visitors to the tents can gaze through these skylights at the Great Beyond. The strange thing is that the visitors see many different things. Visitors to tents of Christian faiths often report seeing the God of the Christian Bible, Jesus, and the Mother Mary. Visitors to Muslim tents see Allah. Visitors to Jewish tents see the God of the Hebrew Bible.

Co-Anchor 2: It is awesome. People looking out to the Light of the Great Beyond all find different truths there, different theological understandings, and different cosmic views. That's especially true at the tent we will visit today, the Unitarian Universalist Tent.

Co-Anchor 1: A tent that is just now being erected. Let's swing the camera around to that tent now so our viewers can see it going up.

[Camera Operator swings aims camera at the Tent Crew who struggle to raise their "tent" — a sheet with holes in it lifted high on four tent poles held by the Tent Crew, who stand in place for the remainder of the broadcast.]

Co-Anchor 2: There! The UU tent is now in place. Let's go inside and talk to some of the UUs who are there and ask what they see through the mystic skylights. Let's start with that group of three over there, and find out if they see God.

[Atheist, Theist, and Agnostic move under the tent, in range of the camera. Co-Anchor 1 interviews the Atheist, asking what the Atheist sees and whether the view includes God. Co-Anchor 2 then interviews the Theist in a similar way. And Co-Anchor 1 then interviews the Agnostic in a similar way. Atheist, Theist, and Agnostic give answers based on Belief Notes given to them in advance by the Director. While giving their answers they sometimes look up through or point at the skylights through which they view the Great Beyond.]

Co-Anchor 2: Well that was interesting. Now let's talk to that group of four over there.]

[Atheist, Theist, and Agnostic move out of the tent and camera range. Humanist, Mystery Seeker, God as Love-ist, and Pagan all move into the tent and camera range. Co-Anchor 2 interviews the Humanist, asking what the Humanist sees and whether the view includes God. Co-Anchor 1 then interviews Mystery seeker in a similar way; Co-Anchor 2 interviews God as Love-ist in a similar way, and Co-Anchor 1 interviews Pagan in a similar way. Humanist, Mystery Seeker, God as Love-ist, and Pagan give answers based on Belief Notes given to them in advance by the director. While giving their answers they sometimes look up through or point at the skylights through which they view the Great Beyond.]

Co-Anchor 2: My goodness. It is beginning to sound as if every Unitarian Universalist you meet has a different cosmic view.

Co-Anchor 1: You are right about that, [Co-Anchor 2's name]. I think it is time to return to the studio and ask NUUs Analyst to explain all this.

[Camera swings away from tent to studio and NUUs Analyst.]

NUUs Analyst: I think you just said it, [Co-Anchor 2's name). Unitarian Universalist call themselves a creedless religion. They agree to disagree about their ideas. They even like having different ideas, because it helps them learn from each other.

The UUA's web page gives us some clues about UU beliefs. About half of UUs say they are humanists. Some humanists say there is a God and some do not. About thirteen percent of UUs say they are theists, and believe in a god. Nineteen percent have earth-centered beliefs like paganism. Some of them also believe in gods, and some do not.

Co-Anchor 1: What about the UUs who speak of Mystery?

NUUs Analyst: They feel there is some sort of power beyond us and beyond the world that lives in our hearts and helps guide us, but we can never fully know or understand it. You could say that Mystery or Great Mystery is another name for God. But it is certainly not the sort of God who sits on a throne in the high heavens that other people think about when they say the word "God."

Co-Anchor 2: Can you sum up UU ideas about God, NUUs Analyst?

NUUs Analyst: Here's what one UU minister has to say. He is Forrest Church, a UU minister in New York City. He says, "God is not God's name. God is our name for that which is greater than all and yet present in each. Call it what you will." No wonder UUs have so many different ideas when they look through their skylights at the Great Beyond.

Co-Anchor 1: Thank you, NUUs Analyst, for your time and your words.

NUUs Analyst: But I am just getting started. There are one hundred thousand UUs with one hundred thousand different ideas who all gather together in one religious tent. I could go on all day.

Co-Anchor 2. Go right ahead, but not on our show. Tomorrow we will move on to some other tents in the International Camp of Faith. But for now it is time to sign off.

Theme music

[Cue the sound engineer for theme music if your group uses it.]

Station break

Co-Anchor 1: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

Co-Anchor 2: That is W-C-U-U for Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists. And this is [your real or stage name] signing off, too.

LEADER RESOURCE 5: BELIEF NOTES

Copy, divide, and distribute appropriate parts of this page to these Activity 4 On-Air People: Atheist, Theist, Agnostic, Humanist, Mystery Seeker, God as Love-ist, and Pagan.

Atheist — You do not believe God exists.. You try to live by the UU Principles. You like searching through the UU Sources for wisdom and ideas. But you do not believe in God. You cannot speak for all UU atheists. You know some are humanists who believe people have the responsibility to care for one another and solve the problems of the world. You know some say that belief in God is bad because different ideas about God make people fight with each other. You yourself just cannot find any proof that there is a God. So you are an atheist.

Theist — You believe in God. You cannot speak for all UU theists. You know they have many many different ideas about God. Some believe in a God who can influence people's lives and many believe in a less personal God. You yourself think God created the universe with a big bang, then stepped back to watch what happened after that.

Agnostic — You are not sure whether or not God exists. In fact, you do not think that you or anybody else can ever know. Sometimes when you look up at the sky, it seems that there must be a superpower somewhere that started everything and gives us guidance. At other times, you think there are so many problems in the world that there cannot be a God. You cannot prove nor disprove God's existence and you really do not even find the question important. So you are a UU who is just not sure about God.

Humanist — You think that our life on earth is the only life we know of for sure, and that what we do on earth is more important than whatever might follow after death. You cannot speak for all UU humanists. Some believe in God, and some do not. You yourself are not sure, so you are an agnostic humanist. But you do not really care much about the idea of God. You are too busy trying to do all the human things you can do to help make the world a good place.

Mystery Seeker — You feel there is a power beyond you, and beyond all creations on earth, and you call that power Great Mystery. Some people spend a great deal of thought trying to define what that power might be. You love exploring the possibilities, even though you know you will never know the answers for sure and that is fine with you. Instead of worrying about finding answers, you would rather celebrate the beauty of it all.

God as Love-ist — You are a UU who thinks of God as the force of love. The power of love, you say, is what draws everybody and everything together. Love is a universal connecting force. Other words you use to describe your God, the force of love, are "divinity" and "divine." You hope that someday other people will stop worrying about who their God is, and why their God is better than other people's Gods. You think that if they will honor the force of love, they can all grow together and be peaceful.

Pagan — You belong to a UU pagan group, and all the members have different ideas. Some of your friends think of themselves as Wiccans and witches who have religious ideas that go back before the time of Jesus. But when you think of paganism, you think about the UU Source that says "Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature." To you, nature is a life-giving and sacred force.

FIND OUT MORE

Beliefs about God

Unitarian Universalism is a home for people who hold a wide range of theological views. On the UUA website, read a statement about [belief pluralism in our faith](#), this web page links to information about how Unitarian Universalism specifically embraces Christian, humanist, Theist/Deist, atheist/agnostic and other faith perspectives.

The [Council for Secular Humanism](#) (at www.secularhumanism.org/) is a North American "organization for non-religious people... who find meaning and value in life without looking to a god." The organization publishes Free Inquiry magazine.

Individuals in Search

The 2008 Beacon Press book *Surprised by God: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Religion* thoughtfully and engagingly describes author Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg's winding spiritual and philosophical path from atheism to the rabbinate.

Bringing God Home: A Traveler's Guide chronicles the personal and professional struggles which led Unitarian Universalist minister Rev. Forrest Church's into his quest for God.

Humanism and Theism

Read about [humanism](#) on the Unitarian Universalist Association website.

The Rev. Tom Owen-Towle's book *Wrestling with God: A Unitarian Universalist Guide for Skeptics and Believers* (Barking Rocks Press, 2002), available from the UUA bookstore, also deals with the dialogue between Humanism and Theism in our denomination. Read an excerpt [online](#) (at www.uuworld.org/2003/01/musing.html).

Human Rights

The Faith in Action activity in this session deals with basic human needs. See the [United Nations web pages](#) to discover the human rights the UN has affirmed are necessary for a person's basic survival and well being. Find full text as well as simplified-language versions of the Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of Rights of the Child.

SESSION 5: OUT OF NOTHING

INTRODUCTION

Out of the stars in their flight, out of the dust of eternity, here have we come. — Robert T. Weston

Big Question: How did life begin?

Where are the youth who have never wondered why they exist, where life comes from, what lies beyond the first known causes? Session 4 applied faith and belief to the question of God's existence. This session applies science to the question of how life began. It explores the beauty of poetic answers from myth and story, then presents science as a probable source of more accurate information.

An optional timeline activity (Alternate Activity 7) helps youth find their own place in the development of life over millennia—a process stretching from the Big Bang to the present. In WIT time, youth respond to the Unitarian Universalist emphasis on what we do with our life over a preoccupation with life's ultimate cause. The session affirms Unitarian Universalism's position that our search for ultimate answers is unlikely to end.

Evolution is the subject of the story and informs other activities. To do more with the topic, use Alternate Activities 4, 5, 6 and/or 7.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "How did life begin?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses to it
- Explore the idea of cause and effect
- Offer myth and science as two responses to questions of ultimate cause
- Emphasize the richness of the Unitarian Universalist Sources
- Explore science and reason as a Source
- Present the vast sweep of time
- Challenge youth to express their own ideas about life's beginnings.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Play detective, tracing cause through effect

- Experience a scientific explanation of life's beginnings
- Weigh the relative value of humanistic teachings (science, reason) and other UU Sources in seeking the ultimate beginning of life
- Take a stand on questions relating to first causes
- Articulate and reflect on their own ideas concerning the beginning of life
- Optional: Discover their place in deep history by making personal timelines.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Playing Detective	20
Activity 2: Story — A Garden Is Born (Evolution)	8
Activity 3: WCUU — Wonder of the World	17
Activity 4: WIT Time — Taking a Stand	7
Faith in Action: Planting New Life	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Life Is the Greatest Gift of All	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Wonder Art	15
Alternate Activity 5: Great Story Stuff	20
Alternate Activity 6: The Awakening Universe	20
Alternate Activity 7: Personal Timelines	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

With preparations complete, carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Remember when, as child and youth, you searched the stars and clouds for clues to the source and meaning of life. Recall the awe your questions inspired, and recapture it now. Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their search of life's mysteries is good.

- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant from Session 1

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and post a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants to make their own.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant, generated in Session 1.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to (make and) wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the paper back in the bag or box. (If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.)

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. Explain that you will use this same ritual—chalice lighting, followed by silence—at each session.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted a covenant made by the group in Session 1, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process any suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—How did life begin?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

If you are using Riddle and Mystery's sessions in sequence, you might ask if today's Big Question reminds youth of another Big Question they have already considered. Help them identify "How did life begin?" as a variation of "Where do we come from?" (Session 1).

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice. Move the chalice table aside as necessary to allow movement in the room.

Set aside the "Today's Big Question" sign and the Kid for the Day bag or box, with the names and extra pieces of card stock, for re-use.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: PLAYING DETECTIVE (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Writing paper and pencils for small groups
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document), Mysteries
- Timepiece
- A poster of the Unitarian Universalist Sources, or, copies of [Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how you will form small groups of three or four.
- Review Leader Resource 1. Print out a copy for each small group and/or write the questions on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: Familiarize yourself with a few creation stories. Find some in the illustrated book *In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World*, told by Virginia Hamilton (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988).

Description of Activity

Invite the youth to work in small groups to solve mysteries including the mystery of how life began.

Ask if participants enjoy mysteries and detective stories in books, movies or television shows. Say you have a few mysteries you want them to solve. Tell them they will work in small groups and present each solution in the form of a story that explains the mystery.

Form groups of three or four participants and give each group paper, pencils and a copy of Leader Resource 1 (or, direct their attention to the posted list of mysteries). Explain that the paper is for making notes; they need not write out their stories in full detail. Tell them they will have about eight minutes to prepare two stories—one

story that solves mystery number 6 and one that solves any other of the mysteries listed. Tell them you will let them know when four minutes are up so they can switch to their second mystery. They may try to solve additional mysteries if they have time.

Separate groups so they cannot overhear one another, then signal them to begin. Signal when four minutes have passed. After another four minutes, bring the groups together and invite them to share stories as time allows.

When they have finished sharing, say that billions of people, maybe most people who have ever lived, have wondered how life began. So, over time there have been many, many solutions offered to the sixth mystery. Note that you will share another explaining story in the next activity.

As appropriate, note that the youth have acted not only as detectives, but also as scientists, using the concept of cause and effect. They started knowing what the effect was and then tried to trace its cause. This what the earliest people did: They saw that life existed, then created stories and myths to explain what had caused it to be—where life came from.

Point out the posted UU Sources or distribute copies of Session 1, Leader Resource 1 for youth to share. Ask them to think about which Sources might tell us how life begins. Almost certainly somebody will quickly suggest science. If not, do so yourself. Ask the group how science could help answer the question. Affirm responses.

Ask the group how science works. Ask if anybody can explain "scientific method." (Many sixth graders study this subject in school.) Explain in your own words:

Scientists begin an inquiry by defining what they want to know—framing a question. Then they make a guess, called a "hypothesis," about what the answer might be. Next, they set up an experiment to see if the hypothesis is right. If the experiment shows the hypothesis is correct, then scientists say the idea has been scientifically proved. If not, they make a new hypothesis—maybe even a different question—and try again.

Even when scientists have proved something, they know they must be ready to change their minds later, if different experiments show different answers. A hypothesis must be tested more than once. Results are not valid unless others who try it obtain the same results. If they do not, something is wrong needs more thought and experimenting.

Ask participants if they can define a scientific theory. Affirm that a theory is not a fact. It is an explanation about the world and how it works that scientists shape—using all the facts they know and the hypotheses they have proved so far—and then try to prove by doing and analyzing more experiments.

Ask youth how the scientific method of solving a mystery differs from using faith and religious belief, which they have talked about in previous sessions. The answer most useful for sixth graders lies in experiments and proof.

Ask:

- Which of your stories show that your group used scientific method to solve a mystery? Which show the group used faith, belief or imagination? Which stories could be proved to solve the mystery, and which could not?
- Can all the big questions be answered through scientific method?

(Can science prove whether God exists? The answer is "no." Some people have tried to prove God exists, but none can offer proof that everybody else accepts. The idea that God does exist is a belief, and some scientists have that belief. In fact, *Nature* magazine did a survey in 1997 in which 40 percent of scientists believed that God exists.

Say that today's story talks about the scientific theory of evolution.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — A GARDEN IS BORN (EVOLUTION)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[A Garden Is Born \(Evolution\)](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out the story.

Description of Activity

Gather the group and read or tell the story. At its conclusion, ask for reactions:

- How do you feel about the theory of evolution? Do you think it is a good explanation of how the life we know came to be?
- What unscientific myths and stories about the beginning of life do you know? (Remind them of the story about turtles "all the way down" from Session 1 and of the creation stories in the biblical Book of Genesis.) What do you think about these stories of how life began?

Say in your own words:

While most scientists and most Unitarian Universalists today accept the story of evolution as an answer to today's Big Question, they also recognize that creation myths were a wonderful way for ancient peoples to answer their own big questions and explain the world. Some people still strongly believe in creation stories like the story of Adam and Eve. Most UUs believe we can learn from and enjoy creation stories even if we do not believe they are literally true.

Many people believe in both evolution and a God that created the universe. Perhaps they see evolution as the mechanism God used to create everything.

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — WONDER OF THE WORLD (17 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)
- Optional: Wonder Art created by participants (Alternative Activity 4)
- Optional: Shovel for Science Assistant

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If the group has done Alternate Activity 4, Wonder Art, consider

using their creation(s) in WCUU as a backdrop, or suggest youth add to the script and feature the art in the broadcast. If you plan to record WCUU:

- Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
- Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
- If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling... " followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Make enough copies of Leader Resource 2 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has five On-Air people who will need scripts—an Anchor, a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst, Dr. UU Scientist, Science Assistant and Competitor. If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Description of Activity

Participants present a WCUU segment involving five On-Air People—Anchor, NUUs Analyst, Dr. UU Scientist, Science Assistant and Competitor—and a Studio Crew which might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Assign roles, using volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be the Anchor or Dr. UU Scientist.

Give participants who need to follow the script a moment to look it over. Review it with them if you have participants with limited reading skills.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

At the end of the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how typical Unitarian Universalists respond to today's Big Question: "How did

life begin?" Do they think non-UUs would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing the WCUU broadcast?

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — TAKING A STAND (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , Where I Stand on Life

Preparation for Activity

- Review and print out Leader Resource 3.
- Clear space so participants can move easily from one side of the meeting space to the other, or find a place in the middle, as you read a series of choice questions.

Description of Activity

Say you want the youth to explore where they stand on some questions about the origins of life. Explain that for each question, participants should place themselves where you indicate to show which of two answers they believe—or, they may move to a place in the middle to show their answer falls in between the two you offer.

Pose the first question from Leader Resource 3 and indicate where participants should stand for "yes" and for "no." Give as much guidance as needed until participants get the idea of responding with motion. Once youth are in place, ask volunteers to comment: Why are they where they are? Suggest they may move and change position as they like as they hear the reasoning of others.

Ask as many questions from the list as you like, and add some of your own if you wish.

Including All Participants

Adapt the activity to fully include youth of limited mobility. You might help a youth to a position near the middle and after you read each question, invite them to indicate verbally or by pointing the spot where they choose to be. Or, have the group remain seated and call out their responses to each question. For example, read the first question and then ask who says "yes," who says "no" and who would place themselves in the middle. Invite some volunteers to comment on their own choices, and then ask the question again.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape

- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asks how life began. We used the idea of cause and effect to make up some stories of our own about why various things happen, then we heard how the story of how evolution explains the development of life. We said that myths are powerful and a good way to learn about the people who told them, but that science may be the best source for information about how life actually began. In our WCUU broadcast, we talked about life as a great wonder. In WIT Time, we took a stand to show some of our own ideas about how life began.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: PLANTING NEW LIFE

Materials for Activity

- Pots, potting soil and flower seeds for all participants or small, inexpensive, potted houseplants suitable for the congregation's meeting space
- Additional gardening tools, such as watering cans and trowels, and supplies, including clean-up supplies

Preparation for Activity

- Identify recipients for potted seeds or plants. You might consider a family shelter, a residential nursing home or an adult day care or rehabilitation center. The plants would also

make nice gifts for elders in the congregation, especially those who are no longer able to attend services. You might also decide to place plants inside or outside the congregation's meeting space. Secure any permissions and make arrangements to donate potted seeds or plants.

- Obtain flower seeds, seedlings or potted houseplants, making sure none are toxic to humans or pets.
- Identify a work space for the group to use that is near a water source. If the group will nurture the plants for an extended period, make sure you have a place to display the pots and to store gardening equipment/supplies.
- Optional: If appropriate, arrange for the group to pot and grow plants to sell, giving proceeds to an organization they wish to support. Perhaps others in the congregation—adults, children and youth—might assist this effort; discuss the possibilities with your religious educator and/or social action committee.

Description of Activity

If the group has chosen an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, consider this short-term Faith in Action project:

Planting New Life. Tell the group scientists have found it is healthy for humans to keep plants around and inside buildings. Ask if participants know why. Affirm that plants help improve air quality and humidity; plants can also add beauty to our surroundings. Helping people stay healthy can be an excellent way to practice Faith in Action. Unfortunately, economic injustice leaves some people so strapped for resources that they lack money or time for acquiring plants and thus do not get the benefits of living around plants. Providing a plant can not only make someone feel better, it also takes a step toward making life more equitable and fair.

If you have decided to engage the group to provide plants for the congregational meeting space, point out that the plants will add health benefits to the congregational building, and can help the congregation save money for other important projects, such as working for economic justice.

Show the group the planting supplies and invite participants to plant the seeds or pot the seedlings you have brought. Set protective saucers beneath all plants placed indoors.

Have youth give the seeds or plants an initial watering, then talk about later care. What must be done to keep

the plants alive? Periodic watering is the greatest need. Ask if youth will volunteer to arrive early for future group meetings so they can water the seeds or plants.

Ask how youth would answer today's Big Question—How did life begin?—when it concerns seeds and houseplants. Can youth be the cause of tomorrow's flowering effects?

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. How was your mix of discussion and action? Do youth seem excited by science? Should you talk more about science in future sessions? Note that the Big Question for Session 6 is "What happens when you die?" Plan to reflect on your own answers to that in the days ahead.

TAKING IT HOME

Out of the stars in their flight, out of the dust of eternity, here have we come. — Robert T. Weston

Talk about the quote. When you think about how life began, do you go all the way back to the stars?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question is "How did life begin?" We saw that science is one of the best UU Sources to help answer that question, and we heard an answer in the story of evolution. We broadcast a WCUU show about life as a great wonder of the world, and we took a stand to show what we think about the beginning of life.

ANSWERING TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

How do members of your family feel about the theory of evolution? Do all of your relatives feel the same way? How about your friends? Talk about the Source that explains the beginning of life best. Is it religion? Science? Your own experiences and inner feelings?

SEE A SHOW

Watch a DVD called "The Awakening Universe." It is a capsule summary of the past 14 billion years prepared by Thomas Berry and based on the work of cosmologist Brian Swimme. Your congregation or your local library may have a copy, or you can find it online for your family to purchase. You will hear this narration, near the end:

The universe arose and gave rise to the galaxies. The galaxies gave rise to the stars. Our sun gave rise to the earth, and the earth gave rise to life and to all that we are. And now it is causing us to awaken from our dream of lonely isolation so we may rejoin the great community of life and take on our part in the

stupendous unfolding story. As Thomas Berry says, "This is our great work."

What does that mean to your family?

SHARED SEARCH

Go together to a place that makes you or somebody else in the family think about how life began. Maybe it is a starlit field, or the shore of an ocean. Maybe . . . but you decide.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something that makes you think about how all of life began. It could be something outdoors, such as flower buds on a tree. It might be a book inside your house. Get a camera and decide what calls to you.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION

The story of evolution not only explains how life began, it also demonstrates how strongly we are connected to all other life on the planet. Encourage your family to deepen their relationship with another life form. You could do this by caring for plants in a garden, spending more time with pets, or building birdhouses.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve participants' Big Questions notebooks begun in Session 1.
- Set out supplies for any new participants to start an individual notebook.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide any new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "How did life begin?" Say they can write about anything they want. Their ideas can

be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — LIFE IS THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song, and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "Life Is the Greatest Gift of All," Hymn 331 in *Singing the Living Tradition*—reading the words, singing together or playing a recording. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.
- Obtain copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook.
- Optional: Ask the music director or choir director to make a recording of the song.

Description of Activity

Remind/tell the group that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "Life Is the Greatest Gift of All" Hymn 331 from *Singing the Living Tradition* in a manner comfortable for you. Ask for reactions:

- Do participants like the song? What do they like about it?
- Does it seem to say anything about today's Big Question?

Ask the group:

- What does the song suggest UUs should do in response to the gift called life?

An answer comes at the end of the first verse, which says to treasure the gift and offer back "deeds of shining worth." Engage the group to name "deeds of shining worth" they can, or do, offer—either individually, as the Riddle and Mystery group or as part of their family or another group to which they belong. Suggest the group's Faith in Action projects may be such deeds. Guide youth

to articulate how such deeds express thanks for the gift of life.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: Browse the Internet and see what you find to share.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

Is science a religion?

If you search for an answer on the Internet, you find people saying "yes" and others saying "no." But what do the youth think?

Lead a discussion. You might also ask:

- What is the difference between proof and belief?
- Can someone trust in their faith and at the same time trust in the scientific method?
- Can someone belong to two religions?
- Can scientific method be used to prove anything at all about a religion? Why or why not?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: WONDER ART (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Scratch-Art paper, and scratch tools such as toothpicks (round is better) for all participants
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Large sheets of black construction paper and pastel or chalk crayons for all participants
- Optional: A recording of Reading 530 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Out of the Stars," or quiet background music to accompany someone reading aloud, and an audio player

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain materials. Scratch-Art paper is unusual and fun, so choose that instead of construction paper if you can. [Dick Blick](http://www.dickblick.com/) (at www.dickblick.com/) (retail stores or website) is one source for Scratch-Art paper.
- Arrange meeting space so youth can share materials as needed, yet work independently.
- Optional: Make a recording of someone reading "Out of the Stars" aloud. Or, obtain an anthem by Betsy Jo Angebrannt, published by the Unitarian Universalist Association, based on Weston's words.
- Optional: Choose quiet background music to play while you read Weston's words aloud.
- Optional: Identify a place where you can display youth's artwork after this activity. Obtain permission, if you need it. Prepare the text of the Weston reading to display with the artwork.

Description of Activity

Youth draw as you read words poetically describing the beginning of life.

Settle participants at work tables or on a floor. Distribute Scratch-Art paper and toothpicks or construction paper and pastels/crayons to share.

Ask for a quiet, meditative moment, and invite youth to use the materials to create whatever they wish after you begin reading the words or playing the music. Say their creations can be abstract or realistic, whatever they like. Read the words slowly and dramatically; they are very powerful. If you have more time, you may wish to pause, then repeat the reading.

When the artwork is complete or time is running out, give youth a chance to stand back, examine and comment on what they have done. If possible, display their artwork. You may wish to also post the text of the reading.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: GREAT STORY STUFF (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Material from The Great Story website, or a computer with Internet connection

Preparation for Activity

- Explore the website. Familiarize yourself with its descriptions of life's origin and evolution. Select material to share with the youth.

Description of Activity

Present The Great Story perspective on evolution and how life began. Connie Barlow is a Unitarian Universalist who has devoted herself to telling the story of evolution, together with Michael Dowd, a United Church of Christ minister. Barlow has prepared an entire children's curriculum, available through the website.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 6: THE AWAKENING UNIVERSE (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- DVD, *The Awakening Universe*, and DVD player/monitor

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain and test equipment to show a DVD.
- Preview the 15-minute DVD. Consider showing it from where the screen is visually empty and the narrator says "Imagine nothing."

Description of Activity

Show the group *The Awakening Universe*, a capsule summary of the past 14 billion years based on the work of Thomas Berry and cosmologist Brian Swimme. The DVD conveys some of the awesome wonder associated with the creation and evolution of life. Explain that Brian Swimme, the speaker with flowing gray hair, is a cosmologist (who studies the physical universe) at the California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco. Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd base some of their "The Great Story" work on Swimme's ideas. Leave time for youth's comments.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 7: PERSONAL TIMELINES (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Oval wooden beads large enough for youth to write on and string for all participants
- Paper and pencils for all participants
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors) and fine-point permanent markers to share
- Optional: Trays or bowls to hold beads on work tables
- Optional: Quiet background music and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain plain, wooden beads at an arts and crafts store. [American Woodcrafters Supply Company](http://www.americanwoodcrafterssupply.com/wooden-products/beads.htm#Beads) (at www.americanwoodcrafterssupply.com/wooden-products/beads.htm#Beads) is an online source. Plan for each participant to use 10-20 beads.
- Set materials on work tables.
- Optional: Choose quiet background music to play while youth work.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to narrow today's Big Question from "How did life begin?" to "How did my own life begin?"
Say, in your own words:

It is easy for most of us to find out about events 12 or 13 years ago, just before we were born. But the trails that led to each of us being born go back way beyond our parents. Science now believes life on Earth can be traced back about 14 billion years. That is a long, long time. If every year equaled one inch and you drew a line showing 14 billion of them, the line would go around the Equator almost nine times.

Invite the youth to string together beads to represent some of the really big events leading up to their own lives. The first event at one end will be the Big Bang. At the other end will be today. In between they might place beads to represent events in their family history before their lifetime, their ethnic group's history, their community history, U.S. history, human history or the history of the world. Suggest they might include great-grandparents having babies, then their grandparents having babies and then their own birth. What else? That is up to them, and everybody can do it differently.

Show the beading supplies to the group. Tell them they may include as many important events as they like, and they can use the paper and pencils to keep track of what they are doing. They may write dates of events and any other details they wish on their beads, then string them together in sequence.

Play quiet background music if you like as youth do their beading. When they have finished or time is running out, invite them tie off the laces to hold the beads in place, then share what they have done.

Invite youth to imagine how long their strings of beads would be if they showed all the important events between the Big Bang and their own births. Point out that if the beads each stood for one century, they would still each need 140 million of them. Ask youth to imagine how large their own life of, say, 100 years compares to

14 billion years. When the moment is up, ask how that idea makes them feel.

STORY: A GARDEN IS BORN (EVOLUTION)

Where previously there had been nothing, now there was something.

Within a black hole, a "singularity" developed.

What's a "singularity?" It's an area in a black hole where the density is so great the pressure squeezes bits of finite matter into a piece of infinite matter. Do you understand that?

Leader: Wait for a negative response.

I don't either! Riddle and mystery.

But some mathematicians support this theory of how the universe began. They call the birth of the universe the Big Bang, but there wasn't really a bang because it didn't happen instantaneously.

The singularity began to cool off and as that happened, it expanded to become the entire universe we know today. It's still cooling, expanding, and changing as we speak. Today, it's 156 billion light years wide. Can you imagine how big that is?

Leader: Wait for a negative response.

I can't either! Riddle and mystery. Cosmogony, the study of the origins of the universe, says this appears to be true.

Atoms became molecules. Molecules of different elements clustered together to form galaxies. Gaseous clouds of molecules formed into suns. Other gases became rock particles. Bunches of rock particles collided and stuck together and became the Earth. Earth has a non-living atmosphere of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen. Somehow, these elements managed to form

themselves into living creatures. Planetary processes brought these elements together to form amino acids and nucleic acids—the building blocks of life—and they created single-celled organisms that grow and reproduce.

How did these non-living elements become life?

Leader: Wait for a negative response.

Many theories exist, but no one knows for sure. Riddle and mystery. Yet, we know that those single-celled organisms, like bacteria, changed over time. Changes in a living organism overtime is called "evolution."

As organisms evolved, they became more complex. Single-celled creatures, probably living in the sea, evolved into life forms with trillions of cells, which live now in the sea, in the air and on land.

Life became more plentiful. The barren rock became a garden. Since all life has a common ancestor, all life is linked. Since all life has requirements to stay healthy and alive, we have a responsibility. It isn't just that my survival might depend on your survival. My survival depends on the survival of trees and plants that create oxygen and the survival of particular bacteria which live in my intestines. Do you think it a far stretch to imagine that my survival might depend upon the survival of a rainforest ecosystem in South America?

Leader: Wait for a negative response.

I don't either! All life is connected and dependent upon other life forms. Riddle and mystery.

Riddled.

Mysterious.

Beautiful.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)
2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

How did life begin?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: MYSTERIES

Think of your small group as a detective agency and the following events as mysteries to be solved. Make up a story to explain what caused one of the mysteries numbered 1-5. Then, make up a story to explain mystery number 6. If you have more time, return to mysteries 1-5 and choose another to solve. Take notes about all your stories so that later you can share them with the other groups.

1. A house has burned down.
2. A rainbow has glowed in the sky.
3. Two cars have crashed into each other.
4. A pancake tasted awful.
5. Your favorite team has won a championship game.
6. Human life has appeared in a universe that was lifeless.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WCUU SCRIPT

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU program talks about a UU scientist's attempt to have life named the greatest wonder of the world. Your job is to follow the script, read your part, and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you are alone on camera, sitting or standing in front of a microphone.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name] here to report a stunning development in the competition to name the greatest wonder of the world. Here to get us started is our WCUU NUUs Analyst, [give NUUs Analyst's real or stage name].

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to stand or sit with Anchor.]

Anchor: Tell us what you know about Dr. UU Scientist's claim that life is the greatest wonder of the world.

NUUs Analyst: Just this: As you know, people around the world have voted for many years on the greatest natural and human-made wonders of the world. Usually they come up with things like Niagara Falls and Cleopatra's Tomb. Now this Dr. UU Scientist appears out of who-knows-where to claim that life is the greatest wonder. That's what I know.

Anchor: That's it? You usually have more to say than that, NUUs Analyst.

NUUs Analyst: Right. But right now I'm more interested in coffee and a donut than I am in talking to you.

Anchor: So go get your coffee and donut, NUUs Analyst, and I'll check back with you at the end of our report. Maybe you'll have more to say then. In the meantime, let's ask Dr. UU Scientist to join us.

[Director: Cue Dr. UU Scientist to change places with NUUs Analyst on camera.]

Anchor: Thanks for joining us, Dr. UU Scientist. Now what can you tell us about life?

Dr. UU Scientist: Thanks right back for having me, Anchor. Now here's what I can tell you about life. It's a wonder, that's what life is.

Dr. UU Scientist The biggest wonder in the world, bigger than Wonder Bread, almost as big a wonder as the universe itself!

Anchor: How so?

Dr. UU Scientist: Think about it! Life goes way, way back, so far back we can't say exactly how far back. It came out of the Big Bang and all the swirling stardust that goes back 14 billion years.

Anchor: And how do you know all that, Dr.?

Dr. UU Scientist: Research. Scientific research. No stories and myths for us. We look for evidence, to test hypotheses, which add up to theories we can prove are true. We dig and dig and dig and then we dig some more in our search for real proof.

Anchor: Are your hands covered with blisters from all that digging?

Dr. UU Scientist: Oh, no. I used to dig all the time, but now I have an assistant to do that. There they are now...

[Director: Cue Science Assistant to begin digging. Cue Camera Operator to focus on Science Assistant. Cue Competitor to join Anchor and Dr. UU Scientist.] **Science Assistant:** I'm digging for fossils and bones. We're trying to track life back as far as we possibly can.

[Director: Cue Camera Operator to focus on Anchor and Dr. UU Scientist.]

Anchor: Thank you, Science Assistant. And, good luck with that. Now let's meet somebody else, a competitor for the greatest wonder of the world who says it's not life, but rocket ships.

Dr. UU Scientist: I'm ready, let's do it.

Anchor: Good morning, Competitor. Tell us why transportation is such a great wonder.

Competitor: And good morning to you. A rocket ship is not simply transportation, you know. Just think of a rocket ship probing outer space. One of the great creations of all humankind! Once there was no transportation at all. Then there were things like rafts and canoes. Then there were steamboats and trains and cars. Then there were airplanes and now there are rockets! Wow! That's a wonder all right!

Dr. UU Scientist: Easily. People had to create rockets. But people didn't create life. Life evolved all by itself.

Competitor: You've got me there.

[Director: Cue Competitor to leave studio.]

Dr. UU Scientist: Possibly so. We don't know about God. Maybe God made the Big Bang that eventually allowed life to begin. That is a mystery, and we cannot be sure. But we can see the wonder of life, and that is what is most important to me. Knowing lots and lots about life from science does not take away from the wonderful mystery of how it all began.

Anchor: Thank you so much for being with us.

Dr. UU Scientist: My pleasure.

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to switch places with Dr. UU Scientist.]

Anchor: Now let's see if NUUs Analyst is done with the coffee and donut. Good morning again, NUUs Analyst. Feel better?

NUUs Analyst: Much. Now what questions have you got for me, Anchor?

Anchor: I am sure the magic of television allowed you to see the show even while you were drinking and eating, NUUs Analyst. So tell us: are Dr. UU Scientist's ideas typical of UU ideas about life, what it is and how it began?

NUUs Analyst: Indeed, clearly, yes. Just look at the UU Sources. One of them is "humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit." In other words, science rocks and reason rules. Other UU Sources include ideas of wise people everywhere. UUs honor and enjoy creation myths and stories which give many different ideas about how life began. But most UUs agree that the myths and stories are artistic and poetic ideas about the beginnings. They can help us relish and probe the mystery of creation. But for the facts about how life began some fourteen billion years ago, UUs typically turn to science.

Anchor: Thank you, NUUs Analyst. That is very helpful.

NUUs Analyst: Wait a minute, Anchor. Don't you want to know what kind of donut I had?

Anchor: No I don't. And our viewers don't either. Let's go to theme music!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: WHERE I STAND ON LIFE

1. Is the theory of evolution the best way to explain how life began? Yes — No
2. I would rather study . . . Myths — Science
3. I think that something or someone had to start the whole process of evolution. Call it God, or call it Mystery or whatever, but whatever you call it, it had to be there. Right — Wrong
4. Should public schools teach evolution to kids whose parents say the theory is wrong because God created everything? Heavens, no! — Heavens, yes!
5. I am glad we do not know everything about how life began. I like having scientific mysteries to solve. Life would be boring without them. Agree — Disagree
6. Here's what some people say: "Time, like other stuff, began at the instant of the Big Bang. Before the Big Bang there was no time. So nothing at all could exist. There was absolutely nothing. So everything did come out of nothing at the instant of the Big Bang." Do you agree? Yes — No
7. Who should decide what kind of science is taught in schools? Parents — Governments
8. Is it weird or wonderful to think that some of the atoms in you might have been in somebody else a thousand years ago? Weird — Wonderful
9. Some UUs say that knowing how to use our lives is more important than knowing where they come from. Do you agree? Yes — No

FIND OUT MORE

Cosmology

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration offers an [introduction to cosmology](http://map.gsfc.nasa.gov/universe) (at map.gsfc.nasa.gov/universe) with in-depth yet accessible information on the Big Bang, the beginning of life and other topics.

The PBS program [NOVA](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/origins) (at www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/origins) has online resources about the beginnings of life and the origins of the universe, including interactive timelines, which could interest adults or youth.

The European Space Agency's website for children has a section called ["Our Universe"](http://www.esa.int/esaKIDSen/index.html) (at www.esa.int/esaKIDSen/index.html) with information on the beginnings of the universe and of life.

Science and Religion

To explore one way Unitarian Universalist religious education can celebrate the potential for mutual

inspiration between science and religion, see Amy Hassinger's article, ["Great Story' Religious Education"](http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/2700.shtml) (at www.uuworld.org/life/articles/2700.shtml), in the Spring, 2006 UU World. It reads, in part:

If children can learn... they descend from the stars and that their ancestors once swam in the sea, (Connie) Barlow says, perhaps they'll see there's no fundamental contradiction between having a religious understanding of the world—one that stands in awe of creation and finds meaning and value in existence—and embracing the profound offerings of science.

For more Unitarian Universalist perspectives on the relationship between science and religion, read the pamphlet ["Science and Religion: A Unitarian Universalist Perspective"](#), by Helen Lutton Cohen, which quotes Joseph Priestly, a founder of British Unitarianism: "Distrust all those who require you to abandon (reason), wherever religion is concerned."

SESSION 6: THINKING OF DEATH

INTRODUCTION

The question is not whether we will die but how we have lived. — Joan Borysenko, psychologist

Big Question: What happens when we die?

In one sense, all of us may one day know the answer, for death is surely our fate. Yet none of us can know it in life. Nor can we know whether, after death, we will have any kind of consciousness. Nevertheless, the inherent impenetrability of today's Big Question has not stopped humanity from asking it.

In this session, youth learn some beliefs about death, hear ideas from our faith, and explore their own beliefs. Be sensitive to the experiences of youth. Most sixth-graders have encountered death in some form. Some have grieved the death of a relative, a friend or a pet. If anyone in the group is struggling with a loved one's life-threatening illness or recent death, offer space for them to open up and speak in the group or to you alone; also convey your warm permission for them to maintain silence. Honor any beliefs participants express about death. The listening and support you offer might well be more important in a time of crisis than any possible intellectual processing of death's meaning.

This session may be beneficial to lead for youth and parents/caregivers together. Except for the WCUU activity, the core activities lend themselves to intergenerational participation; you may wish to videotape the WCUU broadcast first, then invite parents/caregivers to watch and discuss the broadcast. Alternate Activities 5, Death and Your Congregation, and 6, Another WIT Time — About Death, are suitable for youth and their parents/caregivers to do together.

If you do gather adults and youth together, make sure all youth have an adult family member who can join the session.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "What happens when we die?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses to it
- Acquaint youth with a variety of religious ideas about death
- Present the reflections of a Unitarian Universalist minister contemplating his own imminent death

- Introduce ways your Unitarian Universalist congregation recognizes deaths in your community
- Support youth in their current understanding of death.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Compare and contrast death beliefs of various religions
- Learn the perspective of a contemporary Unitarian Universalist theologian
- Consider the concept that we live on, after death, through our actions in life and in the love and memories of others
- Reflect on their own ideas about death
- Plan and/or experience a ritual to recognize the deaths of individuals in their congregation, family or community.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Who Believes What?	10
Activity 2: Story — Reflections by Forrest Church	7
Activity 3: WCUU — Visit to UUville	15
Activity 4: WIT Time — Memorial Rituals	20
Faith in Action: Capital Punishment	30
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — In Sweet Fields of Autumn and Nearer, My God, to Thee	8
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: A Science Report	5
Alternate Activity 5: Death and Your Congregation	30
Alternate Activity 6: Another WIT Time — About Death	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

With everything for the session set to go, carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Explore your current understanding of what happens when we die. Recall your encounters with

death as a child and youth. What were your ideas then about what happens when a life ends? How have your ideas developed through the years?

Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their search of life's mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant from Session 1

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and post a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. You might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants if needed.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant, generated in Session 1.

- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to (make and) wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the paper back in the bag or box. (If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.)

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. Explain that you will use this same ritual—chalice lighting, followed by silence—at each session.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted a covenant made by the group in Session 1, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process any suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—What happens when we die?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice. Move the chalice table aside as necessary to allow movement in the room.

Set aside the "Today's Big Question" sign and the Kid for the Day bag or box, with the names and extra pieces of card stock, for re-use.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: WHO BELIEVES WHAT? (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Matching Belief Systems and Statements
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , Belief Systems and Statements — Leader Key
- Optional: Tape or pins to fasten paper to clothing

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1. Cut the 11 belief system names and the matching 11 belief statements into 22 individual slips. For this activity, you will give each youth either the name of a belief system OR a belief statement. You need not use all the slips, but make sure you distribute pairs; be sure to include "Unitarian Universalism" and the belief statement that goes with it.
- Print out Leader Resource 2 (the leader key).
- If you wish, you may wish to have masking tape to fasten the Belief Systems and Statements to participants' backs.

Description of Activity

This activity teaches participants Unitarian Universalist ideas about what happens after death in the context of other major philosophic and religious ideas.

Distribute slips of paper with Belief System descriptions and Belief Statements, making sure you distribute both parts of any pair you use. Give each participant one slip. If you have an uneven number of participants, an adult can participate.

For a fun challenge, fasten a Belief System or Belief Statement on each youth's back and invite the group to form correct pairs without talking. They will realize they need to gently guide one another toward possible appropriate partners.

Some of the Belief Statements are fairly similar. The youth will need to negotiate until everybody is satisfied they have it right.

Once the pairs are together, present the correct matches using Leader Resource 2, adding information

from the leader key and your own knowledge, but note that few sixth graders will be ready to take in and process all that you might know.

If some pairs are not matched correctly; explain that different belief systems share some ideas about what happens when we die. Note that religious belief systems are complicated, and this activity simplifies them to make basic differences clear.

Say you will spend the rest of the session finding out more about what Unitarian Universalists—including the participants—believe happens when we die.

Intergenerational Variation

If the group is large and parents/caregivers are present, invite the adults to carry or wear the slips of paper with Belief Systems and Belief Statements. Ask the entire group to keep silence while youth move the adults into their proper matches.

Including All Participants

Respect physical abilities of all participants by setting the activity up to be comfortable for all. People with mobility limitations may still enjoy moving around.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — REFLECTIONS BY FORREST CHURCH (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[Reflections by Forrest Church](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Review and print out the story.

Description of Activity

Invite the youth to hear reflections from a Unitarian Universalist minister who faced a terminal cancer diagnosis. Read or tell the story. Then invite reactions:

- Is it okay to disagree with Forrest Church, even though he is a well-known Unitarian Universalist minister? (Of course. In our faith, it is expected that we may have different ideas about many things.)
- If we know that death is natural and that everybody dies, why do we grieve when people die? (We miss the people who have died, even though we know that death is natural and comes to all living things. The death of somebody close can leave a big hole in our lives. It takes time for that hole to close. One thing that helps fill it is

the love left behind by the person who has died.)

- What if you know that Forrest Church does not believe in heaven with angels and clouds, but you do? Is that dumb? (No. Your religious ideas are never dumb. Nobody can be sure whose beliefs about death are right. Many people believe in an idea of heaven with angels, harps and clouds. They take comfort from that image of heaven and their belief that their loved ones go there at death, and they themselves will eventually join them.)

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — VISIT TO UUVILLE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — A Visit to UUville
- [Leader Resource 4](#) (included in this document) , Memo to Citizens of UUville
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.

- If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling... " followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.

- Make enough copies of Leader Resource 3 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has three On-Air people who will need scripts—an Anchor, a Roving Reporter and a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst. Four Citizens of UUville will use Leader Resource 4 instead of scripts. If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.
- Print out Leader Resource 4 for youth who will portray the four Citizens of UUville.

Description of Activity

Participants present a WCUU with seven On-Air roles and a Studio Crew which might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Assign roles, using volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be the Anchor or Roving Reporter.

Give copies of Leader Resource 4 to the youth who will be the UUville Citizens and have a co-leader or adult volunteer take them aside to prepare their roles.

Give participants who need to follow the script a moment to look it over. Review it with them if you have participants with limited reading skills. Note: This script asks the Roving Reporter to improvise dialogue with the UUville Citizens; coach as necessary. You might suggest the Roving Reporter talk first, very briefly, with each of the Citizens about what they are presently doing (riding a bicycle, etc.), and then, briefly again, about the Citizen's death beliefs.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

At the end of the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how typical Unitarian

Universalists respond to today's Big Question: "What happens when we die?" Do they think non-UUs would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing the WCUU broadcast?

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — MEMORIAL RITUAL (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- For Part 1: Candles and matches or a substitute; (optional) a large tray filled with sand for supporting multiple votive candles; (optional) copies of the words for unison reading(s) or song(s) you plan to include; (optional) recorded music suitable for a memorial service and music player
- For Part 2: Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, *Singing the Journey* and/or other resources for songs and readings used in your congregation

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will conduct a remembrance ritual with this group, plan a ritual for the wider congregation, or do both. Base your decision on the interests and energy of the group and the time you will have. Be sure to save time for participants to process the activity or activities you choose (see Concluding Discussion).
- Be aware of any life-threatening illnesses or recent deaths participants may be experiencing.
- **For Part 1.** Create a simple order of service for a ceremony of remembrance. Include the opportunity for participants to speak the names of people, or pets, they wish to remember. Choose one or more readings or songs used in your congregation. If you will ask participants to join in a reading or song, make and photocopy a short order of service and include the needed words. If you wish to light real candles, secure permission in advance and have a fire extinguisher nearby.
- **For Part 2.** Talk with your religious educator, minister and/or lay worship leaders to determine when and where the Riddle and Mystery group might lead a remembrance ritual. Determine the parameters for the ritual—e.g., duration, location, availability of the congregation's music director or volunteer musicians—so you can

guide the youth to make a realistic, appropriate plan.

Description of Activity

This is a two-part activity. In Part 1, youth experience a candle-lighting ritual in remembrance of people and pets they have lost through death. In Part 2, they plan a UU memorial service suitable for use in their own congregation.

Tell the group it is WIT time—What I Think time—but this is a different kind of WIT Time. Instead of thinking right now about how they would answer today's Big Question, youth will experience (and/or plan) a ritual having to do with death. Doing/planning a ritual will help them understand what they think about death. Maybe they will realize what they think about death during this activity. Maybe they will realize some things later.

Part 1. Lead a simple candle-lighting service. Invite youth to remember people and pets they have lost through death. Remind the group of the UU idea that those who have died live on through what they have done in life and through the memories of families and friends. Say that a simple ceremony like the one you have planned can help keep the memories alive.

Explain the ceremony. Perhaps you will light the chalice, play quiet music and invite each youth to take a votive candle, light it from the chalice and place it carefully in a container you have filled with sand. As they do, they can speak or not, as they wish. If they do speak, they can name the person or pet they are remembering. They can say what they meant to them or something that person or pet has done that will live on—explain the deeds that outlive a person, or a pet, are their legacy.

Go first to model the action, but allow a moment or two of silence first, so youth can decide who they wish to memorialize. Be brief and serious as you light and place a candle, mention somebody you have lost and what that person meant to you, stand for a quiet moment, then move back so somebody else can have a chance.

Keep the activity serious at all times. It may have great significance for some youth.

Keep a careful eye on lit candles. Watch that loose sleeves and hair are kept away from flames.

When all who wish to have lit a candle, conclude with an appropriate, short song or reading, or a simple "Blessed be" or "Amen." Carefully extinguish flames. If music is playing, turn it off.

Part 2. Ask youth to plan a memorial service to be used in the congregation. If you have made specific arrangements with congregational leaders, explain the parameters for the service. Clarify whether this will be a

generic memorial service or a service of remembrance for a particular person (tell the group who). Point out that a memorial service gives the full congregational community a chance to remember the person together, to express emotional responses to the loss of a member and to support the family and close friends of the person who has died. Ask if the youth can think of other ways a memorial service helps the community after someone has died.

Lead a group brainstorm. Record ideas on newsprint. Mention that youth who have experienced such a service can be especially helpful. Invite youth to describe a Unitarian Universalist memorial service they have attended and to identify elements they liked about the service. Prompt as needed, but be sure to seek the group's assent before adding your ideas to the brainstorming list. You might suggest opening music, opening words, chalice lighting, candle lighting by individuals, hymns, choir anthems/musical performances by others, readings of words that the person wrote or enjoyed, a talk about the person by a minister or somebody else who knew the person well (sometimes called a "eulogy"), sharing by friends and family members about what the person was like and what the person did in life, moments of silent meditation, closing music, and closing words.

Distribute copies of the hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition* and any other UU resources you have brought. Allow individuals or small groups to look for appropriate readings and music. Show the youth how to use the topical indices in the back of the hymnbook; it has a "Death and Life" section for hymns (page 671) and readings (page 643). Regather the group and invite them to share their suggestions; list suggested readings and songs on newsprint with book and page references. You might invite youth to add ideas from other sources—songs, prayers or readings they know which they think might add to a UU memorial service.

If you have time, use another sheet of newsprint to draft an order of service.

Concluding Discussion

Prompt with these questions:

- (For Part 1) Was the person or pet you lit a candle for someone you think about often or someone you had not thought about for some time?
- (For Part 1) What was it like to think about a person or pet you have lost? Did you feel sad? Did you enjoy thinking of the good times you shared?

- Have you ever attended a funeral? What happened at it? How did you feel being there? Have you ever attended a memorial service? What happened at it? How did you feel being there?
- Some people plan their own funerals or memorial services before they die. Do you think you would ever do that? Why or why not? If you would, what kinds of plans might you make?
- (For Part 2) How do you think people will feel during the memorial service we have planned? How do you think people will feel afterward?

Including All Participants

Be alert to any life-threatening illnesses or recent deaths that may concern your youth. Be prepared to make a co-leader available to leave the activity and offer listening comfort privately, if a youth becomes emotional or needs to talk .

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the day's session with words like these:

Today we thought about death and what happens when we die. We explored what different religions say about death and heard a story about the beliefs of a Unitarian Universalist minister facing death. Our WCUU broadcast featured the ideas of typical UUs living in UUville. In WIT Time, we thought about rituals that memorialize those who have died.

Ask if youth agree with this conclusion:

Death is even more of a riddle and a mystery than life is.

Affirm their responses.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- [Leader Resource 5](#) (included in this document) , Capital Punishment Resolution and/or [Leader Resource 6](#) (included in this document) , Capital Punishment Resolution — Simplified
- Poster-making materials (poster board, markers and tape)
- Optional: Letter-writing materials (writing paper, envelopes, pens/pencils and names and addresses of legislators)

Preparation for Activity

- Research current capital punishment information, including the laws in your state. Sources include the [Death Penalty Information Center](#) (at <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/FactSheet.pdf>) (find a list of states that do and do not have capital punishment) and [Capital Punishment Statistics](#) (at <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/new-resources-bureau-justice-statistics-releases-capital-punishment-2010>) compiled and summarized by the United States Department of Justice.
- Print out Leader Resource 5 and/or Leader Resource 6. If you plan to invite volunteers to read items of the GA resolution aloud, make multiple copies.
- Post blank newsprint.
- **For poster-making.** Review Leader Resources 5 and 6. Extract phrases youth can use on posters for the congregational meeting space. Write these on newsprint, and post. Leave room on the newsprint for youth to brainstorm additional phrasing for posters. Secure

permission to display posters (from congregational staff or appropriate committees).

- **For letter-writing.** Obtain legislators' names, addresses and their voting history and current positions on capital punishment. Find sample letters online—the website of [Students Against the Death Penalty](#) (at www.studentabolition.org/) is a good starting point—and make copies to distribute at work tables. Identify an adult who will purchase stamps and mail the letters.
- If you think some youth may opt out of this Faith in Action activity because they do not oppose capital punishment, be ready to offer alternate tasks that support a different Riddle and Mystery Faith in Action project.

Description of Activity

If the group has begun an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, consider this short-term Faith in Action project:

Unitarian Universalism and Capital Punishment. The topic of capital punishment emerges naturally from the session's focus on the meaning of death. Acquaint the group with the Unitarian Universalist Association's stance against capital punishment. Then, ask the group to make posters to familiarize your congregation with that stance and/or write advocacy letters to legislators. Plan to include discussion to determine where youth stand on the issue.

Ask the group to define "capital punishment" — putting people to death as punishment for crimes they are convicted of committing.

Say that most Unitarian Universalists believe capital punishment is wrong. Congregations agreed on this at a General Assembly (GA) meeting in 1961. At that GA, the UUA resolved to oppose capital punishment in the U.S. and Canada and the UUA has continued to oppose it ever since. (You might explain that the General Assembly is a meeting of representatives of UU congregations. These meetings have been held each year since the Unitarians and Universalists came together in 1961 and are where the Association makes many decisions together.)

Read the text of the GA resolution (Leader Resource 5) or the simplified version (Leader Resource 6) aloud to the group. Or, hand out copies for participants to share and invite volunteers to each read a bullet point aloud. Lead a discussion to clarify the resolution's meaning. Write key phrases on newsprint.

Carefully unpack the clause "WHEREAS, capital punishment has not always been used impartially

among all economic and racial groups in America." Point out that capital punishment is an economic justice issue. Explain that judges give death sentences disproportionately more to poor people. If you have found relevant statistics, share them. Ask the youth to consider why this may be so. If none raise this point, suggest:

One reason may be because poor defendants are often represented by court-appointed attorneys. They generally earn less than private lawyers and may have less time to work on each client's case. Someone rich can hire any lawyer they want, so they may have a better chance of presenting evidence of their innocence and convincing the court they are innocent or deserve a lighter sentence.

Ask the group to think about how it would feel to have been arrested and have no choice in who would be your lawyer.

Mention there is another justice problem with capital punishment. The death penalty has not always been doled out fairly to all ethnic groups. Tell the group:

There seems to be prejudice in the courts. Statistics show that many state and local court systems punish African Americans and other people of color more readily and more harshly than white Americans charged with the same crimes. So, if a state allows capital punishment, it is likely to threaten the lives of people of color the most.

Another economic issue related to capital punishment is the cost of a death penalty court case. A murder trial where the death penalty is sought costs the public three times as much as a murder trial where the government seeks to punish the defendant with life in prison. This means money that could be used to improve the lives of many citizens is being used to bring about the death of one. Tell the group there is much debate about which costs more, securing the death penalty for a crime, holding the convicted prisoner on Death Row and finally executing them, or securing a life-without-parole conviction and then supporting the prisoner in jail for the rest of their life.

Tell the group the information you have learned about capital punishment in your state. Ask youth whether they agree with the Unitarian Universalist Association position and wish to help end capital punishment. If they do, suggest building awareness about the issue in your congregation with a poster-making activity—by posting elements of the 1961 GA resolution to remind congregants that the UUA is still fighting to eliminate the death penalty in all the U.S. states and Canada. Point out the phrases from the resolution which you have

posted. On the newsprint, add youth's ideas for more poster phrases to explain that the issue is still not resolved and why it is important. Help the youth come up with short slogans for the posters, for example, "Don't Take a Life" or "The Death Penalty Does Not Serve Justice."

If you live in a death penalty state and have targeted legislators to whom youth can write, invite them to write letters. You might also write letters to national leaders.

Distribute materials and engage youth to begin working individually or in small groups to make posters (or write letters). Save some time or plan another time for youth to post completed posters around the congregational facility. Consider explaining and announcing the posters via your the congregational newsletter, website, worship announcements or a coffee hour announcement.

If Youth Disagree

While the youth will likely support the UUA's position, some may not. Many people in this country do support capital punishment. Like many adults, some youth may feel some crimes are so horrible that people committing them should themselves be killed. Chances of youth taking this stand may be higher if a horrible crime has been reported recently.

If youth disagree with the UUA or with each other about capital punishment, help them process their disagreement. Affirm that in our faith, we covenant about what we will do together in our congregations and as the Unitarian Universalist Association. That does not mean all members always agree. People can argue for a change in the UUA stand. See if youth would like to invite an adult with knowledge of UUA processes and procedures to talk with them about how to make pro-capital punishment or other minority views known in your congregation or the UUA.

Keep the discussion respectful, but limit the time you spend. See what next steps the group wants to take. Suggest:

- They group could agree to disagree, for now. They could set a future time and place to debate capital punishment at greater length.
- The group might like to research pro- and/or con-capital punishment arguments on their own. Perhaps the youth would like to invite an adult advocate from each side to speak; talk with your religious educator, minister and members of your Social Action Committee to explore whether this might become an event for the entire congregation.

- For today, some of the group can work to end capital punishment while others do a different Faith in Action activity. Suggest concrete possibilities; perhaps youth who opt out of today's activity can prepare for a future Faith in Action activity or follow up on one already in progress.

Including All Participants

Some youth process difficult language more easily if they can read the text to themselves while someone else reads it aloud. Consider making a copy of Leader Resource 5 and/or 6 for each youth.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with co-leaders after the session to reflect on how it went. How was your mix of discussion and action? How comfortable did youth seem when sharing ideas about death? Did you manage to convey the information you wanted to while respecting their own ideas? How well do you think youth understood the different ways various belief systems answer the question "What happens when we die?" Are they clear about what Unitarian Universalists think about death and how we memorialize family and community members who die?

Did any youth show signs of concern about either the idea of death or their own experiences with death or life-threatening illness which you should communicate to parents, your religious educator or your minister?

Note that the Big Question for Session 7 is "Why do bad things happen?" If you will lead Session 7 next, plan to prepare by reflecting on your own answers to that.

TAKING IT HOME

The question is not whether we will die but how we have lived. — Joan Borysenko, psychologist

Talk about the quote. What does it mean to you?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question is "What happens when you die?" We talked about some different answers to the question which come from a variety of belief systems. We heard what a Unitarian Universalist minister said when he had cancer and expected to die soon. We found out that UUs talk more about heaven- and hell-like situations on Earth and what to do about them, than we talk about an afterlife. That is because many UUs believe we live on after life through what we did when we were alive—as well as in the memories of our families and friends. We also explored rituals to memorialize people after they die.

ANSWERING TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

What do family members have to say about the question: "What happens when we die?" What does your family do so relatives who have died live on, through you?

VISIT THE DEAD

Go to a cemetery and look at the gravestones. What can you learn from them? Do those messages help the people buried there live on? Are there flowers and mementos? Why do people put them there?

SHARED SEARCH

Go through a family photo album or "family tree." Choose somebody you know little about who has died. Find out as much as you can about that person so they can live on through you.

REFLECT ON YOUR BELIEFS

Ask another big question: Is anything worth dying for? Patrick Henry was a famous patriot who said, "Give me Liberty or Give me Death." Was he right? What do you think is worth dying for?

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph a cycle of life and death. You might start with a seed, photograph a flower as it grows through the summer, and photograph it again when it dies in a frost. You might photograph spring buds and then beautiful dying leaves.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION

Find out about capital punishment in your state. Do you have a death penalty? Does it make sense to you to kill somebody to show that it is wrong to kill somebody? Do you agree with the UUA that capital punishment is wrong? What can you do about it? Try sending an e-mail or writing a letter to your governor. If the state does not have capital punishment, watch for news stories about criminal justice. Do the jails and prisons in your state have enough money so they can help or rehabilitate criminals and not just punish them? If not, send an e-mail or a letter to the governor saying you want things changed. But if you do not agree with the UUA that capital punishment is wrong, what should you do in that case?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)

- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve participants' Big Questions notebooks begun in Session 1.
- Set out supplies for any new participants to start an individual notebook.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide any new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "What happens when we die?" Say they can write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — IN SWEET FIELDS OF AUTUMN AND NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the hymns and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the songs "In Sweet Fields of Autumn," Hymn 52 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, and "Nearer, My God, to Thee," Hymn 87—by reading the words aloud, singing together or playing a recording for the group. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.
- Obtain copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook.

- Optional: Ask the music director or choir director to make a recording of the song(s).

Description of Activity

Remind/tell the group that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "In Sweet Fields of Autumn" and "Nearer, My God, to Thee," in a manner comfortable for you. Be sure the youth hears the words to at least the first verse of each song.

Ask which hymn participants think Unitarians and Universalists would have preferred, long ago, and which is probably more often sung today. Tell the group, as discussion progresses, that "Nearer, My God, to Thee" was probably more commonly sung years ago when Unitarianism and Universalism were closer to their Christian beginnings and Christian beliefs about God and what happens when we die. Remark, if youth do not, that "Nearer, My God to Thee," was sometimes sung by people facing death; in fact, it was sung by passengers on the deck of the ocean liner Titanic as it sank and carried them to their deaths. "In Sweet Fields of Autumn" does not mention God but presents death (in the third verse) as a natural part and consequence of the life cycle.

Ask for reactions:

- Do participants like the songs? What do they seem to say about today's Big Question?
- Would youth wish to sing either songs at a memorial service or funeral? Which? Why?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: Browse the Internet and see what you find to share.
- Optional: In Alan Lightman's novel, *Einstein's Dreams* (New York: Warner Books, 1994), read an illuminating, short description of life without death. See the chapter, "9 June 1905."

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

What would life be like if it did not end in death?

Share relevant ideas you have found. You might also ask:

- Would life be better or worse without death? Why?
- Would people ever finish anything if they had forever to do it?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: A SCIENCE REPORT (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to tell youth about attempts scientists have made to find out what happens when we die. Find the experiments in the activity description, plus others, in "[The Big Questions: What Happens After You Die?](http://www.newscientist.com/channel/being-human/mg19225780.075-the-big-questions-what-happens-after-you-die.html)" (at www.newscientist.com/channel/being-human/mg19225780.075-the-big-questions-what-happens-after-you-die.html) by Mary Roach in *New Scientist*, November 18, 2006, available in full, online, with a subscription.

Description of Activity

The physical aspects of death may fascinate some youth. Tell the group about scientific experiments seeking proof that a soul leaves the body after death and the dead and the living can communicate. Say:

Mary Roach wrote a magazine article in 2006 that talks about 47 attempts to scientifically investigate what happens when we die. Only one investigator ever found out, because he died trying to answer the question. After he died, he could not report back what he had learned.

Tell the youth:

- Some scientists have written secret messages to see if they could send them to other people when they themselves died.
- A scientist tried weighing people when they died to find out if their bodies got lighter because a soul was escaping at death.
- Another scientist tried the same thing with sheep, and discovered that they actually got heavier when they died.
- Doctors in an operating room in Virginia set up a computer to show an image that can be seen only by somebody who has a near death experience.
- None of these experiments have proved anything about what happens when we die.

Ask the youth their ideas for further scientific experiments to explore today's Big Question. Affirm ideas. Encourage youth to articulate how they might conduct an experiment and what hypothesis they might test. Help them distinguish between information about what happens to the body after we die and information about what happens to our intangible selves—our souls, our awareness, our spirits.

Conclude:

Science can tell us what happens to our bodies when we die, but not what happens to our conscious, thinking selves. Science does not know all of what happens after death. Despite the scientists' attempts, death remains a riddle and a mystery.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: DEATH AND YOUR CONGREGATION (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Orders of service for funerals or memorials recently held in your congregation
- Obituaries or newspaper articles about congregational members and friends who have recently died
- Unitarian Universalist books or pamphlets about death
- Congregational hymnbooks

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Obtain and copy recent orders of service for congregational funerals or memorial services.
- Optional: Obtain copies of obituaries of or articles about recently deceased congregational members and friends.
- Optional: Find out about congregational places and items associated with death, such as a memorial garden, a cemetery or a wall with memorial plaques. Determine whether the youth can tour any of these places or see the items during the session or at another time, and make the arrangements.
- Optional: Invite someone in your congregation whose work involves death to join the group for this activity, such as a hospice nurse, an oncologist, a firefighter or EMT, a minister or a psychological counselor. If such a guest is coming, tell the youth in advance and give them a chance to ask you questions about the

person's work and think of some questions they may wish to ask.

Description of Activity

Help the group explore and understand the "death culture" of your congregation by investigating the physical spaces and mementos, funeral and memorial practices and recent history of the congregation with regard to deaths in the community.

Possibilities include:

- Tour the congregation's cemetery or memorial garden
- Share and discuss orders of service and obituaries associated with recent deaths in the congregational community
- Find out about the individuals commemorated on memorial plaques in your congregation's building
- Read and discuss Unitarian Universalist pamphlets and other materials about death made available by the congregation for members and friends
- Invite an adult from the congregation to talk with the youth about the rituals used to mark a recent death in the congregational community. (The adult need not be a close relative of someone who has recently died, but should be someone who knew and cared about the deceased person.)

It is of course important for leaders conducting this activity to be very sensitive to participant experiences with death, especially recent ones.

Youth might benefit from hearing about the differences between traditional funeral services and the memorial services more typically held in UU congregations. Traditional funerals are often designed around traditional rituals of the dead person's religion, such as readings from Christian or Jewish scripture or performances of special music. The body of the deceased may be present in a casket. The casket might be open or closed. Memorial services typically focus on the life of the person who has died. Family members and friends may speak. Readings and music can be just about anything that was meaningful to the deceased and remains meaningful to survivors. Laughter is less likely to be heard at a funeral than at a memorial service, where people often tell stories about the dead person in order to celebrate their life.

If you want a minister, a hospice nurse, a doctor, or another congregational member familiar with death to

join the group, choose someone with experience and comfort working with sixth graders. When you introduce the guest, tell the youth that you have invited them because they encounter death regularly in their work and are here to give participants a chance to ask any questions they may have about death.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 6: ANOTHER WIT TIME — ABOUT DEATH (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , What I Think
- Paper, envelopes that can be sealed and pens/pencils for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.

Description of Activity

If you have time, use this activity at the end of this session.

Tell the youth you will distribute a handout to help them record their own ideas about death and the ideas covered in the session. Assure them they are not expected to share their answers. In fact, you will give each youth a sealable envelope so they can keep their ideas private. However, note that they may not wish to keep their ideas private. Many people find that talking with others about death can be very helpful.

Distribute the handouts, envelopes and pens/pencils. Suggest that youth begin by writing their name on their envelope. Tell them they need not hurry; they can take the page with them to complete later if they wish.

Give the group at least five minutes of quiet writing time. When they are done, suggest they may wish to put their envelopes away in a special place so they can find them and read them at a later time—maybe years later—to see how their ideas may have changed.

If you have time, ask if anyone wishes to share any answers. Were they comfortable thinking about death as they considered their answers? Did they find any of the questions especially interesting or challenging to answer? Which ones, and why?

Including All Participants

If some members of the group struggle with reading and writing, read the questions aloud and then give the group time to write their answers.

STORY: REFLECTIONS BY FORREST CHURCH

Based on excerpts, adapted with permission, from *Love and Death: My Journey through the Valley of the Shadow* by Forrest Church (Beacon Press, 2008).

Reverend Forrest Church is a minister of a very large Unitarian Universalist church in New York City. Rev. Church has cancer. The cancer is serious and cannot be cured. Rev. Church knows it will take his life.

Rev. Church is sad that his life will end before he can finish doing all he wants to do and before he can meet the grandchildren he expects will be born some day. But he is not afraid of dying. He is comfortable with the fact that his turn has come, and he must soon say goodbye.

When he learned he had cancer, Reverend Church wrote a book about what was happening. The title is *Love and Death: My Journey Through the Valley of the Shadow*. The title refers to a verse in Hebrew scripture known as the 23rd Psalm. The verse talks about walking "through the valley of the shadow of death."

In his book, Rev. Church has a lot to say about death to his family, to friends, to members of his congregation, to anybody else who reads the book and to you. Death is sad, he says, especially for the people who are left behind. However, death is not scary. Death is the natural end of life.

We know all of us will die, and because we know that, we have religion. Religion helps us think about big questions, like "What will happen when I die?" "Where did I come from?" "Does God exist?" and "What is life's purpose?"

We do not know what will happen when we die. That is a mystery. Maybe there is a heaven. If there is a heaven, it might have angels, harps and puffy clouds... or, it might not. In any case, Rev. Church believes, people who die will all know peace.

God is a mystery, too, a mysterious connecting force that makes everything one, a force you can call "Divine" or "Holy" or whatever you want. God is the name many people use for the highest power we know, but God is not a "puppet master" pulling strings and deciding just who dies when.

Knowing that we will die, what should we do? We should live, we should laugh, and we should love, says Rev. Church.

The minister writes that he learned something about living from his own children. One day, when they were young, he was walking them to school. On a busy New York City street, a car swerved around a corner and almost killed them all. Forrest Church was angry. But, he remembers, "my kids just laughed, romping blithely down the sidewalk, jumping from tree to tree as they always did, trying to touch the leaves." The kids were celebrating the joy of life, and they "had the right idea. Why didn't I think to jump and touch the leaves?"

Laughing, really living, and loving all require more courage than dying does. Dying comes naturally, yet we have to work at laughing, really living, and loving. To love is especially difficult, because we may lose what we love. But love is super important, important enough to use along with "death" in a book title. Why? Because love survives us when we die. Love is the one thing death cannot take away. Our love goes on and on and on after we die. That much we do know about what happens at death.

What does "really living" mean? How should we live? In three special ways, according to Reverend Church. These three ways are his "mantra," he tells us. A mantra is something a person says over and over again in order to remember and do what the mantra says. This is Forrest Church's mantra: "Want what you have. Do what you can. Be who you are."

Think about those three things. Does doing them sound easy? It is not. Try to want what you have. Try to do what you can. Try to be who you are. You will see it is difficult. You will also find it is very worthwhile.

Rev. Church, who knows he will die soon, says:

We should laugh, really live, and love. We should want what we have, do what we can, and be who we are.

Forrest Church and his book may help other people—maybe you, maybe me—to accept those challenges of life. That is one way Rev. Church's love will live on after he dies.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

What happens when we die?

HANDOUT 2: WHAT I THINK

Here are some ideas about death. Use check marks to show whether you agree or disagree. Remember—this is a private page. You can share it with others if you want, but you do not have to.

Agree Disagree

- _____ _____ Thinking about God can help you explain life and death.
- _____ _____ Science is better than religion for explaining life and death.
- _____ _____ Heaven and hell really do exist.
- _____ _____ The heavens and hells on earth are more important than religious ones.
- _____ _____ I can help keep my favorite people alive and well by praying.
- _____ _____ Maybe someday science can fix things so nobody has to die.
- _____ _____ I believe in reincarnation.
- _____ _____ I think death is like a very peaceful sleep that never ends.
- _____ _____ What you do in life is more important than what happens when you die.
- _____ _____ A million good deeds are more important than a million dollars.
- _____ _____ I think I know what happens to people after they die.

If you checked “agree” for the last item, explain what you mean in this space.

Write any other ideas you have about death and what happens when you die in this space:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: MATCHING BELIEF SYSTEMS AND STATEMENTS

Unitarian Universalism — We agree that after physical death, a person lives on through the people who have known them and the deeds they have done. We may hold different ideas about the nature or existence of an afterlife.

Roman Catholicism — We believe people are judged when they die, based on their sins and how completely they have repented by doing particular rituals. A few people go straight to Heaven. Some go to Hell and stay there forever. Some go to Purgatory, where they suffer until they are purified of their sins and can go to Heaven.

Fundamentalist Christianity — We believe anyone who accepts Christ as their savior will be saved and go to Heaven. People who are not saved go to Hell.

Buddhism — We believe a person will be born and reborn many times until their soul reaches an enlightened state called Nirvana.

Science — We know about the physical part of death because we can observe it by examining dead bodies. We can observe the return of all living matter to the earth after death. Until scientific experiments prove some facts, we cannot know what happens to the non-physical aspects of a person after their physical death.

Judaism — Life is more important than death. We do not have one, definite answer to "What happens when we die?" There may be an afterlife, but our faith offers many different concepts of what it might be. Hebrew scripture, rabbinic commentary on scripture and our own personal experiences and philosophies provide individual Jews with answers.

Hinduism — We believe each soul spends multiple lifetimes on Earth, evolving each time so it can ultimately become perfect and merge with the Divine. Between lifetimes, your soul may go to a heaven- or hell-like place, depending on your deeds on Earth—your karma—and your thoughts at the time of death. Our ideas about "What happens when we die?" are expressed in a scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita.

Liberal Christianity — We believe there is some sort of life after death but we do not know the details. We do not believe scripture is literally the word of God, yet we may look to the Bible's text to form our ideas about what happens when we die. However, our faith is more focused on how we live following Jesus' teachings than on what happens after.

Humanism — We only live once. To us, "life" means life in our human bodies. There is no afterlife. After we die, our molecules live on, but we do not.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: BELIEF SYSTEMS AND STATEMENTS — LEADER KEY

Unitarian Universalism — We all can have different ideas about an afterlife, whether it exists, and what it might be like. We agree that after physical death, a person lives on through the people who have known them and the deeds they have done. (Our century-long Universalist heritage taught that God is good, and saves everybody's soul after death. Nobody goes to Hell forever. This radical idea of "universal salvation" appeared as a response to Calvinism and Puritanism, which said that people are predestined to go to either Heaven or Hell, and only a select few would go to Heaven. Today, our First Principle is an expression of Unitarian Universalist belief that all people are worthy of "salvation" in this life.)

Roman Catholicism — We believe people are judged by when they die, based on their sins and how completely they have repented by doing particular rituals. A few people go straight to Heaven. Some go to Hell and stay there forever. Some go to Purgatory, where they suffer until they are purified of their sins and can go to Heaven. (Family members and friends can pray and offer masses so their loved ones will spend less time in Purgatory.)

Fundamentalist Christianity — We believe anyone who accepts Christ as their savior will be saved and go to Heaven. People who are not saved go to Hell. (While fundamentalist Christian faiths have a variety of views, they commonly rely on a literal interpretation of the words in the Bible. Some say people who die will have a second life on Earth after a second coming of Christ. Others say the souls of the dead go to a holding place called Sheol or Hades until Christ comes again.)

Buddhism — We believe a person will be born and reborn many times until their soul reaches an enlightened state called Nirvana. (Buddhists believe death should not be feared, as life is merely a temporary, physical state. Nirvana is a state of bliss and perfection; a person has no physical being; they are outside of and untroubled by human concerns.)

Science — We know about the physical part of death because we can observe it by examining dead bodies. We can observe the return of all living matter to the earth after death. Until scientific experiments prove some facts, we cannot know what happens to the non-physical aspects of a person after their physical death. (Scientists have many different beliefs about what might happen after death, but most scientists would differentiate their beliefs from facts that can be tested in a laboratory.)

Judaism — Life is more important than death. We do not have one, definite answer to "What happens when we die?" There may be an afterlife, but our faith offers many different concepts of what it might be. Hebrew scripture, rabbinic commentary on scripture and our own personal experiences and philosophies provide individual Jews with answers. (Judaism entertains a wide range of possibilities about what happens when we die and, if there is an afterlife, what it is like.)

Hinduism — We believe each soul spends multiple lifetimes on Earth, evolving each time so it can ultimately become perfect and merge with the Divine. Between lifetimes, your soul may go to a heaven- or hell-like place, depending on your deeds on Earth—your karma—and your thoughts at the time of death. Our ideas about "What happens when we die?" are expressed in a scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita. (Hindus believe in the soul and reincarnation. When you die and your soul follows the path of the sun, you never have to return, but if your soul follows the path of the moon, you do return.)

Liberal Christianity — We believe there is some sort of life after death but we do not know the details. We do not believe scripture is literally the word of God, yet we may look to the bible's text to form our ideas about what happens when we die. However, our faith is more focused on how we live following Jesus' teachings than on what happens after. (When a Unitarian Universalist is also a Christian, they may share liberal Christian views about life after death.)

Humanism — We only live once. To us, "life" means life in our human bodies. There is no afterlife. After we die, our molecules live on, but we do not. (Many Unitarian Universalists consider themselves to be humanists, and might share this view of what happens when we die. However, not all Humanists are UUs and not all UUs are Humanists.)

LEADER RESOURCE 3: WCUU SCRIPT — A VISIT TO UUVILLE

To the Anchor:

In today's WCUU broadcast, Roving Reporter wanders around UUville and asks citizens what they believe happens when we die. Your job is to follow the script, read your part and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you are alone on camera, sitting or standing in front of a microphone.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name], and I am here to explore what happens when people die. Even as I speak, WCUU's Roving Reporter is alert on the streets of UUville, choosing random citizens to ask about their beliefs. At the end of our show, we will ask our brilliant WCUU NUUs Analyst whether the statements you have heard represent typical UU beliefs. Let's talk to our Roving Reporter now. Hey, there, Roving Reporter, are you there? Come in, come in, Roving Reporter!

[Director: Cue Camera Operator to focus on Roving Reporter.]

Roving Reporter: I am here Anchor. I am, [give your real or stage name], your Roving Reporter. Here's a great big smile [smile] for all you good folks out there watching me roam the streets of UUville.

[Director: Cue Camera Operator to focus on Anchor.]

Anchor: So let's get at it, Anchor. What have the good folk of UUville got to say about death?

[Director: Cue Camera Operator to focus on Roving Reporter and follow as Roving Reporter goes up to First Citizen, who is riding a bike. They talk briefly about what First Citizen is doing and then Roving Reporter asks about First Citizen's death belief, and First Citizen replies. Roving Reporter says "thank you" and moves on to the Second UUville Citizen, then the Third UUville Citizen and the Fourth.]

[Director: Cue Camera Operator to focus on Anchor. Cue NUUs Analyst to join Anchor in studio set.]

Anchor: Thank you, Roving Reporter. Those were fascinating reports. Now let's hear what our NUUs Analyst has to say about all this. So, NUUs Analyst [or NUUs Analyst's real or stage name], what do you think? Have we just heard typical UU views about death?

NUUs Analyst: Indeed we have, Anchor [or Anchor's real or stage name]. UUs do look to many Sources to help them think about death and the answers to other big questions. Ultimately, though, they understand that nobody can really be sure what happens when we die, at least until we ourselves die. Most UUs do not believe in a heaven with angels and clouds, but some of them do. Some believe in reincarnation. Other beliefs exist, too. But, most UUs agree we should worry more about how to use our lives than about what happens after death. Another belief shared by most UUs is this: People live on after death because of what they did in life. And the love they give in life is sure to survive them after death.

Anchor: Thank you, NUUs Analyst. That helps a great deal. Any other wise ideas to tell us?

NUUs Analyst: Here's a good way to put it: Many UUs worry more about the heavens and hells on Earth than they do about any heavens and hells that come after death.

Anchor: Thank you. That is very good to know.

NUUs Analyst: Do you also want to know all the good things that UUs have done in life to help their world? It wouldn't take me much more than three years to tell you.

Anchor: That's okay, NUUs Analyst. Maybe another time. Right now, it is time for us to leave the air. Theme music, please.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: MEMO TO CITIZENS OF UUVILLE

The WCUU script includes short speaking parts for four UUville Citizens. You will need to decide exactly what to say when the Roving Reporter interviews you. The paragraph about your role will help you get started.

First UUville Citizen: Pretend to be riding a bicycle when Roving Reporter comes to you. You can keep moving (slowly) while you speak, and Roving Reporter will move along with you. When Roving Reporter asks what you believe about death, say you think what happens at death is a mystery. You know that UUs believe many different things, but most agree that they can never really know what happens at death—at least until they die. That is okay with you, because you want to concentrate on what you do know about. That is life. You think it's more important to focus on creating a better life for everyone here on earth than to focus on what happens when we die.

Second UUville Citizen: Pretend to be mowing a lawn when Roving Reporter comes to you. Make a lawnmower sound if you want, but stop when Roving Reporter asks you to turn the lawnmower off. When Roving Reporter asks what you think about death, say you believe there is a heaven, and that your favorite uncle, who died last week, is there. You know that many UUs do not believe in Heaven, but many other people around the world do. You believe you will see your uncle again someday when you die.

Third UUville Citizen: Pretend to be reading a book when Roving Reporter comes to you. When Roving Reporter asks what you believe about death, say you believe in reincarnation: that is, that our souls are born into a different body and experience another life. You are not sure if this goes on indefinitely or if there is an endpoint, like Nirvana, where souls become one with the Universe.

Fourth UUville Citizen: Pretend to be playing a trumpet when Roving Reporter comes to you. When Roving Reporter asks what you think about death, say you believe that death is the end and that nothing happens afterwards—you simply cease to exist. You have a good friend who believes there is a heaven, but you do not agree. You do think that people live on in the memories of others. For example, if you were a teacher in life, you live on after death through your students. If you were a parent, you live on through your children. You went to a UU memorial service recently, and people told wonderful stories about the person who died. Those stories will live on for years and years and years.

LEADER RESOURCE 5: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT RESOLUTION

Find this [1961 UUA General Resolution](#) text online.

WHEREAS, respect for the value of every human life must be incorporated into our laws if it is to be observed by our people; and

WHEREAS, modern justice should concern itself with rehabilitation, not retribution; and

WHEREAS, it has not been proved that fear of capital punishment is a deterrent to crime; and

WHEREAS, human judgments are not infallible, and no penalty should be used which cannot be revoked in case of error; and

WHEREAS, capital punishment has not always been used impartially among all economic and racial groups in America;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Unitarian Universalist Association urges its churches and fellowships in the United States and Canada to exert all reasonable efforts toward the elimination of capital punishment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That copies of this resolution be sent to the Governors of all states in which capital punishment has not yet been eliminated, and to the Canadian Minister of Justice.

LEADER RESOURCE 6: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT RESOLUTION — SIMPLIFIED

Paraphrased from the [1961 UUA General Resolution](#).

All our laws must respect human life.

Our laws and courts should help criminals, not hurt or kill them.

Nobody can prove that capital punishment stops crime.

If we make a mistake and put the wrong person to death, we cannot correct the mistake.

Capital punishment in America has often been unfair to people who are poor and not white.

The UUA wants all its congregations and members to work to end capital punishment.

The UUA wants the leaders of all American states and Canadian provinces to hear what UUs believe.

FIND OUT MORE

[About Death: A Unitarian Universalist Book for Kids.](#)

About Death presents a gentle, yet unsentimental, story about how a family deals with the death of their beloved dog. The story is followed by a series of questions a child might pose about death and its aftermath, particularly the rituals and cultural customs that accompany the death of a person. The answers to these questions, like the story that proceeds them, are frank and respectful of the child's curiosity. At the same time, both the story and the questions are illustrated by lovely watercolors that say, without words, yes, death makes us sad. A short poem that follows reminds us that death is a part of life. Ages 5 and up.

Bereaved Children: A Support Guide for Parents and Professionals by Earl A. Grollman (Beacon, 1996) offers insight into how children and adolescents experience death and grieving and how adults can help them through such experiences. The book presents ways children and adults might bring various faith perspectives to the subject of death.

A Unitarian Universalist minister who has written extensively on this session's Big Question is Rev. Forrest Church. Obtain [Love and Death: My Journey through the Valley of the Shadow](#) (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008) from inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop in hardcover or paperback or as an audio CD.

A [2008 Time magazine](#) article details one scientist's attempts to find out what happens after death.

SESSION 7: STUFF HAPPENS

INTRODUCTION

I think of life as a good book. The further you get into it, the more it begins to make sense. — Harold Kushner

Big Question: Why do bad things happen?

The flat statement that "stuff happens" seems to ask that we shrug, accept whatever fate befalls us and shuffle on, head down, through life. Sixth graders want more. They want to know why bad things happen, and especially why bad things happen to good people.

This session explores some possibilities, presenting a variety of religions' answers. Youth respond to a story from Hebrew scripture where God allows Satan to test Job by sending bad things his way. The group considers Unitarian Universalist ideas, especially the importance of putting faith into action by working to redress bad things, no matter why they have happened.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "Why do bad things happen?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses to it
- Introduce youth to some traditional religious answers to the question
- Present the story of Job
- Invite youth to develop and share their own ideas about why bad things happen.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand a variety of explanations for why bad things happen
- Consider the story of Job

- Hear Unitarian Universalist ideas about the causation of bad events and a faithful response to them
- Reflect on their own ideas about why bad and good things happen.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Job	10
Activity 2: Exploring Answers	10
Activity 3: WCUU — A UU Panel	20
Activity 4: WIT Time — Making Our Marks	12
Faith in Action: Reacting to the News	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — We'll Build a Land	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: The Perfect Day	12

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Examine your own current understanding of why bad things happen. Have you learned to accept at least most such events with equanimity? How do your religious beliefs support or comfort you in answering today's Big Question?

When do you remember first asking why bad things happen? What has shaped your answers since that time?

Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their search of life's mysteries is good and rewarding.

- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant from Session 1

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and post a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants to make their own.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant, generated in Session 1.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the card back in the bag or box. (If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass and draw another name.) Indicate the posted chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. If new participants have joined the group, invite all to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted the group's covenant, ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1. Write the question—Why do bad things happen?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — JOB (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[Job](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Review and print out the story.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story. Invite responses. Ask if anyone has ever had a day when all bad and no good things

happened to them. Allow a few brief stories. Point out that the Job story is remarkable not for what happens to Job, but how he reacts.

Ask:

How does the story of Job answer today's Big Question, "Why do bad things happen?"

Why did bad things happen to Job? (God and Satan made the bad things happen as a sort of a game or test, not even as a punishment.)

What does the story say about why good things happen?

Point out that God is powerful in this story. Although God sometimes acts at the suggestion of Satan, God ultimately controls what happens to Job. Ask, do you think God controls what Job thinks and does?

Point out that Job has free will in the story. He can think and do what he wants. He keeps praising God, although he could have chosen to curse God or stop believing in God at all. Ask the youth if they think they have free will; ask for some examples. Can free will stop bad things from happening?

Ask if the idea of free will reminds them of a philosophy the youth have heard about in Riddle and Mystery. Point out, if they do not, that Humanists think free will is very important. Humanists believe people have the ability to act and speak as they want to and cause good or bad things to happen. The story of Job is not a Humanist story; it has God and Satan in it. However, the story does rest on the idea that humans have free will.

ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING ANSWERS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Some Answers
- Two red and two green cards (or, any two contrasting colors) for each participant
- Paper and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1.
- Optional: Post newsprint with an explanation of how to use the red and green cards.

Description of Activity

This activity has two parts. First, invite participants to react to eight Answers to today's Big Question. Next, challenge them to create their own answers.

Part 1. Distribute two red and two green cards to each participant (other contrasting colors will also work). Explain that the youth are to hold the cards up to respond to the Answers you will suggest for today's Big Question. Holding up one green card means, "I think this Answer is helpful." Holding up two green cards means "I think this Answer is really, really helpful." One red card means, "I do not find this Answer helpful." Two red cards mean, "I really, really do not find this Answer helpful."

Read aloud the Answers from Leader Resource 1. After each, ask participants to respond with their cards and then invite comments.

Point out, as appropriate, that each Answer is based on real beliefs that people have held at some point in time. Whether or not we share a belief, we should respect each one as a serious attempt to understand why bad things happen.

Part 2. When you have offered all eight Answers, collect the cards and distribute paper and pencils. Invite participants to propose their own ideas of why bad things happen. You might give the youth a minute or two to write their Answers, and then invite volunteers to share. Or, invite volunteers to propose Answers in the group without the writing segment.

Variation

If you have time, form small groups to propose new theories of why bad things happen and then invite them to share their answers with the entire group.

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — A UU PANEL (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — A UU Panel
- A copy of *Singing the Journey: A Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005)

- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece (minutes)
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Attend to lighting: Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling..." followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Copy Leader Resource 2 for everyone who will need a script: an Anchor, a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst and four UU Panelists. If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, floor director, camera operator, sound engineer, lighting director, script supervisor and multiple production assistants.
- **For UU Choristers.** Review "When I Am Frightened," Hymn 1012 in *Singing the Journey*. Decide how you wish the UU Choristers to present it. You may want a musical person to teach it to you and the Choristers. Or, the Choristers could speak the words, while individuals or small groups act out lines. The purpose of using this song is to help the youth consider the words while having some fun.

Description of Activity

Participants present a WCUU broadcast involving six On-Air People—an Anchor, a NUUs Analyst and four UU Panelists—and as many UU Choristers as you want to perform a hymn.

The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

This broadcast has three segments. The first has the Anchor and four UU Panelists chatting on camera, the second features the UU Choristers and the third has the Anchor and the NUUs Analyst. Assign roles, using volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be the Anchor. The Choristers can include everyone except the Studio Crew needed to record the show. The Anchor and the four UU Panelists can easily join the Choristers.

Prepare the UU Choristers to present the song "When I Am Frightened," Hymn 1012 in *Singing the Journey*, in the second segment.

Give participants who need to follow the script a moment to look it over. Review it with them if you have participants with limited reading skills.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

At the end of the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how typical Unitarian Universalists respond to today's Big Question: "Why do bad things happen?" Do they think non-UUs would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing this WCUU show?

Lead a discussion about the words of the hymn, using these questions:

- What bad thing is happening to the singer of the song? What is going wrong? (The person is frightened, angry, lonely and troubled; the song does not say why.)
- Who do you think the singer is talking to? A friend? A parent? God? Anybody who is listening?
- What is the singer asking the listener to do? ("Be strong for me," "believe in me," "be there for me." You might say the singer is asking mostly for a friend, a good strong friend. Sometimes that is all you need to help bad things get better or to put your faith in action—just be somebody's friend.)

Relate the hymn to the story of Job: Though we cannot control everything that happens to us, we can control our responses when bad things happen to us and to others.

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — MAKING OUR MARKS (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , Bad Things That Happen
- Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Use Leader Resource 3 to prepare six newsprint sheets. On each sheet, write one of the bad events with plenty of room for youth to write around or under it. Or download the leader resource to your computer, enlarge the text and print each bad event on a separate page.
- Post the newsprint sheets on walls or work tables with markers nearby.
- On another sheet of newsprint, write the instructions for participants to rank the six bad events by severity and to indicate which ones UUs should do something about (see below). Post the newsprint.

Description of Activity

This activity asks youth to rank six bad events by severity and decide which ones UUs should try to do something about.

Say, in your own words:

Even when we know what caused a bad event to occur, we do not always know the answer to our Big Question: Why did it happen? One thing we can do is to put it in perspective. That means trying to decide how important it really is. Sometimes what seems horrible is not really so bad. Little kids do not understand this yet. For example, a small child can burst into tears if their balloon flies away. Kids your age are more able to put things in perspective.

A second thing you can do is to try to make things better. If life gives you a lemon, some people say, turn it into lemonade. Even when something really terrible happens, you can probably help make things a bit better.

Point out the sheets of newsprint you have placed around the room. Ask participants to take a marker and move around the room adding marks to all of the papers. Indicate the sheet of newsprint where you have posted the instructions of how to rank the events, and explain:

- Write asterisks (*) to show how bad an event is. Put six asterisks on the worst event, one on the least serious event, and so forth.
- Write "UU" on the event if you think UUs should do something about it.

When they have finished, have the group observe their work. Have they largely agreed about which events are most serious? Invite discussion.

Acknowledge that even the events marked as least serious can be very problematic. Help them identify what UUs might do about each of the events. We cannot stop a hurricane, but we can insist that good preparations are made for the next one, volunteer to build new housing or raise funds, and work to make sure everyone affected is treated fairly.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the day's session with words like these:

Today's Big Question is "Why do bad things happen?" We began by reacting to some answers offered through history by various groups of people. We also heard the Hebrew scripture story about Job. Then, in our WCUU broadcast, we talked about UU responses to the question. We said Unitarian Universalists rely on a variety of sources to see why bad things happen. UUs accept that life is not perfect, that bad things happen to everybody. UUs try very hard to make things better, to turn lemons into lemonade. Sometimes we do that with Faith in Action projects. Next, we talked about a few, different bad events and decided which ones UUs could try to do something about. In WIT Time, we shared a choral reading that talks about celebrating life despite the bad things that happen.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to speak these closing words with you: "May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions."

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: REACTING TO THE NEWS

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Local newspapers and (optional) congregational newsletters

Preparation for Activity

- Gather recent local newspapers and (optional) congregational newsletters or announcements of social action needs and projects. Mark some stories that might invite youth involvement.

Description of Activity

Remind the group that one way Unitarian Universalists respond to bad things is to try to make the situation better, for the present and the future. Faith in Action is an opportunity to do just that.

If the group has begun an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, consider this short-term Faith in Action project:

Reacting to the News. Ask youth to review local newspapers, identify bad news stories about economic injustice or other problems, and choose one that offers a way to help local people and causes.

Distribute copies of a local newspaper for the group to review. Give them a few minutes to look for stories that suggest Faith in Action projects. Perhaps there has been a fire whose victims could use help replacing what they have lost. Maybe an animal shelter needs volunteers or supplies.

Invite suggestions for group action and record the ideas on newsprint. When you have a good list, stop the brainstorming, and lead a discussion.

Help the group make a realistic plan to offer assistance to mitigate a bad event. Will the youth need to ask their families for help? What about others in the congregation? Just what will they ask for and when will they do it? Can they bring answers to the group's next meeting? Does the group need more information? Who will try to get that in the days ahead?

Record the names of participants and leaders who will follow through with specific actions. To conclude, ask the group if their plan is a good response to questions about why bad things happen. Note that one of the benefits of a community, like a congregation, is that many hands can share the work and get more done.

Including All Participants

Guide the group to choose projects in which all members can participate.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. Does the group have any new behavioral issues you need to address? Do the youth have a realistic understanding that bad things are part of life?

Note that the Big Question for Session 8 asks, "Is life fair?" Plan to reflect on your own answers to that if you will lead Session 8 next.

TAKING IT HOME

I think of life as a good book. The further you get into it, the more it begins to make sense. — Harold Kushner

Talk about the quote. Do you think life makes sense? Or are you still trying to figure it out?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question is "Why do bad things happen?" We responded to some answers offered by various belief systems and heard the story of Job. In our WCUU broadcast, we said UUs think it is important to accept the fact that life is a mix of bad and good, and to do something to help when bad things happen. We ranked some bad events that could happen, and said which ones UUs might do something about. We finished in WIT Time by celebrating life the way it is, good and bad.

ANSWERING TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

What do family members have to say about why bad things happen? Why to they think good things happen?

TRYING SOME SUPERSTITIONS

Try out some good-luck superstitions to see if they work. If you say a hopeful thought aloud, knock on a piece of wood with your knuckles so speaking your hopes aloud will not doom your chances; then say "Knock on wood." Cross your fingers when you hope for something (some people think this gesture is a way to make the sign of the Christian cross to keep the Devil away). Pick a four-leaf clover for good luck, if you can find one. Bring a frog into your house for good luck! What other superstitions

have you heard? (Search on the Internet for more, if you wish.) After a few days, talk about whether your luck has improved.

Talk about what superstitions are, what they mean to you. Did you ever believe in the power of superstitions? What do you think makes superstitions survive?

REFLECT ON YOUR BELIEFS

People say, "Misery loves company." Is that true? Get together with some other people and talk about bad things that have happened to you. Does it feel good to do that? Do you still feel better a few hours later? Together talk about good things that have happened or are happening to you. Does that feel different? Better?

SHARED SEARCH

Does your family have stories about very good things or very bad things that have happened to individuals? Which stories are told most often? Have you appreciated the good things and overcome the bad ones? If not, what more can you do? Was there a time when somebody had what seemed like bad luck but it turned into good luck?

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph the results of somebody's good action. Share the photograph with others and ask why they think the good thing happened.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION

Find out about cooperative games to play at your next family gathering. Cooperative games are non-competitive. Nobody wins, so nobody loses. [The Learning For Life](http://www.learning-for-life.org/exploring/resources/99-720/x08.pdf) (at www.learning-for-life.org/exploring/resources/99-720/x08.pdf) website describes some cooperative games. Other sites include [Creative Kids at Home](http://www.creativekidsathome.com/games/cooperative_games/) (at www.creativekidsathome.com/games/cooperative_games/) and [Peace First](http://www.peacefirst.org/site/) (at <http://www.peacefirst.org/site/>).

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve participants' Big Questions notebooks begun in Session 1.
- Set out supplies for new participants to start an individual notebook.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide any new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "Why do bad things happen?" Say they can write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — WE'LL BUILD A LAND (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "We'll Build a Land," Hymn 121 in *Singing the Living Tradition*—by reading the words aloud, singing together or playing a recording. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Mention that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "We'll Build a Land," Hymn 121 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Ask if participants think the hymn gives a Unitarian Universalist response to today's Big Question, "Why do bad things happen?" Affirm contributions. Point out, in your own words:

The hymn does not answer the question directly, but says what people will do—what UUs plan to do—to correct some of the bad things caused by

people. It says we will build a land, which is free and good, "where justice shall roll down like waters, and peace like an ever flowing stream."

Ask:

- Do you like the hymn? What do you like or not like about it?
- Do you think it offers a good approach to correcting bad things that people cause?
- What ideas does it suggest about the cause of "bad things?"

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

Would you want to be the only person on Earth to have a life in which nothing bad ever happened?

Spark discussion with these additional questions:

- How would a life in which nothing bad ever happens be possible? What would it be like?
- What would other people say? Would that matter? If others resented or criticized you, or wanted to be your friend just so they could be around you and avoid bad things that way—how would it make you feel?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: THE PERFECT DAY (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 4](#) (included in this document), Hopeful People

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 4 and cut up as shown.

Description of Activity

This activity asks youth to assume roles and report on what a perfect and a rotten day would be like for their character. It will soon become clear that a perfect day for one can be a rotten day for another; a bad thing that happens to one person can be a good thing that happens to somebody else.

Give each youth a numbered paragraph from the leader resource. There are 17 roles. Most are in pairs; there is one set of three (1.a.-c.). Be sure to distribute both paragraphs from each pair you choose. If there are an odd number of participants, use the set of three. (You can use just two from this set, also.) If the group is larger than 17, ask up to that many volunteers to take a role.

Ask participants to read the paragraphs, but keep their new identities to themselves for the moment. Explain that you will want each of them to tell the group what a perfect and a rotten day would be for them. Say they can be as dramatic as they wish in their presentations and embellish the stories they have been given, as long as they keep the basic facts.

You can have each pair go together if you want. But it may be more interesting to let the youth present in random order, so it only gradually becomes apparent that a perfect day for any one of them will be a rotten day for somebody else.

When all have made their presentations, ask the group if they noticed anything about the activity. Allow comments. Then ask if, in real life, a bad thing which happens to one person might be a good thing for somebody else. In a world with 7,000,000,000,000 people, can everybody ever have a perfect day at the same time—even if nobody gets sick or has a terrible accident? When a bad thing happens to one person, does somebody else always benefit?

STORY: JOB

Based on Hebrew scripture.

Have you heard about Job? He had quite a story. You can find it in Hebrew scripture—the Book of Job.

Job lived in the land of Uz, and at the beginning, he was a happy man—as he should have been. He had ten great kids and a wonderful wife. He was wealthy, and he was a pious man. That meant he believed in God, prayed every day and gave thanks often for everything that he received. God seemed very pleased with him. "He's a great example," said God.

Then Satan came along and spoke to God. Satan said that Job loved God only because God was so good to Job. "I'll bet," said Satan, "that if Job's life turns bad, then Job will turn against you, God. Job will curse and complain."

"You are on," said God. He gave Satan permission to test Job any way he liked—as long as Job stayed alive.

That was enough for Satan. Soon messengers started bringing bad news to Job. Thieves had taken his donkeys and oxen. Fire had killed some sheep and servants.

Job did not understand. "Woe unto me if I am wicked," he said. But he felt innocent.

Job kept worshipping God. When he heard that a wind had destroyed a house and killed all ten of his children inside it, he fell to the ground and praised God. "Naked I came from my mother's womb," he said, "and naked shall I return there; God gave, and God has taken away; blessed be the name of God."

"Look at that," God said to Satan, but Satan was not done. Now it was time to destroy Job's health, and Satan did. Job got sores all over his body, bad dreams, peeling skin, and more.

Job's wife said he should curse God and die. But Job refused. He kept praising God.

Then three friends turned against him. It seemed they may have envied Job when everything was going well. Now they blamed him for his own suffering. "God is punishing you," they said. "Because you were not good."

Job might have wondered that himself. How was Job to know that God was testing him, not punishing him? In fact, God was really very impressed with Job. So when Job asked for answers, God finally spoke, in a voice that came out of a storm. Even though questioning God was possibly the first bad thing Job had ever done.

God asked Job a whole slew of big questions—about creation, about life, about much, much more. Job began to see how great God really was. God was much too great for Job to understand. "Sorry, God," he said. "I can never understand you." Or that's what he would have said, if he had spoken American English.

The Bible quotes Job like this. Job said to God (in Aramaic, maybe) "I know that you can do all things. No plan of yours can be thwarted... Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

"That's okay," said God. "No problem." Or so God might have said in American English. But however God said it, God forgave Job for questioning him—only because Job had been so good, all along, and had passed Satan's test. God paused for a moment to scold Job's friends, and demanded a sacrifice from them for not being as good as Job. Then God turned back to Job and gave him great reward.

Job's new life was even better than before. He had more animals, and seven new sons and three new daughters. He lived happily for 140 more years, and he kept praising God through them all.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

Why do bad things happen?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: SOME ANSWERS

Includes material from *Why Do Bad Things Happen?* by Charlene Brotman, Barbara Marsh, and Ann Field (Brotman Marsh-Field Curriculums, 1975). Used by permission.

Answer 1: In the land of the ancient Hebrews, the first two people ever, Adam and Eve, ate some fruit which God, who made them, had told them not to eat. This disobedience was the first sin ever. God made Adam and Eve leave the Garden of Eden to punish them. Now bad things will happen to all people—the descendants of Adam and Eve—forever and ever.

Answer 2: In the land of the ancient Greeks, Pandora opened a box and let evil into the world. Now bad things will happen to people. Pandora knew she should not open the box but curiosity got the better of her. She has said she is sorry, but that did not change the situation—evil is in the world forever.

Answer 3: In the land of Iroquois Indians, an Evil Spirit named False Face has brought pain and suffering into the world. Now the world needs medicine men to speak with good spirits and work against the evil.

Answer 4: In the land of the Hindus, bad things happen to people who have lessons to learn from a previous life. If they do their duty and learn their lessons this time, they will have better lives next time. If they are perfect, they will unite with God forever and, once they die this time, will never have to come back to human form on Earth.

Answer 5: In the land of Buddhists, people say the answers are inside us. People can stop our own suffering by letting go of wanting anything, because all suffering is caused by desire for something. If we choose right thoughts and words and actions, we will find the path to peace inside our own minds.

Answer 6: In the land of Science, the entire universe is constantly in motion and events can have random causes. A tiny little change can happen to a tiny little particle smaller than an atom. That changes something else and the something else can change another something else. Bad things—or good things—can happen to people as a result.

Answer 7: In the land of Humanists, bad and good things happen to people, sometimes because of other people's actions, sometimes due to a natural cause, and sometimes for a combination of reasons. The important thing is, even though bad things do happen, people have the power to think and care and act to make the world a better place and ease others' suffering.

Answer 8: In the land of UU, you have learned that bad things do happen, but you have discovered that you can make a difference all by yourself! If you act angry or mean, you can actually be the cause of bad things happening to someone else. That is bad. If you act with compassion and fairness and help other people, you can help prevent bad things from happening to people or make things better when they do.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WCUU SCRIPT — A UU PANEL

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU broadcast explores UU answers to today's Big Question: "Why do bad things happen?" The script has three parts. In the first, a panel of four UUs share UU responses to the question. In the second, the famous UU Choristers perform a UU song that talks about how people can help each other deal with and avoid bad things. In the third, NUUs Analyst sums up UU ideas about today's Big Question. Your job is to follow the script, read your part, and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you and four UU Panelists are sitting on camera, in front of the microphone(s).

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name], and today we will explore why bad things happen. Here to assist me with UU ideas about that are four expert UU panelists. They are First UU Panelist [give name as First UU Panelist waves or nods to the camera], Second UU Panelist [give name as Second UU Panelist waves or nods to the camera], Third UU Panelist [give name as Third UU Panelist waves or nods to the camera] and Fourth UU Panelist [give name as Fourth UU Panelist waves or nods to the camera]. So good morning to you all, and thanks for being here.

Panelists [together]: Hi.

First UU Panelist: Well, UUs don't just answer a Big Question without thinking. We consider answers they find in different UU Sources. We think about those answers, and consider them some more. Then we each decide what we believe.

Second UU Panelist: I will tell you one thing most UUs do not believe. We do not accept the idea that God causes good things to happen and Satan causes bad things to happen.

Third UU Panelist: Humans are involved with everything that happens, good or bad. You probably know that UUs have a lot of humanist ideas. People have free will, so we must take responsibility for a lot of bad things. Like pollution. People, not God, cause pollution, and people, not God, have to clean it up. The same thing with war. People can create a bad war... or a good peace.

Fourth UU Panelist: If I can jump in here, let me explain, this is called "human agency." Humans are the agents that make things happen, both bad and good.

Anchor: Do you all agree that human agency is important?

Second UU Panelist: I do. Of course, some bad things happen outside human agency. Like natural disasters and really, really bad weather. In those cases, UUs say what is really important is our reactions. Because UUs know everybody in the world is connected, they want to help whenever, wherever bad things happen. UUs try always to help and never to harm.

Third UU Panelist: Of course, some UUs feel the entire world is our community, since we are all connected. But I would like to point out that, like the members of other religious groups, UUs pay attention to the good and bad things that happen to the people in their communities where they live. That is one reason so many congregations have candles of joys and concerns in their worship. Anyone can go to the front of the congregation and name good or bad things that have happened to them or to others. After the service, others can celebrate with them about the good and help them know what they can do about the bad.

First UU Panelist: We don't worry so much about why it happened. We look for what we can do to make it better. What we do about the bad stuff shows our faith in action.

Fourth UU Panelist: Right on, First Panelist. Being a Unitarian Universalist means helping each other deal with the bad things that happen—the huge bad things like hurricanes, and the smaller bad things like anger and thoughtlessness and fear.

Anchor: Funny thing you should mention that, Fourth Panelist. Because we have a special treat for our UU audience today. It's a performance by our world famous UU Choristers of a hymn called "When I Am Frightened." It talks about how we can help each other handle some everyday bad things. Thank you UU Panelists, you have been very helpful. Now bring on the UU Choristers!

[Director: Cue Camera Operator to focus on the UU Choristers. Cue the Anchor and Panelists to join. Cue the UU Choristers to perform "When I Am Frightened." At the end, cue the Anchor to return to their seat. Cue the NUUs Analyst to join the Anchor. Cue the Camera Operator to focus on the Anchor and the NUUs Analyst.]

Anchor: Thank you so much, UU Choristers. Your performance was just plain great! Now we have just enough time for a quick summary from our favorite NUUs Analyst. So what can you tell us today, NUUs Analyst?

NUUs Analyst: Just this: What your UU Panelists said is exactly right. Unitarian Universalists think a lot about human agency and scientific explanations when it comes to why bad things happen. They say that how you react to bad things is just as important as knowing how they happened. That is it, in a nutshell.

Anchor: Wow, NUUs Analyst, that was shorter than usual. Thank you.

NUUs Analyst: That's because I wanted to save time to tell you about all the bad things that have happened to me. Just this morning, my toothpaste fell off my toothbrush and got all over me. Then at breakfast I hiccupped so loud that...

Anchor: Stop, NUUs Analyst! We don't need to know about your hiccups. What we need to do is get off the air. Let's have some music, please!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: BAD THINGS THAT HAPPEN

You break your arm—the one you write with.

A hurricane destroys the homes of 5,000 families in another part of the country.

You had let go of your dog's leash for one minute and now you can't find your dog.

A parent found all your hidden candy and threw it away.

Fighting soldiers in a nation far away have burned entire towns and killed many people.

A bully chases you and yells mean things at you.

A murder happens in your neighborhood.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: HOPEFUL PEOPLE

1.a. Your name is Jay. You are one of three finalists for the single scholarship that Super Summer Camp offers every year. You hear the camp is a great place and you really want to go. But you will not be able to unless you win the scholarship. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

1.b. Your name is Jackie. You are one of three finalists for the single scholarship that Super Summer Camp offers every year. You hear the camp is a great place and you really want to go. But you will not be able to unless you win the scholarship. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

1.c. Your name is Jude. You are one of three finalists for the single scholarship that Super Summer Camp offers every year. You hear the camp is a great place and you really want to go. But you will not be able to unless you win the scholarship. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

2.a. Your name is Farmer Moore. Your crops are drying up. They will die unless there is a heavy rain tomorrow. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

2.b. Your name is Farmer Less. Your crops are doing wonderfully well because it is so dry. But a heavy rain in the next few days will kill them. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

3.a. Your name is Izzy Fast Ball. Tomorrow you will pitch for the Rangers against the Tigers in a national championship baseball game. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

3.b. Your name is Izzy Curve Ball. Tomorrow you will pitch for the Tigers against the Rangers in a national championship baseball game. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

4.a. Your name is Sal Sometimes. Tomorrow Sammy Sunshine will tell you whether he is coming to a Halloween party at your house Friday night. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

4.b. Your name is Sal Othertimes. Tomorrow Sammy Sunshine will tell you whether he is coming to a Halloween party at your house Friday night. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

5.a. Your name is Kim Republican. Your whole family has been working hard to help your Uncle Jake get elected as mayor of Your Town. The election is tomorrow. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

5.b. Your name is Kim Democrat. Your whole family has been working hard to help your Aunt Carol get elected as mayor of Your Town. The election is tomorrow. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

6.a. Your name is Dana Warmup. You can win your cross-country ski meet tomorrow if the weather warms up and melts the snow a little, because that is how you ski best. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

6.b. Your name is Dana Cooloff. You can win your cross-country ski meet tomorrow if the weather cools down and hardens the snow a little, because that is how you ski best. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you?

7.a. Your name is Bernie Builder. Tomorrow you will hear if the planning board will let you build a new gas station at 45 Grant Street. The gas station can make a lot of money for you. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

7.b. Your name is Hap Homeowner. Tomorrow you will hear if the planning board is going to allow a gas station to be built at 45 Grant Street, right across from your house. You think a new business will ruin your neighborhood. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

8.a. Your name is Sam Southern. Tomorrow, in school, you are going to have a test about either South Carolina or North Carolina. You were supposed to study both of them, but you only had time for one, and you chose South Carolina. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

8.b. Your name is Nicky Northern. Tomorrow, in school, you are going to have a test about either South Carolina or North Carolina. You were supposed to study both of them, but you only had time for one, and you chose North Carolina. What will make tomorrow a perfect day for you? What will make it a rotten day?

FIND OUT MORE

Reconciling Faith and Evil

Rabbi Harold Kushner's classic book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* attempts to reconcile a belief in God with evidence of evil in the world, based on some of the author's own experiences.

That's Good! That's Bad! by Margery Cuyler (Henry Holt, 1993) is a fun picture book for younger children that humorously presents a series of alternating good and

bad events. Riddle and Mystery youth might like to read it with younger children in the religious education program, or with a younger sibling.

The archetypal, deist "Why do bad things happen?" story is the biblical story of Job, which appears both in Hebrew scripture (Book of Job) and the Koran and forms the basis for Archibald MacLeish's 1959 play *J.B.* The protagonist responds to a series of afflictions with an ever-stronger belief in God and faith in God's omniscience and power

SESSION 8: SPEAKING OF FAIR

INTRODUCTION

Do more than belong: participate. Do more than care: help. Do more than believe: practice. Do more than be fair: be kind. Do more than forgive: forget. Do more than dream: work. — William Arthur Ward

Big Question: Is life fair?

This session's Big Question may be the only one in Riddle and Mystery that commonly and appropriately receives a one-word answer: "No." Certainly most sixth grade participants will agree. Life is not fair. Somebody gets the short stick and somebody the long one. Bad stuff can happen to you, to me, to anyone for no good reason. (See Session 7: "Why do bad things happen?")

Well, so what if life isn't fair? Most youth already know that when something is unfair they can sit and mope or they can do something about it. Now they will learn that doing something about injustice is an aspect of Unitarian Universalist faith, and in fact a kind of answer to today's Big Question.

Activity 1 involves a snack. Find out about allergies or food restrictions to provide a snack everyone can eat. To add a brief story from your own congregation to the central story, "UUs in Action," do some research in advance.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "Is life fair?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses
- Develop participants' capacity to respond to unfairness not only to themselves, but to others
- Demonstrate how some Unitarian Universalist youth and adults have worked to protest or correct unfair situations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Evaluate whether particular scenarios and life, in general, are fair

- Learn about Unitarian Universalist youth and adult efforts to correct injustice
- Apply Unitarian Universalist Principles and values to address hypothetical, typical sixth-grade fairness situations
- Optional: Create video news reports about Unitarian Universalist youth social justice efforts.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Snack Time	10
Activity 2: Story — UUs in Action	12
Activity 3: WCUU — The UU Advisor	20
Activity 4: WIT Time — Sharing Stories	10
Faith in Action: Teaching Fairness	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — There Is More Love Somewhere	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Fairest of All	20
Alternate Activity 5: Looking Back	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Recall, early in your life, when you began to understand that life is unfair. Recall a time when you saw your own life as abundant, safe or blessed, in comparison to others, and recognized unfairness. Remember the people who helped you understand how important it is to work against injustice. Remember actions you have taken to make life more fair, and how it felt to take action.

Smile in the knowledge that simply joining the youth in their search of life's mysteries is good and rewarding.

- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant from Session 1

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint and post.
- Print a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant, generated in Session 1.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to (make and) wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the card back in the bag or box. (If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass and draw another name.)

Point out the posted chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted the group's covenant, ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—Is life fair?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: SNACK TIME (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag containing three cookies
- Second bag with enough cookies for the full group

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether to take a safe or challenging approach to distributing the three-cookie snack:
 - Safe approach: Produce the supply of three cookies and ask the group how to divide it fairly.
 - Challenging approach: Hand the cookies to any three participants, then sit back to see how the group responds. Choose this approach only if you are quite comfortable that the group will handle it well; stirring up rancor is not in anybody's interest.
- Find out about participants' allergies, especially nut allergies. Obtain a snack food everyone can eat.
- Review your impressions of the group's experience with choosing the Kid for the Day and how fair they will say it has been.

Description of Activity

This activity has two parts. In Part 1, the youth decide and implement fair distribution of an unexpected snack. In Part 2, they discuss the fairness of the Kid for the Day selection process and may decide to change it.

Part 1. Announce that you have a special treat, and produce the bag of three cookies. Say the person who provided the snack was unfortunately confused about the number required, so you have only three.

- If you are taking the safe approach, ask the group how to share them fairly. Divide the cookies as they suggest. Then produce the extra cookies.
- If you are taking the challenging approach, pick three recipients at random, and hand the cookies to them. Then wait to see what happens. Perhaps the three lucky youth will share on their own. Perhaps somebody will say, "That's not fair," and you can ask the group what to do about it. In either case, keep discussion brief and then produce the extra cookies.

Point out that this activity was just a way to start thinking about what is fair.

Part 2. Ask the group how well the selection of Kid for the Day has worked out. Has anybody been selected an unfair number of times? If not, is that because of the process you are using? Does anybody not want to be Kid for the Day? If that is the case, should their names be left in the bag or box, or not? If the process does not now seem fair, what does the group want to do about it?

Help the group reach a decision, and tell them you will begin using the new procedure next time the group meets.

To conclude, note that life is sometimes only as fair as you, yourself, make it.

Including All Participants

Find out about participants' allergies or food restrictions. Be sure to provide a snack everyone can eat.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — UUS IN ACTION (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[UUs in Action](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story—five real stories of UU activism. Consider adding a true story of your own congregation's social justice work. Describe a youth, multi-age or adult action done by members of your congregation to protest or correct an unfair situation.
- Optional: If you wish to engage multiple readers, print out additional copies. Do not put any youth on the spot to read aloud. If possible, select volunteer readers in advance, and provide them with their parts ahead of time.

Description of Activity

Presents five (or six, if you add one from your congregation) true stories about UU efforts to make the world a better, fairer place. Say:

Just about every Unitarian Universalist would agree that life is unfair. Most UUs would also agree that when life is unfair, we should do something about it if possible. That is because Unitarian Universalism is a humanistic religion, that means UUs believe in human agency. We think humans cause some situations to be unfair, and humans have the power to correct those situations. More than that, UUs say, we can help correct many unfair situations even when we ourselves do not cause them. Today's story shows how UUs in different congregations have worked to promote fairness and justice.

Read the stories aloud, pausing after each to process with these questions:

- Do you know of any similar situations where UUs have been active? Have you helped with any such actions?

- Was this a good way for UUs to act?
- What do you think is Unitarian Universalist about this story? How does it show UU faith? Do you see any of our Principles in action?

Including All Participants

If you ask for volunteer youth readers, be sure to offer gentle assistance to any who struggle with the text.

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — THE UU ADVISOR (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — The UU Advisor
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , Dear Dr. Phayre and a basket to hold cut-up slips of paper
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1](#), [Leader Resource 1](#), (included in this document) or a poster in your meeting space)
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- This script calls for up to a minute of music to play, twice, while people are thinking. If the group does not use theme music or if the theme music is too short, choose some "thinking" music and bring a music player.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.

- If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling..." followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.

- Copy Leader Resource 1 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has seven On-Air people—an Anchor, a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst, Dr. Phayre and four Candidates. (Note: You may use a different number of Candidates—adapt the script before you print it out.) If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.
- Print out Leader Resource 2. Cut the numbered paragraphs into separate slips of paper. Fold the slips and place in a basket.

Description of Activity

This WCUU activity has two parts. Part 1 is the broadcast, in which four Candidates vie to become WCUU's new Dr. Phayre, the person who dispenses advice in response to viewer questions. Part 2 is a discussion which gives other youth a chance to answer questions similar to those fielded by the Candidates. It is important to make time for this second part of the activity so all the youth have a chance to wrestle with the questions.

Part 1. Participants present a WCUU broadcast involving seven On-Air People—an Anchor, Dr. Phayre, four Candidates and a NUUs Analyst. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Assign roles, using volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be the Anchor. Give participants who need to follow the script a moment to look it over (but do not distribute the Dr. Phayre "letters"—each poses a typical sixth grade situation in which a youth protests that something is not fair.). Review the script with the youth if any may have limited reading skills.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

After the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how typical Unitarian Universalists respond to today's Big Question: "Is life fair?" Do they think non-UU viewers would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing this WCUU broadcast?

Part 2. Expand the discussion by asking the entire group to consider some of the Dr. Phayre questions. Start with questions not used in the broadcast. Invite volunteers who were not On-Air People to answer questions, or pose questions to the whole group. Help the youth understand:

- The Unitarian Universalist Principles can help us decide what to do and how to act.
- It is not always easy to apply a Principle to a specific question or action, but it is still worth trying.
- What makes it difficult is that the Principles are general guidelines, while our problems are specific. Applying guidelines to specific problems is a challenge just about everybody has to face from time to time. Judges and lawyers need to do that frequently. So do teachers, when they need to interpret general school rules. Deciding what to do in an unfair situation can be tough, but it would be impossible if we had no guiding principles at all.

Including All Participants

Arrange the WCUU activity with respect for any participant limitations. If some youth have limited mobility, adjust WCUU parts to fit them.

Be alert and quickly stop any youth from applying a racist stereotype to the Dr. Phayre role.

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — SHARING STORIES (10 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Announce that it is WIT Time, when each youth has a chance to consider and say "What I Think."

Ask youth to share stories about something unfair that happened to them or to a friend. Invite volunteers, rather than going around in a circle; make sure youth know it is all right to pass. Caution youth against telling stories that might embarrass anyone, especially people in the room. Invite the youth to simply say they are talking about what happened to somebody they know, without identifying the people.

With each story, probe:

- What or who caused the injustice? (Sometimes the causes are complex. Help youth identify human agency. If something was "the school's fault," who exactly created or delivered the school's injustice?)
- Did you do anything to make the situation better?
- What could you do next time? (Invite other youth to contribute suggestions.)

You may need to remind youth that "unfair" is not necessarily the same as "not getting your way," but do not attack their perceptions of what is fair or unfair. You may wish to encourage the group to focus on injustices done to their friends instead of themselves.

Including All Participants

Make sure you establish that youth may pass if they prefer not to share a personal story.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the day's session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asks "Is life fair?" Our answer is "No, life is not fair." However, as Unitarian Universalists, we can and should work to make things fairer. We saw how to be fair in connection with a snack, and heard some quotes about fairness. Our story was about Unitarian Universalists working to make life more fair. In WCUU, we considered what sixth graders might do in situations they feel are unfair. In WIT Time, we gave our own responses to ideas about fairness.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: TEACHING FAIRNESS

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- A computer with Internet access and/or copies of Teaching Tolerance magazine.

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a copy(ies) of [Teaching Tolerance](http://www.tolerance.org/teach/magazine/index.jsp) (at www.tolerance.org/teach/magazine/index.jsp) magazine. Your religious educator or members of your congregation may receive it. You can also download it from the [Teaching Tolerance](http://www.tolerance.org/) (at www.tolerance.org/) website.
- Post a sheet of blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Remind the group that Unitarian Universalists do more than admit "life isn't fair;" we work to make life fairer. Faith in Action is an opportunity to do just that.

If the group has begun an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, consider this short-term Faith in Action project:

Teaching Fairness. Introduce the youth to Teaching Tolerance, an organization that gives children and youth ways to recognize injustice and ideas for working for fairness. Ask youth if they think we live in a country that values fairness. Most will probably agree that we do. Point out, if youth do not, that our country sometimes fails live up to its own standards of justice. Remind participants that though we have a Constitution that was written to establish a fair country, this document is not an airtight guarantee of justice for all in the U.S. and furthermore, the Constitution doesn't function on its own—it needs people to enforce it.

Ask if anyone is familiar with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). It was established by two lawyers, Morris Dees and Joe Levin. Morris Dees happens to be Unitarian Universalist. Here is a quote from their website:

Throughout its history, SPLC has worked to make the nation's Constitutional ideals a reality. The SPLC legal department fights all forms of discrimination and works to protect society's

most vulnerable members, handling innovative cases that few lawyers are willing to take. Over three decades, it has achieved significant legal victories, including landmark Supreme Court decisions and crushing jury verdicts against hate groups.

If the meeting space has Internet access, explore the [SPLC's website](http://www.tolerance.org/). Follow its link to [Teaching Tolerance](http://www.tolerance.org/) (at www.tolerance.org/), which provides resources for K-12 educators to teach anti-bias as well as web pages for parents, youth and children. If you have a copy(ies) of Teaching Tolerance, look through the magazine(s) with the youth. Invite them to find an activity they would like to do, e.g., designing [CD covers to create an anti-prejudice message](#).

Youth might find an activity for younger children that they could lead. If there is interest in this, determine which activity the youth prefer to lead and make a plan to approach your religious educator about scheduling a joint session of the Riddle and Mystery youth and a younger group. You might adjust the CD cover activity for younger children by asking children to think about the word "fairness" and designing book jackets to reflect their thoughts.

Use newsprint to list what the group wants to do and the immediate action steps to get the plan started. List any materials needed. When will the group hold the activity? During Sunday religious education time? On a weeknight? At a congregational retreat? Who needs to approve and help arrange the plan? Who will contact them?

After you implement the teaching activity, process it with the group. Ask:

- What do you think the younger children gained from this activity?
- What did you gain?
- If you did it again, would you do anything differently?
- What was it like to be the leader/teacher instead of the participant? Did you enjoy helping young people explore "fairness?"

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session. How was the mix of discussion and action? How much did youth seem to take in the Unitarian Universalist value of working for justice?

If the youth revised the process for selecting the Kid for the Day, make sure all co-leaders of future sessions

know about it. You may wish to provide new Opening instructions for them.

Does the group have any behavioral issues you need to address? Note that Session 9's WIT Time activity (Activity 4) asks youth to review or create a group covenant. The Big Question for Session 9 asks, "How can I know right from wrong?" Plan to reflect on your own answers to that, if you will be leading Session 9.

TAKING IT HOME

Do more than belong: participate. Do more than care: help. Do more than believe: practice. Do more than be fair: be kind. Do more than forgive: forget. Do more than dream: work. — William Arthur Ward

Talk about the quote. Do you agree with it? Do you think most Unitarian Universalists agree with it?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "Is life fair?" Most people agree that life is sometimes unfair. Most UUs agree that what you do about unfair things is what counts most. We saw how some UUs around the country have tried to help people attain justice. We had a snack designed to make us think about fairness. Our WCUU broadcast was about giving advice to sixth graders who say that life is unfair for a variety of reasons. We shared some of our own ideas about fairness.

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

People sometimes say it is important to play "on a level field." Try playing a game on a hill to find out what that is like. Maybe it is a pickup soccer game, where one team has to run up a hill to score a goal, and the other has to run down the hill. Is that fair? Does it become fair if the teams switch places halfway through the game?

BE AN UMPIRE

Volunteer to umpire or referee in a sports game. How easy is it to be fair?

REFLECT ON YOUR BELIEF

Is your school fair all the time to everybody in it? Can you think of any way to make it better? Talk with friends about the idea. Then ask a teacher. Talk to your parents, too, and maybe your principal. Talking is a good way to get started. Be willing to help with any plan that is decided on instead of expecting someone else to take action.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something that makes you think of justice, or being fair. Maybe it is a courthouse, or the referee at a baseball game, or row of equal-sized slices of pie.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION

Find something unfair in your family and work to fix it. Are members of your family treating each other fairly? Sit down and talk about fairness together. If one person says something is unfair, what can other family members do? (If they agree, they can discuss some ways to make things fair. If they do not agree, they can at least talk calmly about it; sometimes that helps a great deal.)

Remember that "fair" does not always mean "the same" or even "equal." "Fair" does not necessarily mean "getting what you want."

Also remember, faith in action does not always have to be what you and your family do for other people. It can be what you do for each other, too.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide any new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "Is life fair?" Say they can write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — THERE IS MORE LOVE SOMEWHERE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "There Is More Love Somewhere," Hymn 95 in *Singing the Living Tradition*—by reading the words aloud, singing together or playing a recording for the group. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Remind/tell the group that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "There Is More Love Somewhere" in the way you have chosen.

Ask participants to respond to the words. Do they apparently come from somebody who has not had a fair share of love, hope, peace and joy? Explain that the song is a traditional African American hymn which has been sung in connection with actions to win equal civil rights for blacks and other minorities. Music can help bring a community together in its struggles to win justice for all; we can all share the hope that "There Is More Love Somewhere."

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

Is nature fair?

Extend discussion with these additional questions:

- Do some creatures or plants in nature seem to get a better deal than others? Which ones? Is that fair?
- Does evolution seem like a fair process? The theory of evolution says the fittest animals and plants win out. The least fit die. Is that fair?
- Can you think of a better system? A way nature could be more fair and still be nature?
- Can a Unitarian Universalist action make nature more fair?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: FAIREST OF ALL (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , Fairest of All and pencils/pens for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.

Description of Activity

This activity asks participants to imagine a fairest-of-all Universe, where all countries and all people have equal starts and advantages in life.

Distribute Handout 2 and pencils/pens. Read the instructions with the entire group. Form small groups and ask each group to work on the handout.

When all have finished or when about five minutes remain, gather the entire group and invite small groups to share their ideas. Discuss:

- Did all the small groups agree on the basic starting points of equality? How so/not so?
- Do you believe countries and people have such equal starts in the real world? Do any countries, peoples or individuals have a "more fair" start than others?
- What do you think would happen if countries and people did have equal starts? Would everybody have equally happy lives? Do you think that Unitarian Universalists should give part of their lives to working for equality?
- What was it like to work as a group? Did group members agree on all the answers? If not, did the group establish a fair way to pick an answer? If time permits, discuss with the group the differences between consensus and majority rule. Are there other ways for groups to work together and make decisions?

Including All Participants

Tell the group you are more interested in knowing what their ideas are than in having them written down in detail; youth may write or not, as they wish.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: LOOKING BACK (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Glance back over the Riddle and Mystery sessions the group has covered.
- Post a sheet of blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Ask the group to review some topics you have explored in the first half of Riddle and Mystery. Ask which Big Questions they recall, and write these on newsprint as you hear them. The first eight sessions ask:

- Where do we come from?
- What are we?
- Where are we going?
- Does God exist?
- How did life begin?
- What happens when we die?
- Why do bad things happen?
- Is life fair?

Ask what activities youth have enjoyed. Ask them to name some ideas they have learned. You will not hear a clear synopsis of the curriculum to date, of course, but you may learn which concepts have taken hold. This will help you choose future sessions and activities.

Here are some key curriculum messages to listen for and, if needed, reinforce:

- Unitarian Universalism is a creedless religion. Individual Unitarian Universalists decide on their own answers to the Big Questions.
- While Unitarian Universalists are free to decide what to think and believe, we agree about important values to live out, such as helping each other and being inclusive.
- Unitarian Universalism is a humanistic religion. This means we believe people have a lot of responsibility for what happens to us and our world.

- Unitarian Universalists have covenanted together to shape Principles and Sources to guide us. We support each other in our UU communities.
- Many UUs believe that what you do is at least as important as what you think. You need to act on your ideas, beliefs and hopes. That is what Faith in Action means.

STORY: UUS IN ACTION

The First Situation is based on "Taking Justice to the Community" by Kimberly French, in *UU World*, September/October 2002. The Second Situation is based on "Work Camp" by Heather Robb, in *UU World*, September/October 2002. The Fourth Situation is based on "Picking up the Gulf Coast pieces" by Donald E. Skinner, in *UU World*, Summer 2006. The Fifth Situation is based in "Churches offer shelter from the storm" by Sonja L. Cohen in *UU World*, Winter 2005.

First Situation: Life is unfair. Some African American congregations in the South had their buildings burned down by white racists. This is the story of how some UUs responded. Eighteen hundred volunteers, aged 13 to 81, helped from 1996 to 2000 to rebuild African American churches in Alabama and South Carolina. The buildings had been burned to the ground by white segregationists. Each church building took about six months to rebuild. A new team of volunteers arrived every week. They stayed in trailers on the construction sites. Many of the volunteers signed up through the Unitarian Universalist Committee. Others came through an organization called Washington Quaker Work Camps.

Second Situation: Life is unfair. The children of migrant workers in eastern Washington State had no place to play. This is the story of how some UUs responded. Twenty teens and young adults from around the country traveled to a migrant camp near the Columbia River in the summer of 2001. The volunteers did all sorts of physical work, from cleaning trash and pulling weeds to helping with construction. They built a playground, they cooked, they played with children and they made friends. One of the UU youth was Heather Robb, from Newark, Delaware. "The work I did in Crewport has definitely made me appreciate the luxuries and privileges I have in my life," she said later. "But more important, it has given me a greater sense of my responsibility to use that privilege to make the world a more just place."

Third Situation: Life is unfair. Some people did not have enough to eat. This is the story of how some UUs

responded. Children and youth at the Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church in Portland, Maine have done many, different faith in action projects. They have contributed to Project FEED, which gives food to those who do not have it. They have served breakfast at a resource center, and dinner at a soup kitchen. They have made cookies, place mats and desserts for the soup kitchen. They have collected food plus art and laundry supplies for the local Ronald MacDonald House. They have created back-to-school kits and sweet dreams kits with pillowcases, books and stuffed animals for a local family shelter.

Fourth Situation: Life is unfair. Hurricanes hit the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2006, killing many people and leaving thousand homeless. This is the story of how some UUs responded. Many individual UU youth and adults and many UU groups have visited the Gulf Coast to assist. One group from the Winchester, Massachusetts UU Society had 34 youth and nine adults. "We were all shocked to see destruction far worse than the images that we'd seen on the news," said Emma Sprague, a high school senior. "We learned that as youth we have the strength to make a real difference in the world." When the youth returned home, they made their own video to show at other congregations, which then raised money for making health kits to send people in the Gulf Coast.

Fifth Situation: Life is unfair. Many people in American have no homes. This is the story of how some UUs responded. In Huntington, New York, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship has provided a shelter for people who had been living in the woods during the winter. UU churches in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Golden, Colorado, have done the same thing. In Woodinville, Washington, a traveling tent city has sometimes stayed on the grounds of the UU congregation. Up to sixty women and men stay in the tent city, each for about two months

Sixth Situation (from your congregation): Life is unfair. [State the unjust situation.] This is the story of how some UUs from our congregation responded. [Describe the action.]

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

Is life fair?

HANDOUT 2: FAIREST OF ALL

Do you remember the terrible stepmother in Snow White? She wants to be the "fairest one of all." Unfortunately, she was talking about her looks, not about treating everybody equally.

Imagine that you are in charge of the whole Universe. You want to make it the fairest place it can be. How do you do that? You start by creating every country and every person in the fairest possible way. This means making them equal in all the most important ways. What are those? That is what you need to decide right now.

Think about countries first. What does every single country need to have equal amounts of, to make the fairest Universe possible? List at least five things on these lines, and add more if you want. Here is one to get you started:

1. Natural resources
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

In the fairest universe you can make, what will every single person have in equal amounts? List at least five things on these lines, and add more if you want. Here is one to get you started:

1. Good health
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

LEADER RESOURCE 1: WCUU SCRIPT — THE UU ADVISOR

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU broadcast explores UU answers to today's Big Question: "Is life fair?" Several candidates will try out for the position of Dr. Phayre, a TV advice person who answers viewer questions on-air, from a UU point of view. The current Dr. Phayre, a WCUU celebrity, is now retiring. Your job is to follow the script, read your part and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you, Dr. Phayre, the four Candidates and the NUUs Analyst are sitting or standing on camera, in front of the microphone(s).

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name], and what a show we have for you today. Our old friend Dr. Phayre is retiring and today four Candidates will audition to be the new Dr. Phayre. Each Candidate will answer a randomly selected question about how to correct a problem situation to be more fair. Our NUUs Analyst will be the judge and choose the best Candidate to be the new Dr. Phayre for WCUU. Let me call on the old Dr. Phayre now. Can you explain more, Dr. Phayre?

Dr. Phayre: I sure can. Today's competition is built around the Big Question that asks "Is life fair?" UUs say that life is often not fair, and that we must do something about it.

Anchor: How do we know that most UUs think that?

Dr. Phayre: By looking at the UU Principles. See, there they are on the wall over there. [Director: Cue Camera Operator to show the Principles posted on meeting space wall.] Look at the second one. It does not mention the word "fair," but it talks about justice and equity. The sixth Principle talks about "justice for all," and all the Principles together make it clear that UUs want life to be fair. [Director: Cue Camera Operator to focus on On-Air People in studio.]

Dr. Phayre: I think the best word is "fairly," not "equally." We cannot treat everybody in exactly the same way. But we can treat them fairly. Fair parents may not give all their children piano lessons. All the children may not want piano lessons. But fair parents will give all their children an equal chance to learn something special.

Dr. Phayre: Because Unitarian Universalism is a humanistic religion. That means UUs think humans have to help run the world and even the universe, and to help solve problems.

Dr. Phayre: My job is to advise people who write or call in or email the station with problems and questions. I try to help them find ways to make life fairer. Having somebody like me on board is one way WCUU serves the whole UU community.

Anchor: Great! And you have been wonderful at your job, Dr. Phayre. We are sad to have you leave. But at least we have four good candidates for your job. We are going to choose one right now. Here's what will happen. I will draw questions from sixth graders at random from this basket. [Anchor lifts it up and shows it to camera.] I will give one to each Candidate and let them each have a minute to consider their answer. Then they will answer the question on-air. Our NUUs Analyst will listen, and just a few minutes from now, choose our new Dr. Phayre. Is everybody ready?

[Anchor draws a question from basket and hands it to First Candidate, then does the same for the other Candidates.]

Now let's have a bit of music while our Candidates think over their answers.

[Director: Cue theme music. Give Candidates up to a minute to read and think about the questions. Then, cue music to stop. Cue Anchor.]

Anchor: Ready, First Candidate? Read us your question and then give us your answer.

First Candidate: [Reads question and gives a brief answer.]

Anchor: And now Second Candidate, the same thing.

Second Candidate: [Reads question and gives a brief answer.]

Anchor: Your turn, Third Candidate.

Third Candidate: [Reads question and gives a brief answer.]

Anchor: Last but not least, Fourth Candidate.

Fourth Candidate: [Reads question and gives a brief answer.]

Anchor: That is great. Now it is all up to you, NUUs Analyst. Who will the winner be? Who gets to be our next Dr. Phayre? We'll give you one round of theme music to decide.

[Director: Cue the theme music to play while NUUs Analyst decides.]

Anchor: Okay, NUUs Analyst. The moment has arrived!
Who is our winner?

NUUs Analyst: Well, they did a great job, Anchor. They did a very great job indeed, every one of them. I am proud to call them UUs. I am very proud indeed.

NUUs Analyst: But we need a winner, NUUs Analyst. Time is getting short. What do you say?

NUUs Analyst: I have a great big surprise, Anchor. These guys might be great, but I am even greater. I want to be Dr. Phayre myself!

Candidates [together]: Oh no. That is not fair!

Anchor: Oh, good grief. Sorry about that, audience, but our time is up. See you same time, same station, next time.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: DEAR DR. PHAYRE

1.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

I saw a kid cheat on a test in my sixth grade class! The kid got an A, and I got a C, and THAT'S NOT FAIR! If I tell on the kid, everybody will hate me. What should I do?

2.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

I tried out for my sixth grade play last week. But I was sick that day and somebody else got the part. THAT'S NOT FAIR! What should I do?

3.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

My friend is in trouble for something I did. THAT'S NOT FAIR! I know it. But my friend's mother is being nice about it and my father might hit me if he finds out. He has done that before, believe me. What should I do?

4.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

I'm the only kid in sixth grade who is neither tall nor short. I am just medium height and there's nothing I can do about it and I'm the only one and THAT'S NOT FAIR! What should I do?

5.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

My older brother always gets everything new and I get all his hand-me-downs and THAT'S NOT FAIR! What should I do?

6.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

My friend's parents are getting a divorce and everything bad always happens to my friend and it never happens to me and I don't want it to happen to me but THAT'S NOT FAIR! What should I do?

7.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

I heard my mother tell her friend that my younger brother is the clever one in our family and I wonder if that is true, because I do not get good grades in school, and THAT'S NOT FAIR! What should I do?

8.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

My parents have a bunch of money and they give me everything I want but my friend's parents are poor so my friend can't have anything and THAT'S NOT FAIR! What should I do?

9.

Dear Dr. Phayre,

My parents said I could go to camp this summer if I got good grades and I did but now my parents say they are proud of me but they can't afford the camp so I can't go and THAT'S NOT FAIR! What should I do?

SESSION 9: RIGHT AND WRONG

INTRODUCTION

I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after. — Ernest Hemingway

There must always be a remedy for wrong and injustice if we only know how to find it. — Ida B. Wells

Big Question: How can I tell right from wrong?

Sixth graders may not use the term "moral ambiguity," but they have confronted complex moral and ethical decisions. Even young children know the angst of being torn between two choices, each of which seems to mix right and wrong.

The simple answer to today's Big Question is that there is no simple answer. However, youth will learn in this session how to use tests and guidelines—for example, the UU Principles, their own conscience, the Golden Rule—to discern the best, most right action in specific situations.

Helping sixth graders through the thickets of moral ambiguity is very much worth the effort. The session offers youth challenges to consider and includes a story of conscience at work. In WCUU, youth create conscience art. WIT Time considers where best to find help in making moral, ethical decisions.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "How can I tell right from wrong?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses
- Explore the concept of the conscience
- Examine how one's actions affect oneself and others
- Apply moral abstractions to real situations
- Provide Unitarian Universalist guidelines for confronting moral and ethical dilemmas.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Embrace the challenge and the responsibility of sorting right and wrong
- Experience that general answers usually cannot help in moral decision-making; specific situations and decisions each require a moral and ethical review
- Understand and internalize UU ethical guidelines
- Practice applying moral and ethical tests and guidelines to diverse dilemmas.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: What to Do?	12
Activity 2: Story — The Thief Within	7
Activity 3: WCUU — Brain Art	23
Activity 4: WIT Time — Group Covenant	10
Faith in Action: Feeding the Hungry	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Building a New Way	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Learning About Confession	10
Alternate Activity 5: Stealing Bread	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Remember a recent moment when you wanted to decide the right way to act. Was it easy to know? What tests did you apply to help answer the question? Did you rely on spiritual or religious sources? How did you ultimately decide what to do?

Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their search of life's mysteries is good and rewarding.

- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, with extra card stock for newcomers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant (Session 1)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign with a sheet of newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant generated in Session 1.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the card back in the bag or box. Or, if the group decided during Session 8 (Activity 1) to change how the Kid for the Day is selected, follow the new procedure now.

Allow a reluctant Kid for the Day to pass and draw another name. Indicate you the posted chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. If new participants have joined the group, invite all to introduce themselves. You might ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted the group's covenant, ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1. Write the question—How can I tell right from wrong?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT TO DO? (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Ethical Challenges
- Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1, Ethical Challenges, and cut into slips. If you expect to form more than four groups of three or four, print out multiple copies. You may give multiple groups the same challenges.
- Arrange meeting space so youth can work in small groups without disrupting each other's conversations.

Description of Activity

Form small groups of three or four in separate areas around the meeting space. Explain that you will invite the groups to consider realistic ethical challenges. Say you are interested to hear not only the decision the group reaches but also the rationale for the decision.

Give each group a situation from Leader Resource 1 and tell them they will have five minutes to generate a group response. Then, bring the groups back together to share their situations and decisions. Invite other groups to add their own ideas.

As the groups discuss their situations, capture on newsprint any ethical principles such as "honesty," "the Golden Rule" and "fairness." Save the newsprint for possible reference in later activities.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE THIEF WITHIN (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[The Thief Within](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Print out the story and prepare to tell it to the group.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story, "The Thief Within." Engage participants in discussion:

- What happened?
- Why did the monk get so upset? What caused him to scold himself?
- What is the "inner teacher" he talks about? (Affirm that it is the monk's conscience.)

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — BRAIN ART (23 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — Brain Art
- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , Three-Course Meal
- Color pencils or fine-point markers; masking tape or push-pins
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources (Session 1, Leader Resource 1, or a poster in your meeting space)
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Plan how you will time this two-part WCUU activity. Part 1 involves a discussion and a drawing activity. Make sure you reserve at least ten minutes for Part 2, the WCUU broadcast.
- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. Identify an area, within "reach" of the video camera, where youth can hold up their Brain Art or a wall where you can display their work as a gallery. If you plan to record WCUU:
- Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
- Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
- If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the

phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling..." followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.

- Copy Leader Resource 2 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has three On-Air people—two Co-Anchors and a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst—who can interview any number of other youth about their art work. If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.
- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.

Description of Activity

This WCUU activity has two parts. In Part 1, lead a group discussion about how Unitarian Universalists know right from wrong and invite the youth to prepare art work, for a WCUU art show, which shows what they plan to "feed" their brains to strengthen moral and ethical decision making. In Part 2, the WCUU broadcast, two Co-Anchors and a NUUs Analyst talk about conscience, then visit the art show and interview some of the artists.

Part 1: Lead a discussion to bring youth to an understanding of the term "conscience"—what it is, what it does and how it develops in its ability to know right from wrong. You may use these ideas and questions:

- The study of right and wrong is called ethics.
- Governments have laws about what you can do and what you cannot do. Schools have rules, and so do families. Rules are often in place to help us know right from wrong. But, rules are not always 100 percent ethically, morally right.
- People often join a religion which offers ethical rules that seem right to them. Unitarian Universalism, like many other religions, has a lot to say about ethics. Do you see anything in this room that can help people decide what is right and what is wrong? (UU Principles, UU Sources, and possibly a group covenant; youth may suggest adults in the room, or one another)
- Is there anything inside you that can help you decide what is right or wrong? (Your brain, your conscience, what the monk in the story called "his inner teacher." Have you ever thought you were doing something okay and then had a sinking feeling inside that it really was not okay? That is your conscience speaking. Your

conscience is something you can exercise if you listen to what it says. If you listen, it will give you an inner sense of whether you are doing something right or something wrong.)

- How do you think your conscience knows what is right and what is wrong? How do you think people can strengthen their conscience?
- You can help your body grow strong by feeding it the right foods. Can you help your conscience grow strong by feeding it the right ethical ideas?

Suggest that Unitarian Universalists rely heavily on our consciences to know right from wrong in a given situation. We need to nurture our consciences with guidelines that we find in our UU Principles, our understanding of the Golden Rule and in teachings from our other UU Sources. Say:

Today's WCUU broadcast will feature an art show. On display will be brain art which you will draw now. Imagine that you are going to feed your conscience a three-course meal of ethical ideas. What ideas, what food will you choose? That is up to you.

Distribute Handout 2 and put out drawing materials. Give the group five minutes or so to work, repeating the ideas about where to look for "food," as needed. Tell them the art need not be fancy—time is limited, and you are more interested in the ideas the art shows than in what it looks like. Say they may use words, as needed, but should try to let pictures tell the story.

Have participants attach their completed artwork to a wall.

Part 2: With about ten minutes remaining, begin the WCUU broadcast, which involves three key on-air people—Co-Anchor 1, Co-Anchor 2 and a NUUs Analyst. Other members of the group will appear in the show as artists and display their Brain Art. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Assign roles, using volunteers. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be a Co-Anchor. Give participants who need to follow the script a moment to look it over. Review the script with the youth if any may have limited reading skills.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

At the end of the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how typical UUs respond to

today's Big Question: How can I know right from wrong? Do they think non-UU viewers would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing it? Do they have any new ideas about their conscience, and knowing right from wrong?

Including All Participants

If any youth have limited mobility, arrange the "studio" so they can participate on camera while seated.

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME GROUP COVENANT (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Copy of group covenant

Description of Activity

Ask the group how the balance of right and wrong seems to be in this Riddle and Mystery group. Are they content with the way they and others behave? Do youth and leaders treat each other in acceptable ways? What could be better about how everyone interacts?

If the group has not made a covenant, lead them to develop guidelines and record them on newsprint.

If the group already has a covenant, review it. Ask, is the covenant working? Would anyone like to suggest changes? Reach consensus about what the changes should be and record them on newsprint (Also suggest the changes you have thought of, if youth do not.). Prepare the new covenant to post, or choose a volunteer to do so before the next session.

Discuss the covenant in terms of the ethical basis for its elements. For example, if the covenant says participants should take turns, how do they know that people in the group should take turns? Did they learn that value from their families? Is it a common rule of society? Is it always desirable? Can they find statements in our UU Principles that support their belief that this is a good way to act?

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the day's session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asks "How can I tell right from wrong?" We considered some tricky ethical situations and heard a story about a thief. We fed our consciences in WCUU, and for WIT Time we talked about where to get help making moral decisions. Like many other big questions, this one is more easily asked than answered. It seems that every situation is different, and not everyone will solve a situation the same way. We cannot find exact rules that will provide quick and easy answers every person can use to solve every challenging situation. We can find very useful guidelines that will help us do the right thing. We can use our UU community as a place to talk with about difficult situations and help each other find the best possible ways to respond.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: FEEDING THE HUNGRY

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Paper and pencils
- Optional: A computer with Internet access

Preparation for Activity

- Decide which activity you will do.
- Optional: If a computer or the Internet is not available, print out information about the organizations to share with the group.

- Optional: If the group decides to work on a UU Sabbath for the ONE campaign, you will need additional support.

Description of Activity

If the group is engaged in an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, consider this short-term Faith in Action activity:

Feeding the Hungry

Present an introduction to world hunger and global and local efforts to address it. Invite the group to learn more about one or more projects and find a way to participate.

For many, hunger is a reality. Around the world, 1.4 billion people live below the poverty line of 1.25 dollars a day. Lack of food can lead to malnutrition, serious illness and death. In 2006, 9.7 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday. Most of these deaths, though not directly due to starvation, were the result of illness suffered by children already weakened by hunger.

The time needed to secure food for one's family is time people cannot spend doing other things, like working or getting an education. Until we feed the hungry, it will be impossible to lift families out of poverty. Many people feel ending world hunger should be our number one priority. Ask if participants are familiar with any organizations addressing this issue. Their families might belong to one or more. They might have raised money for Heifer Project International to purchase farm animals or trees for struggling communities. There are many organizations and many ways to help.

An online game. The United Nations World Food Program has a website [FreeRice.com](http://www.freerice.com/) (at www.freerice.com/). On the website, you can play educational games to increase your vocabulary, learn about famous works of art, practice foreign languages and learn geography. As you play a game, you earn rice to help feed the hungry.

Letters to Congress. [Bread for the World](http://www.bread.org/) (at www.bread.org/) is a Christian organization that asks Congress and lawmakers to try to alleviate hunger around the world. They accept donations and members receive legislative alerts to lobby their Congress representatives to support worthwhile legislation.

A Sabbath Offering. [The ONE Campaign](http://www.one.org/) (at www.one.org/) is dedicated to ending extreme poverty and preventable disease. ONE members believe it is wrong for some of us to have so much while others have so little. They want to share the wealth. One of their programs is ONE Sabbath. On their website, you will see material for holding a ONE Sabbath event for

several different faiths, but currently, there is not one for UUs. Perhaps your group would like to create resources for a UU Sabbath. What sources would UUs look to for inspiration in the work of eliminating poverty? Sacred texts? Words from prophetic women and men?

Creating a guide for a UU Sabbath is a big project. Yet it would be a great contribution to our faith. If your group decides to work on this, solicit help from the Social Justice Committee, minister, religious educator and others in your congregation. Consider inviting neighboring congregations to work with you. If the group develops a UU Sabbath for ONE, you might contact the ONE Campaign and inquire about working with them to post it on their website.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session. How was the mix of discussion and action? Have you helped participants strengthen their ethical decision-making skills during this session? Do they seem comfortable with the freedom UUs have in response to many big questions?

The Big Question for Session 10 asks, "What is truth?" Reflect on your own answers in the days ahead, if you will be leading Session 10.

TAKING IT HOME

I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after. — Ernest Hemingway

There must always be a remedy for wrong and injustice if we only know how to find it. — Ida B. Wells

Talk about the quotes. Do you agree with them?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "How can I tell right from wrong?" We talked about what we should do in some difficult situations, and heard a story about a monk who condemned himself for stealing. Our WCUU broadcast talked about how we can feed our consciences with UU Principles and other guidelines. In WIT Time, we talked about where to get help when we need to make difficult decisions.

SHARED SEARCH

Read a newspaper together, or watch the news on television or the Internet. Talk about things that people did wrong and that people did right. How do you know which is which? Is it always clear?

MOVIE NIGHT

Watch the concert version of the musical *Les Miserables*. It tells the story of what happens to Jean Valjean after he is imprisoned for stealing bread to feed his starving family. The musical is based on the novel *Les Miserables* by the French author Victor Hugo. The story raises many interesting questions about right and wrong. An example: Is it wrong to steal in order to save a starving family?

REFLECT ON YOUR BELIEFS

Abraham Lincoln said: "When I do good, I feel good; when I do bad, I feel bad, and that is my religion." Do you feel the same way? Do you think other people agree? What is the best way to know if you did something good or bad?

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something that makes you think of right and wrong. Maybe it will be connected to courts and crime; maybe something to do with the environment.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION — EATING BETTER

Can your family find ways to eat more ethically? Are you happy with the rights and wrongs of the food you buy and eat? Have you been meaning to make a change you can think about now?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1)
- Notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes to reflect on today's Big Question: "How can I tell right from wrong?" Say they can write about anything they want. If they have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax. When time is up, they may seal their notebooks with masking tape and hand them in.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — BUILDING A NEW WAY (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "Building a New Way," Hymn 1017 in *Singing the Journey*—reading the words, singing, or playing a recording.

Description of Activity

Point out that Unitarian Universalists often express their ideas in hymns. Introduce "Building a New Way," being sure the group hears the words to at least the first verse.

Invite responses:

What is right about the "new way" the song describes? What kind of wrong things are being left out of the new way?

Does singing hymns about right and wrong help people understand the difference, and choose the right instead of the wrong?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script – Brain Art
- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , Three-Course Meal
- Color pencils or fine-point markers; masking tape or push-pins
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
 - Timepiece

- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)

Preparation for Activity

- Plan how you will time this two-part WCUU activity. Part 1 involves a discussion and a drawing activity. Make sure you reserve at least ten minutes for Part 2, the WCUU broadcast.
- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. Identify an area, within “reach” of the video camera, where youth can hold up their Brain Art or a wall where you can display their work as a gallery. If you plan to record WCUU:
- Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
- Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
- If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase “Quiet on the Set...Rolling...” followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Copy Leader Resource 2 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has three On-Air people—two Co-Anchors and a NUUs (pronounced “News”) Analyst—who can interview any number of other youth about their art work. If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew; if the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.
- Copy Handout 2, Three-Course Meal, for all participants.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

What is the best way to teach a five-year-old not to do wrong things?

Spark discussion with these questions:

- Is discipline helpful? What kind should it be?
- Does the meaning of "right" things versus "wrong" things change as we get older? How?
- How old do kids have to be before they know enough to evaluate what is right or wrong for themselves?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: LEARNING ABOUT CONFESSION (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Invite your minister or another adult in your congregation with knowledge about a religious confession or atonement practice to speak with the group. Prepare the adult to present about the religious practice clearly, briefly and without passing judgment on the practice or the beliefs it represents. The adult should be ready to explain:
 - What is the practice called?
 - What religion does it belong to?
 - How is it done? (When, where, by whom?)
 - What is its purpose?
 - What religious beliefs does it represent?
 - What positive feelings did the practice bring you, if any?

Make sure the adult knows they are not expected to be expert on anything more than what they choose to share; it is perfectly fine to tell the youth "I don't know" if they cannot answer a question.

Description of Activity

Welcome and introduce the visiting adult.

Tell the group, in your own words:

Many religions have ritual practices for confession or atonement. In religions based on a belief in God or other deities, the practices may involve confessing or apologizing to the deity for wrongs one has done. Judaism, Buddhism, Roman Catholicism and other branches of

Christianity have rituals of confession or atonement. Many people believe that if they confess their sins to God, or atone for wrong things they have done, God may forgive them or offer them a "clean slate" or a "fresh start." They may also believe that the act of acknowledging one's wrong actions (one's "sins" in some religions) makes one a better person, and helps the person avoid making the same mistakes again.

Ask participants to share what they know about a confession or atonement religious practice. Youth's knowledge may come from books, movies or their own experiences. Affirm their contributions, and set a tone of respectful sharing. If appropriate, remind the youth that religious practices they may have seen or heard of, however surprising to them, have meaning for the people who practice them and deserve respect.

Invite the visitor to share their knowledge about confession or atonement practices. Then, invite questions and facilitate the discussion.

Explain that Unitarian Universalism does not have practices for confession and atonement to God, but many UUs believe it is good to confess and apologize to anybody we hurt when we do wrong things. Ask the group if they agree with this idea. Do they remember doing something wrong, feeling very guilty about it and finally feeling better after admitting what they did?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: STEALING BREAD (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Familiarize yourself with the Victor Hugo's novel, *Les Miserables*. You can view the DVD *Les Miserables: The 20th Anniversary Dream Cast in Concert* at London's Royal Albert Hall (London: BBC Warner, 2008), a concert version of the musical based on the novel by Victor Hugo; many scenes are acted out.

Description of Activity

Lead a discussion about what should happen when a starving person steals food. You might begin by mentioning Jean Valjean, the protagonist of *Les Miserables*, which is both a 19th-century French novel by Victor Hugo and a musical based on that novel and composed by Claude-Michel Schonberg, with libretto by Alain Boublil. Jean Valjean suffers greatly through his life after stealing a loaf of bread because he is hungry. Say you do not wish to spend time on the story. Instead, you want to ask a general question: What should happen when people are so hungry they steal food?

Thoughtful and engaged youth may have an energetic discussion around this question. Use these prompts and comments to extend the discussion:

Is it all right to steal to save a life?

- What is wrong in a society if somebody has to steal to stay alive? Is it the fault of society, some individuals in the society or of the individual who steals?
- What does the Golden Rule say about committing a crime to save a life?
- What do UU Principles say?

STORY: THE THIEF WITHIN

"The Thief Within" is taken from *Kindness, A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom* by Sarah Conover and Valerie Wahl (Spokane, Eastern Washington University Press, 2001). Copyright 2001 by Sarah Conover. Used by permission, all rights reserved.

Many centuries ago, a young, novice monk traveled alone in the mountains of Tibet. He wandered about penniless, begging for a meager meal from time to time. One day, just as evening fell, he found himself on a bitterly cold mountain pass. But there, tucked in a high alpine meadow, he noticed a small home. He knocked upon the door. When it opened, a grizzled, ancient couple greeted him. They welcomed the young monk into their home, allowing him to escape the icy mountain wind. Because it is an honor to feed a monk, they cheerfully readied a wonderful supper for their guest.

At some point during the meal preparations, the old man went outside to herd his cattle into the night pasture, and the old woman went to fetch some water at the well. They left the young monk alone, tending the fire. But

suddenly, shouts from the house echoed from cliff to cliff in the mountain meadow. "Thief, robber!" they heard the young monk shout. "Get out and never come back!" The monk created such a noisy tumult that the old man and woman hastened back as quickly as their old legs would run—pitchforks and hoes in hand to deal with the thief.

When they burst through the door, all they saw was the lone monk—flushed as a berry, running around the table, slapping his right hand, and cursing himself. On the table was an open tea container, with a few tea leaves scattered about. "Thief!" he admonished his right hand and held it high, "if I ever catch you trying to steal a little something again I will be rid of you!" The old couple looked at each other and chuckled at the young monk. They served him a fine supper and offered a warm place to rest for the evening. The monk bowed respectfully and thanked them for their generosity, but he wanted to resume his homeless life that very night. Before he left, however, the young monk pronounced that on that evening, in their house, he met his inner teacher from whom he would never again part. And he thanked the old couple and went on his way.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

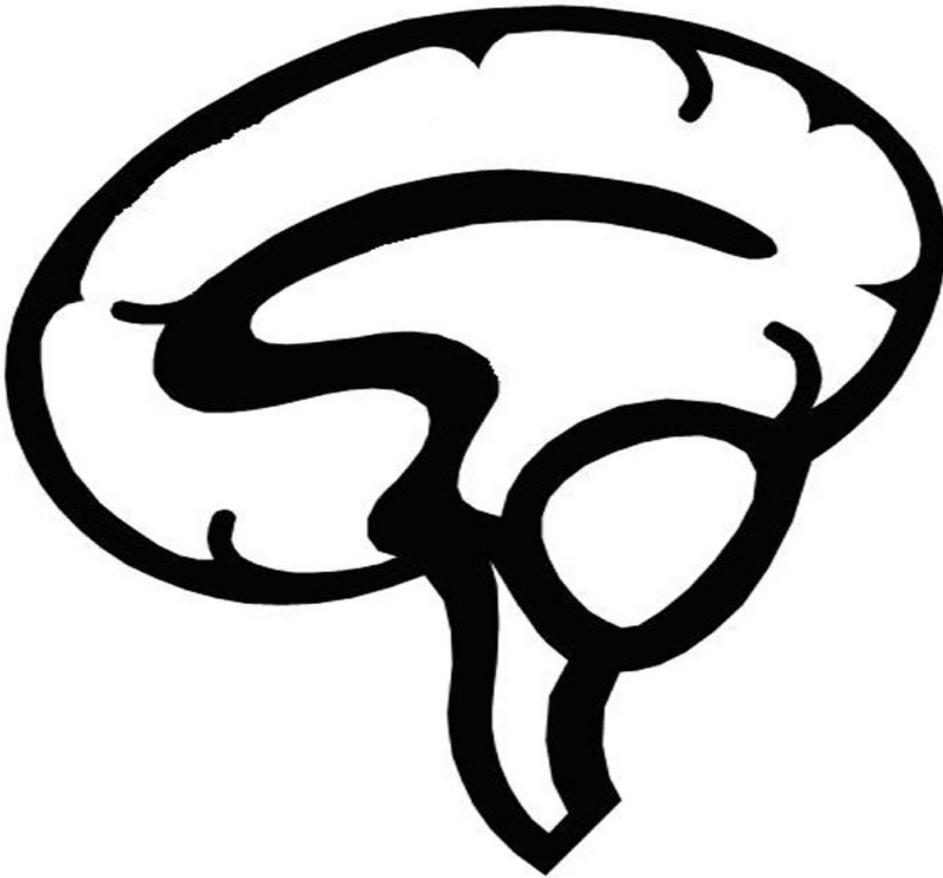
You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

How can I know right from wrong?

HANDOUT 2: THREE-COURSE MEAL



Here is an outline of a human brain. Think of it as your own brain, and imagine that your conscience is somewhere in it. Turn the outline into brain art by following these instructions: 1. Draw your conscience. Maybe it looks like a blob in the middle of your brain. Maybe it looks like something else. Use your imagination and draw whatever you want, but leave space for more drawings. 2. Use drawings or word art (with fancy, decorated letters) to show three different ethical ideas you want to feed your conscience. At least one of your ideas must be based on the UU Principles. You can choose any word or idea from the Principles and make a drawing to represent it. The other two drawings can come from the Principles if you want, but they do not need to. Maybe you will choose a rule about behavior from school or home. Maybe you will choose something from one of our UU Sources, such as the Golden Rule. You do not have to feed your conscience everything it needs all at once. Remember, this is just one three-course meal. You can feed your conscience again whenever you want, whatever you want.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: ETHICAL CHALLENGES

1. You are shopping for a new outfit in a large department store. One outfit is exactly the design, color and price you want. Another outfit is more expensive and a different design, but it has a belt that would look great on the first outfit. You realize you could add the belt to the first outfit and no one would notice. What is the right thing to do and how do you know?
2. When you were talking to the teacher today, you saw a list of spelling words that will be on tomorrow's test. Now you do not know what to do. Should you just keep quiet and take the test? Should you speak to your teacher? Should you call your friends tonight and tell them what the words are? What is the right thing to do and how do you know?
3. Your favorite uncle has asked you to help him for the day, and you were happy to say yes. Now you are in his pickup truck, heading for the recycling center. In the back are several trashcans filled with PVC containers. However, buried among them are some other bottles that do not belong. You know your uncle intends to pretend that everything is PVC and throw it in the same pile just to get rid of it. What will you say? What is the right thing to do and how do you know?
4. You are playing doubles tennis and a good friend is your partner. Twice your team has scored points because your partner said a ball had landed outside the line when it really had not. The second time your friend winked at you, so you know the "mistake" was on purpose. What will you say if this happens again? What is the right thing to do and how do you know?

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WCUU SCRIPT — BRAIN ART

To the Co-Anchors:

Today's WCUU program talks about how to tell right from wrong, and features an art show in which you will talk to artists about their brain art. Your job is to follow the script, read your parts and otherwise work together to keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you are together with NUUs Analyst on camera, standing in front of a microphone.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Co-Anchor 1: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Co-Anchor 2: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name].

Co-Anchor 1: And I am [give your real or stage name]. This morning's broadcast focuses on how people—Unitarian Universalists, especially—can tell right from wrong.

Co-Anchor 2: Right you are, [Co-Anchor's name]. Here to help us is our brilliant NUUs Analyst. So tell us, NUUs Analyst, how can people tell right from wrong?

NUUs Analyst: It's simple enough. Just ask your conscience.

Co-Anchor 1: Just ask your conscience? As simple as that?

NUUs Analyst: Sure. I'll tell you what William Ellery Channing said. He was a famous Unitarian in the early 1800s. He said, "Every human being has a work to carry on within, duties to perform abroad, influence to exert, which are peculiarly his, and which no conscience but his own can teach."

Co-Anchor 2: Wow. That's deep. But listen, if all you have to do is listen to your conscience, how come people worry so much about telling right from wrong?

NUUs Analyst: Because sometimes it is hard to hear your conscience. Sometimes it is tough to know what it is saying. Sometimes it sounds a little confused.

Co-Anchor 1: So what can we do about that?

NUUs Analyst: Simple again. We need to feed our conscience to make it strong.

Co-Anchor 2: Feed it? With what?

NUUs Analyst: With stuff like the Unitarian Universalist Principles, the Golden Rule and whatever we can find from lots of other good sources—especially our UU Sources.

Co-Anchor 1: Do people ever really think about feeding their conscience?

NUUs Analyst: Sure. Look! There's an art show right over there. [Points.] It is full of brain art that UU sixth graders made to show what they want their conscience to eat.

Co-Anchor 2: Let's go take a look.

[Director: Cue Co-Anchors and NUUs Analyst to walk over to the Brain gallery. Cue camera to follow. Cue Co-Anchors to begin interviewing artists... as many as you have time for.]

Co-Anchor 1 or 2: [to an artist, standing or sitting next to their piece of Brain Art]: What is your name? What do you think you should feed your conscience to make it good and strong and right all the time?

Artist 1, 2, 3, etc: [Answer Co-Anchors' questions, briefly.]

[If there is time, Co-Anchors can talk to each other about their own art, and also ask Studio Staffers to talk about theirs.]

[Director: Cue Co-Anchors and NUUs Analyst to return to the studio.]

Co-Anchor 1: That was a great art show!

Co-Anchor 2: It sure was. Thank you for leading us there, NUUs Analyst. Now maybe you could just summarize how most UUs respond to today's Big Question about how we know right from wrong.

NUUs Analyst: Right on. UUs find guidance in their own Principles, in ideas like the Golden Rule and from many different UU Sources. They internalize these ideas. That means, their conscience remembers them and can tell a UU what is right and what is wrong. Remember, Unitarian Universalism is a humanistic religion, and UUs say humans need to decide how to act. They can get useful ideas from many different religions, but they have to decide for themselves how to use those ideas.

Co-Anchor 1: Thank you, NUUs Analyst. Now that concludes our show for today.

NUUs Analyst: Wait a minute! Don't you want some more quotes? I have about a thousand more quotes to share.

Co-Anchor 2: One quote, NUUs Analyst. That's all we have time for.

NUUs Analyst: Okay. Here it is. It comes from Christopher Reeves, the actor, who was a UU. He said, "I think we all have a little voice inside us that will guide us. It may be God, I don't know. But I think that if we shut out all the noise and clutter from our lives and listen to that voice, it will tell us the right thing to do."

Co-Anchor 1: Deep again, NUUs Analyst. But now we really do have to go! To the theme music!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Co-Anchor 1: This is [your name] signing off for WCUU.

Co-Anchor 2: That is W-C-U-U for Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists. And this is [your name] signing off, too.

FIND OUT MORE

Right and Wrong

The challenge question in this session asks how youth might teach a younger child about right and wrong. Explore research on children's social reasoning on the website of the [Museum of Science \(Boston\) Living Laboratory](http://www.mos.org/discoverycenter/livinglab/csr/list) (at www.mos.org/discoverycenter/livinglab/csr/list). Find brief descriptions of studies of school-age and younger children's developing generosity, apologies, fairness and truth.

World Hunger

The UUA passed two resolutions, one in [1966](#) and one in [1987](#), about world hunger. Read the full text on the UUA website.

A Kids' Guide to Hunger & Homelessness by Cathryn Berger Kaye, available from the UUA bookstore, shows what kids can do to help their communities combat hunger and homelessness and includes facts, quotations, real-life examples, service projects,

resources, a note to teachers and other adults—and inspiration to get out there and make a difference.

This session's Faith in Action mentioned the idea of a UU Sabbath. For a Unitarian Universalist perspective on the Jewish Sabbath and how its practice can affirm our Principles, read "[Ecological Spiritual Delight](http://www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/128945.shtml)" (at www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/128945.shtml) by Patricia Guthmann Haresch in the Spring 2009 UU World.

The Fall 2006 UU World article "[Hungry for Democracy](http://www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/5701.shtml)" (at www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/5701.shtml) by Frances Moore Lappe connects the ideas of economic justice, hunger and democracy.

Part of the United Nations system, the [World Food Program](http://www.wfp.org) (at www.wfp.org) is the largest humanitarian agency dedicated to fighting hunger worldwide. The WFP website is rich with project descriptions, statistics, resources for teachers and students and links including one to the [Free Rice game](http://www.freerice.com/) (at www.freerice.com/) which allows users to donate 10 grains of rice for each word defined correctly in an online quiz.

SESSION 10: TO TELL THE TRUTH

INTRODUCTION

I am not afraid of the pen, or the scaffold, or the sword. I will tell the truth wherever I please. — Mother Jones in Linda Atkinson's book, Mother Jones (1978)

You never find yourself until you face the truth. — Pearl Bailey, The Raw Pearl (1968)

You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. — Christian scripture, John 8:32

Big Question: What is truth?

"Always tell the truth" and "Never tell a lie" are often the first moral imperatives a child learns. But adults do not always set good examples. We lie, and children know. Sometimes we excuse our prevarications as choices we make to "protect" people from the truth or otherwise to do good. Small wonder if youth are confused about what truth is and why it is important.

This session asks youth to search for deep truths in the morals of fables and in their interactions with peers. The story lifts up Mahatma Gandhi's view of truth and his commitment to it, while WCUU explores different ideas of spiritual truth found within Unitarian Universalism.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "What is truth?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses
- Define spiritual truth as the truth we find in our own answers to the big questions
- Ask youth to make a commitment to truth-telling
- Demonstrate that different perspectives reveal different truths.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Define truth and explore its importance at several levels
- Learn the role his commitment to truth played in Mahatma Gandhi's life and accomplishments
- Define "spiritual truth" and discover a range of spiritual truths found in Unitarian Universalism
- Explore the implications of gossip.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Truth in Fiction	20
Activity 2: Story — Gandhi's Truth	7
Activity 3: WIT Time — Gossip Control	10
Activity 4: WCUU — Spiritual Truths	15
Faith in Action: News of Injustice	25
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Light of Ages and of Nations	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Truth and Photography	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Consider the term "spiritual truths." What are your own spiritual truths? Do they help you answer the big questions sixth graders are considering? Do you feel the youth are developing their own spiritual truths, as you move together through Riddle and Mystery? Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their search through life's mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant (Session 1) or revised covenant (Session 9)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant (Session 1 and/or Session 9)
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign with a sheet of newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text.
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants.
- Optional: Prepare to play soft background music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant and an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the card back in the bag or box. If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, let them pass. Draw another name or have the participant select one. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1. Write the question—What is truth?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who have difficulty reading, routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: TRUTH IN FICTION (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Fables
- Paper and pencils
- Poster paper and color markers
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Paints, paintbrushes, newspaper to cover work surfaces

Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1 and cut into slips as indicated.

- Arrange meeting space so youth can work in small groups. Decide whether groups will perform their fables or illustrate them, and plan accordingly.

Description of Activity

This activity explores how truth can be found through fiction. Begin with a brief, full group discussion. Ask participants if they have ever discovered a truth from fiction in a book, a movie, a play, a television show, a comic strip or a video game. Remind them that fiction is a made-up story. Invite responses and ask what truth the story revealed to them.

Form groups of three or four at work tables. Give each small group a slip of paper with a fable from Leader Resource 1. Distribute paper, pencils and art supplies. Give the following instruction:

Read your fable, write a moral or truth to sum up the fable, and illustrate the fable with the art supplies [or, plan a performance of your fable for the rest of the group]. You will have eight minutes to work. Then, each group can present their fable, their truth and their art work.

After eight minutes, gather the large group for presentations. Groups should read their fables aloud and share their illustrations (or act out their fables). After each presentation, engage first the small group and then the entire group to suggest what truth the story illustrates. Here are possible morals for each of the fables:

1. The Golden Eggs: Greed destroys wealth. Think before you act. Wanting too much can cost you everything.
2. The Wagon Driver: The gods help those who help themselves. If you help yourself, more help will come.
3. The Fox and the Grapes: It is easy to dislike what you cannot have.
4. The Miser and the Gold: Wealth you do not use has as much value as a hole in the ground.
5. The Fox and the Crow: Never trust a flatterer.
6. The Shepherd Boy: Known liars are not believed, even when they tell the truth.

Tell the group that these fables are attributed to Aesop, an ancient Greek storyteller. Aesop's Fables belong to a larger category of stories called wisdom tales. Wisdom tales are a part of the human oral tradition. Before we had books, people passed their wisdom to the next generations by telling stories like these. Sometimes we tell wisdom tales in religious education and in worship services—see if the youth can think of any. Discuss the

relationship between wisdom tales and the truth, with these questions:

- Are the fables "true?" Did the activities described in them really happen?
- Even if the activities did not happen, do the fables illustrate a "truth?" Do you disagree with any of the "truths" in these fables? Which ones/why?
- What does truth mean?
- Can something be true in one situation, but not in another? Can you think of an example?
- Who gets to decide whether something is true?
- Does public opinion make a difference about what is true?
- Can your truth be different from my truth?

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — GANDHI'S TRUTH (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[Gandhi's Truth](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out the story.

Description of Activity

Read the story aloud. Then start a conversation about what Gandhi's life can teach us about truth. Use these questions:

- What do you think Gandhi meant when he said "What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of truth, my god, from moment to moment, no matter how inconsistent it may appear. My commitment is to truth, not to consistency."
- Have you ever had a situation where truth was inconsistent? What happened?
- Why do you think Gandhi titled his biography "The Story of My Experiments with Truth?"
- What have your own "experiments with truth" taught you?

ACTIVITY 3: WIT TIME — GOSSIP CONTROL (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Post a blank sheet of newsprint.

Description of Activity

This activity offers youth ways to control the telling and spreading of gossip about peers.

Acknowledge that it is not always easy to stand up for the truth. Yet, we can start small, by helping to spread the truth in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Ask for volunteers to explain the terms "gossip" and "rumors." Then ask if they know someone who has been the victim of gossip and rumors. Invite youth to share stories briefly, without mentioning names.

Ask what they can do to avoid such problems in the future. Point out, if youth do not, that the problem would go away if people always told only what they knew to be true about other people. It would also help if people followed the old saying: "If you cannot say anything nice, do not say anything at all."

Ask why so many people are willing to spread gossip and rumors about other people, even people they think of as friends. (To be part of an "in group," perhaps, to get attention, or to feel or appear somehow better than the people they are talking about.)

Now pose the challenge: What can we, as a group, do about this right now? Youth could promise to not spread rumors or gossip in this group. Another possibility is creating a "truth code" that participants sign, promising not to spread gossip and rumors about people. The code might also say to avoid spreading true, but hurtful, information about people unless there is a good reason to do so. (If you are certain someone has stolen something, it may be important to say so.)

If participants wish to create a truth code, divide them into small groups to write initial drafts. Then, bring them together to combine their efforts into a final document.

Invite everyone, including co-leaders, to sign the document. Post it in the meeting space. Be open, and flexible; the youth may suggest other approaches to controlling gossip and rumors.

ACTIVITY 4: WCUU — SPIRITUAL TRUTHS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1

- Painter's tape or masking tape

- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — Spiritual Truths
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , Truth Notes
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece (minutes)
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)
- Supplies to make a tent, such as a bed sheet and four dowels or poles (broomsticks will do) and masking tape to attach sheet to poles, or mural paper or sheets of newsprint, masking tape to attach the paper to a wall and markers for drawing a tent with skylights
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- If you plan to record WCUU, set up and test equipment.
- Copy Leader Resource 2 for everyone who will need a script. This script has nine On-Air People: Two Co-Anchors and a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst, who will need scripts, and seven UUs who will each speak about a different belief orientation found in Unitarian Universalism. The On-Air people will need scripts. The UUs' roles are not scripted; they will improvise based on the role descriptions in Leader Resource 3. If the group is small, omit some parts or ask some youth to play more than one part; co-leaders can be Studio Crew. If the group is large, expand the Studio Crew.
- Print Leader Resource 3. Cut the truth statements into separate slips of paper.
- Decide how the group will make a tent and obtain the materials. (These may already be stored, if the group made a tent for the WCUU activity in Session 4.) One idea is to attach four dowels to a sheet and have four participants lift the dowels to raise the tent. Another option is to draw the tent on mural paper or a chalkboard.

Plan to assemble the tent quickly, just before the broadcast.

- Make name cards for the seven UUs (Buddhist UU, Christian UU, Hindu UU, Humanist UU, Judaist UU, Muslim UU, and Pagan/Earth-centered UU).
- Optional: On the UUA website, read [Beliefs Within Our Faith](http://www.uua.org/visitors/beliefswithin/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/visitors/beliefswithin/index.shtml), a summary of belief groups in Unitarian Universalism.

Description of Activity

Participants present a WCUU show involving nine On-Air People—Co-Anchor 1, Co-Anchor 2, a NUUs Analyst and seven UUs: Buddhist UU, Christian UU, Hindu UU, Humanist UU, Judaist UU, Muslim UU, and Pagan/Earth-centered UU.

Assign roles, using volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be a Co-Anchor or the NUUs Analyst. Tell the On-Air People that all except the NUUs Analyst will need to improvise some of their on-air dialogue. Distribute the truth notes (Leader Resource 3) to youth who will role-play the various UUs. Invite them to read their notes carefully so that, on the broadcast, they can say the ideas in their own words. Tell them they need not say everything on the notes, just a few key points.

Give participants who will follow the script a moment to look it over. Review the script with the youth if any have limited reading skills.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

After the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how Unitarian Universalists with different religious beliefs might respond to today's Big Question: "What is truth?" You may wish to tell the group more about the belief perspectives represented in the broadcast. Some groups, like UUs with Muslim or Hindu backgrounds and beliefs, are very small. The Humanist group is quite large; at least half of all Unitarian Universalists say they have humanist beliefs. Say, in your own words:

More important than the numbers is the fact that the Unitarian Universalist denomination welcomes people with many different backgrounds, many different ideas, many different spiritual truths.

Define spiritual truth as the truth we find in our own, personal answers to the big questions.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the day's session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asks "What is truth?" which we explored in several ways. We began by looking at the truth of wisdom tales. Our story was about Mahatma Gandhi and truth. In WCUU we heard Unitarian Universalist ideas about truth, and in WIT Time we talked about not spreading gossip as a way to dedicate ourselves to Truth.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Invite participants to use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: NEWS OF INJUSTICE (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Assortment of newspaper and or/magazine pages including news about economic injustice—local, if possible—of both general and sixth grade interest
- Letter-writing materials and names and addresses of publication editors

Preparation for Activity

- Gather news publications. Check them thoroughly to weed out and remove any inappropriate material that might distract the group.

Description of Activity

If the group has chosen an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue to work on it.

Or, do this short-term Faith in Action activity:

News of Injustice. Invite youth to find signs of economic injustice in newspapers and write letters to the editor suggesting ideas for change. Introduce the subject with these thoughts:

- Some people think of poor, starving people in nations far away, when economic injustice is mentioned. But signs of economic injustice can be seen almost anywhere, in our own country and sometimes very close to home.
- One traditional way to try to right wrongs is by writing letters to the editors of newspapers. These are often seen by government officials as well as voters who expect government officials to help solve society's problems.

Ask participants to look thorough local newspapers and find signs of economic injustice, then write letters to the publications' editors asking government officials or other people in power to correct the injustice. Divide youth into groups of three, give each group a few newspaper and/or magazine pages plus markers, and ask them to circle anything they think suggests economic injustice. Say that they have five minutes to do this, so they will need to work rapidly. They need not read everything on their pages, but they should check at least some articles and some ads. They may be able to find some issues by glancing at the headlines.

If youth have difficulty finding material, offer some ideas to assist:

The articles will not necessarily talk directly about economic injustice. Look for clues that things are not fair; you might have to think a bit to know that injustice exists. You might find an article about a musician or an athlete who is making many millions of dollars while other people eat at soup kitchens. You may find ads for luxury items that only super rich people can afford.

When some groups have found promising material, ask them to share their discoveries with the full group. Do all participants agree that injustice exists? If youth have discovered an injustice they wish to do something about,

distribute letter-writing materials and ask each group to write to the editor of your local paper. Say that the letters should begin, "Dear Editor." They should briefly explain what the problem is, identify who should solve it and suggest what might be done. The letters should be brief, polite and signed. Alternately, the group could compose one letter together and sign it as a group.

If the group does not identify an injustice that engages them, suggest a topic, such as establishing a minimal level of economic welfare for everyone, so no one is homeless. Your community may already be involved in a living wage campaign.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session. How was the mix of discussion and action? Are you continuing to find ways to involve all youth fully in sessions despite any limitations they might have? Does the group have new behavioral issues you need to address?

Have you helped participants get comfortable with an understanding of "truth" in this session?

Note that the Big Question for Session 11 asks, "How am I connected with everything else?" Plan to reflect on your own answers in the days ahead if you will be leading Session 11.

TAKING IT HOME

I am not afraid of the pen, or the scaffold, or the sword. I will tell the truth wherever I please. — Mother Jones in Linda Atkinson, Mother Jones (1978)

You never find yourself until you face the truth. — Pearl Bailey, The Raw Pearl (1968)

You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. — Christian scripture, John 8:32

Talk about the quotes. What do you think they mean? Can you think of an example when knowing the truth could help you be free?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "What is truth?" We explored this concept, and saw that there are different types of truth, including spiritual truth, which refers to our own inner ideas, our own personal answers to big questions like "Does God exist?" We talked about the messages—the morals—of stories like Aesop's fables and how these statements are truths. Our story was about Mahatma Gandhi and truth. Our WCUU broadcast showed a variety of spiritual truths found within Unitarian Universalism—not all the same, but all true, for those

who believe them. In Wit Time, we committed to honor truth by refusing to spread untrue or harmful rumors.

TALK ABOUT LYING

Talk about lying in your family. Does everybody try to tell the truth all the time? Is it ever okay to say something you do not mean? What if somebody is dressed for a party and wearing clothes that you think do not look very good? Should you say so? If you say, "You look great!" is that a lie, a so-called "white lie"? Is it ever okay to lie about anything?

SHARED SEARCH

Take a short trip to a place in your community where truth is especially important. Is it a courthouse? A school? A congregation? Should truth be more important in some places than in others? Or should it always be equally important?

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Take a photograph that shows an important truth. Maybe it will show that you can find beauty in unexpected places. Maybe it will show something bad or good that people are doing to the environment. Maybe it will show how everybody is connected to other people all around the world.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION — SUPPORTING TRUTH

Get involved in local politics. Find out about elections coming up. Should youth leave such decisions to adults? Remember, whoever is elected can pass laws and make budgets that affect kids as well as adults. Do some research to identify the most honest and truthful candidates. Try [FactCheck](http://www.factcheck.org) (at www.factcheck.org) or the St. Petersburg Times' [PolitiFact](http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/) (at www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/) pages. If you find a candidate you like and trust, sign up to help the campaign. Maybe you can hand out campaign literature, put up some posters or make phone calls. Remember, good politicians can do great things. But they cannot do much of anything if nobody will help them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Participants Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils/pens
- Masking tape

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes to respond to today's Big Question: "What is truth?" Say they can write about anything they want. If they have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, tell them they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — LIGHT OF AGES AND OF NATIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "Light of Ages and of Nations," Hymn 190 (also 189) in *Singing the Living Tradition*—by reading the words aloud, singing together or playing a recording for the group. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Tell the group that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "Light of Ages and of Nations" in the way you have planned, being sure that the group hears the words to at least the first verse.

Ask what participants think "thy truth sublime" means. ("Light of ages" probably refers to God or "the word of God," so "thy truth" would mean "God's truth.") Do participants believe there is such a thing as "God's truth"? Do they like the hymn?

Use the words of this hymn to spark a discussion about the connection between "light" and "truth." Remind the group that WCUU broadcasts in this session and Session 4 have both talked about "The blinding light of truth." Say that "the light of truth" is a common expression. If you search for it on the Internet, you get

almost half a million hits. The light of truth is usually thought of as a good thing. In fact, we often show good things as light, white or bright, and we often show bad things as dark or black. Ask if the group thinks this division might have a bad effect on how we subconsciously feel about the color of people. Might this way of using language create or reinforce racism?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: Review Alternate Activity 2, Song — "Light of Ages and of Nations." Whether or not you have done Alternate Activity 2, you may like to use for the Challenge Question discussion its discussion about cultural use of "light, white, bright" for good and "dark, black" for bad.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

Is it okay to tell a lie in order to avoid hurting somebody's feelings?

Extend discussion with these additional questions:

- What are white lies? (You might say they are small lies told to protect people's feelings when someone feels the truth might hurt them.)
- If somebody tells you a white lie and then you discover the truth, how do you feel?

Ask the group why "good" lies are referred to as "white lies?" Are they really "good?" Do you think people would feel as happy to tell "white lies" if they were called "black lies?" What other examples of this cultural bias of things "white" as being good and "black" as being bad can youth add?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: TRUTH AND PHOTOGRAPHY (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A digital camera or camera phone for each group of three or four youth

- Optional: Photographs from magazines, newspapers, or Internet sources
- Optional: A computer with Internet access

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how and where the youth will make photographs.
- Optional: Alternately, select photos to analyze with the youth.
- Optional: Search online for photographic images the youth can analyze. Searching the Internet for terms such as "fake photos" and "truth in photography" might provide some results worth sharing with the group. Do your search in advance and either print out images or save the URLs. You are likely to find some images that are inappropriate. Preview any web page you want to show the group.

Description of Activity

Ask youth to analyze photographs to see how truthful they are.

If you have the time and equipment, this activity will be most effective if participants themselves create photographs that are misleading ("untruthful") in some way. Form groups of three or four. Give each group a digital camera or camera phone. Invite them to make several photographs that appear to be truthful, but are not. Explain:

It might be possible to make it look like one person has three hands. Or, make someone look like they are standing somewhere they are not. A close-up photograph can look like many things that it isn't.

Allow groups to make photos for a few minutes and bring their devices to the large group to share. Invite participants to speculate what has been photographed; ask what is truthful and what is untruthful about each photograph. Then invite the photographer(s) to explain what they photographed.

Conclude, in your own words:

It is not very hard to take a picture that is not truthful. Actually, no picture is totally truthful. Real people and objects have three dimensions. Most photographs have only two. Every time you take a picture you photograph just part of what you see. Because you cut out everything else around it, the viewer will see less than you saw—and only what you chose for them to see.

Variation

If you do not have the equipment for youth to make their own photographs, distribute photographs from magazines, newspapers or the Internet. Invite youth to analyze them to see what they show and do not show about their subjects. How might they be misleading? Can they still be "truthful?" How?

Including All Participants

Youth with sight limitations can participate meaningfully in this activity. Have a co-leader or another youth describe photos—not what they are of, but what they look like—to a youth who cannot see them.

STORY: GANDHI'S TRUTH

By Greta Anderson.

You have probably seen pictures of the man from India known as "Gandhi:" a skinny, bald-headed man with wire-rimmed glasses, a white cloth wrapped around him. Gandhi made history by practicing nonviolence as a way to confront power. Nonviolent "civil disobedience" is a way for oppressed people to defy their oppressors—and not lose their integrity in the process. It sends the following message to the world: "Look at our truth. We are human beings with dignity and worth. Our oppressors may use violence, but we will not sink to that level."

Mohandas Gandhi was not always that man dressed simply in white cloth. As a law student in London and as a lawyer with a successful practice in South Africa, he dressed up in European clothes because he thought it would improve his status, and the status of all Indians. He encouraged Indians to fight for Britain in World War I for the same reason. At the time, India and South Africa were part of the British Empire. Indians in those countries were ruled by a white colonial government, and had very few rights.

So, who was the true Gandhi? The man in the suit and tie, who promoted military service or the avatar of nonviolence who wore hand-woven cloth and sandals—even when meeting with high officials in foreign lands? Gandhi would have a ready answer. He once wrote, "What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of truth, my god, from moment to moment, no matter how inconsistent it may appear. My commitment is to truth, not to consistency." But he had to experiment to know what Truth was for him—at each moment of his life. In fact, his autobiography is titled *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

Here is an example of Gandhi's "experiments," from his childhood. He was raised to be a vegetarian; it was part of his parents' Hindu religion. However, a friend suggested that eating meat would make him strong—and to get strong that way was patriotic. His friend argued that India would never be independent of colonial rule if its people didn't eat meat. Gandhi saw merit in the argument and tried meat. But he felt shame when he returned home. He saw that the truth of his

loyalty to his parents was stronger than his friend's truth. Young Gandhi swore to never eat meat again, as long as his parents lived.

Later, he found another truth: the principle of ahimsa that motivated his parents' Hindu practice. This principle rejects any kind of violence to any other living thing. Vegetarianism became Gandhi's own moral choice.

Gandhi was an endless seeker after truth, and approached the task humbly. When Christians sought to convert him, he did not dismiss them; instead he listened and learned about Jesus. He read the Gospels. He monitored his impressions throughout, using his inner light to sort Truth from mere religion. He read about Buddha and Muhammad as well as Jesus. When he began to investigate Hinduism through books, Gandhi began to more deeply appreciate parts of his native religion. However, some aspects appalled him, such as the slaughter of lambs he witnessed at a temple of the Hindu goddess Kali.

Other books affected him deeply. *Unto This Last*, a book by the British author John Ruskin, led Gandhi down the path of simplicity. He saw the practical virtue of simplicity for his people. For instance, if Indians learned how to weave their own cloth, they would not have to buy British factory-made clothes. They could increase their economic independence by making the cloth themselves.

The important thing to Gandhi was not just to hold a truth as if it were a possession. It was to put truths into practice, literally "try them on" for size. Not only did he wear homemade cloth, he took a spinning wheel with him wherever he went so that he himself could practice what he preached. He embodied the message of nonviolence to such a degree that riots would stop wherever he showed up—no small thing in a country that was both struggling for independence from Britain and painfully divided between Hindus and Muslims.

Throughout his life, Gandhi influenced millions of oppressed people to stand up for their rights. In South Africa, he united Indians in struggles against racist laws intended to keep them subordinate to whites. In India, he won independence from Britain—without having to fight a war! Gandhi's strength lay in the power of his example—an example of commitment to finding and practicing Truth.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

What is truth?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: FABLES

1. The Golden Eggs

A farmer and his wife had a goose that laid golden eggs.

The first time it happened, they were angry. The egg was metal, not good to eat.

Then the farmer and his wife said, "Hey, this looks like gold. Real gold." They took it to a jeweler and found that it was real gold. They sold it for a lot of money.

Every day after that, they found another golden egg in the goose's nest. They were getting richer and richer, happier and happier. Until one day, they decided that they wanted more, and they wanted it right now.

"Let's kill the goose and get all the eggs out now," they said. So they did. But guess what? There were no more eggs inside. That was the end of the gold.

The moral or truth of this story is _____.

2. The Wagon Driver

One rainy day, a wagon driver and his horses were trying to move a heavy wagon through the mud.

The more the driver whipped the horses and the harder the horses pulled the wagon, the deeper the wheels sank into the mud.

The driver gave up. He sank down on his knees into the mud and he prayed to Hercules, the ancient god of Strength.

Suddenly Hercules appeared next to the wagon. "Help me, help me," the driver said.

But Hercules looked at him and said. "Hey, man. Get up off the ground and push that thing. Then maybe I'll lend a hand."

The moral or truth of this story is _____.

3. The Fox and the Grapes

A hungry fox was wandering along looking for food when he saw some beautiful grapes hanging from a vine on a very high tree.

"Just for me," said the fox. He shook the tree to make the grapes fall off but the tree did not move. He climbed up the tree but the trunk was too smooth and he fell back down. He jumped into the air and grabbed for the grapes but they were too high and he fell back again.

The fox was angry and disgusted. "Who wants those grapes?" he said. "I am sure they are sour anyway." And off he went, still looking for food.

The moral or truth of this story is _____.

4. The Miser and the Gold

A miser dug a hole and hid his gold there.

He loved his gold, so every week after that he went to open the hole and look at the gold to feel good about it.

One day a robber saw what the miser was doing. When the miser went away, the robber opened the hole and helped himself.

When the miser found the empty hole he shouted and yelled until a neighbor came running to see what was wrong.

When the miser told his story, the neighbor asked why the miser kept coming back to look at his gold.

"It made me feel good," said the miser.

"Then tomorrow come look at the hole," said the neighbor. "That should make you feel just as good."

The moral or truth of this story is _____.

5. The Fox and the Crow

A fox was walking through the forest one day when a crow flew by with a piece of cheese in its beak.

"That's for me," said the fox settled onto a branch.

"Hey there," called the fox. 'Aren't you the most beautiful bird in the world?"

The crow was startled, but the fox did not stop with that.

"You have the most beautiful feathers," he called up, "and your eye has the brightest gleam. I'll just bet that you have the most beautiful song in the world. Won't you please, please let me hear it?"

The crow was more than pleased. She opened her beak to sing — and in the process, she dropped her cheese.

"Thank you!" said the fox. He snapped up the cheese and walked happily away.

"Hey!" said the crow, but she was too late.

The moral or truth of this story is _____.

6. The Shepherd Boy

The shepherd boy had a job tending the sheep high on a lonely hill. "This is boring," the boy said. "Boring, boring, BORING."

So he put a little excitement into his life. "WOLF!" he yelled. "WOLF! WOLF! WOLF!"

There was no wolf around, but most of the village came rushing to help and the boy had company for an hour or two.

The next day was a repeat of the first. "This is BORING!" said the boy. "WOLF! WOLF! WOLF!" Again, the villagers rushed to the rescue and again the boy was happy.

The third day started the same way. The boy was stuck with sheep for company, and he was very bored. Until he looked across the field and saw a wolf running into the flock. "Oh no!" he shouted. Then, "WOLF! WOLF! WOLF!"

But this time, the villagers stayed where they were. "Fool us once," they seemed to be saying. "Fool us twice. But not three times."

The boy was not very happy. But the wolf was. He dined very well that day.

The moral or truth of this story is _____.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WCUU SCRIPT — SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

To the Co-Anchors:

Today's WCUU program talks about some different spiritual truths one might find under the Unitarian Universalist tent at an International Camp of Faith. Your job is to follow the script, read your parts, and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you are together with NUUs Analyst on camera under the tent, standing in front of a microphone.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Co-Anchor 1: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Co-Anchor 2: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name].

Co-Anchor 1: And I am [give your real or stage name]. This morning's broadcast comes to you live from the International Camp of Faith. As our regular viewers know, we have recently made a series of visits to tents erected by all of the world's great religions—the most unusual tents in all the world. In our last report from the International Camp of Faith, we said these religious tents help ward off the weather and the bad things that happen and even the blinding light of all truth, a light so hot and powerful that it might frazzle anybody who looked directly at it.

Co-Anchor 2: Yes we did. Which makes today's visit quite remarkable, because today we want to look at that blinding light of truth. We are going to find out what our Unitarian Universalist friends have to say about truth. Fortunately, we ourselves won't be blinded, because this UU tent is equipped with skylights through which people can look and search for truth without being blinded.

Co-Anchor 1: That's a funny idea anyway, [Co-Anchor 2's real or stage name], the idea of being blinded by truth. Maybe NUUs Analyst has something to say about that.

NUUs Analyst: The idea of the blinding light of truth is a traditional religious idea that if you could really see God, the sight would be so brilliant and dazzling that you would be blinded. Most UUs do not worry about that. They think truth is a wonderful thing, no matter how they can get it.

Co-Anchor 2: And what do most UUs say truth is?

NUUs Analyst: UUs talk about different kinds of truth. There is scientific truth, for example. That is something that you can prove with experiments. But the kind of truth that concerns us today is spiritual truth. That is what you feel and know deep down inside you about the answers to the big questions, like whether there is a God and other great mysteries of the universe.

Co-Anchor 1: Thank you, NUUs Analyst. Now, [Co-Anchor 2's real or stage name], let's get started. Let's ask some UUs what truth is.

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to step aside. Cue UU Christian to join Co-Anchors.]

Co-Anchor 2: Here's one now. Hi, there, UU Christian.

UU Christian: Well hi, to you, too, Co-Anchors.

UU Christian: Sure. Truth is the core of my spiritual beliefs. It is the center of what I feel about God.

Co-Anchor 2: And where do you get your truth?

[Christian UU responds briefly.]

[Director: Cue Christian UU to step aside. Cue Buddhist UU, Judaist UU, Humanist UU, Pagan/Earth-centered UU, Hindu UU, and Muslim UU in turn, to join Co-Anchors. As Co-Anchors will interview each UU and they will respond with information from Leader Resource 3, Truth Notes. When interviews are done, cue Co-Anchors.]

Co-Anchor 1: Thanks to all the UUs who talked with us about truth. Wasn't that rich, [Co-Anchor 2's real or stage name]?

Co-Anchor 2: It sure was, [Co-Anchor 1's real or stage name]. We had better ask our NUUs Analyst to sum it all up.

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to walk on camera.]

NUUs Analyst: I'm delighted to do that, Co-Anchors. Delighted, that's what I am. Here's what I have to say. You have discovered your own truth today, Co-Anchors. Call it a religious truth. You have discovered a truth about Unitarian Universalists. The truth is, they think spiritual truth is very important but it can be a different truth for each of them. UUs find their own spiritual truths, with the help of their UU community and using ideas from a variety of Sources. Some UUs find one Source has truth for them, while other UUs find truth in another Source. Some look in Hebrew or Christian scripture, some choose other sacred writings, some follow their own direct experience of mystery and awe. Some find the most truth in science and reason. Yet, they do all agree on a whole bunch of spiritual truths—like that it's important to respect one another, everybody else in the world and everybody's different spiritual truths, as long as those spiritual truths don't lead to actions that hurt other people.

Co-Anchor 1: Wow again, NUUs Analyst.

Co-Anchor 2: That was very helpful. Thank you.

NUUs Analyst: No problem. As I said before, I am delighted to help, just delighted. Want to know how delighted I am? I'm as delighted as a kangaroo in a patch of fresh grass. I'm as delighted as a mosquito at a swimming beach on a hot summer day. I'm as delighted as . . .

Co-Anchor 1: Enough, NUUs Analyst, that's enough!

Co-Anchor 2: Theme music! Theme music, please!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Co-Anchor 1: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

Co-Anchor 2: That is W-C-U-U for Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists. And this is [your real or stage name] signing off, too.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: TRUTH NOTES

Christian UU — You find spiritual truth in the UU Principles and many UU Sources. One of the most important sources of truth for you is teachings attributed to Jesus, found in Christian scripture. You believe Jesus was one of the most important teachers of truth who ever lived.

Buddhist UU — You find spiritual truth in the UU Principles and many UU Sources. Some of the most important sources of truth for you are Buddhist stories, perspectives and practices, such as meditation. You believe you can find your spiritual truth within yourself—answers to questions such as "What is the universe?" and "Why are we here?" One Buddhist belief that feels right to you is also a UU belief—that individuals must seek their own spiritual truths.

Judaist UU — You find spiritual truth in the UU Principles and many UU Sources. One of the most important sources of truth for you is the Jewish perspective that we humans are responsible to heal the world; if you believe in God, you may believe we humans have a covenant with God to make things better in the world. Stories in Hebrew scripture and Jewish writings about the big questions may shape your spiritual truth. A spiritual truth that is both UU and Jewish is that justice and how we treat one another are more important than being sure we have the right answers to big questions.

Humanist UU — You find spiritual truth in the UU Principles and many UU Sources. One of the most important Sources for you is humanist teachings. You believe it is a spiritual act to use our sense of reason and the tools of science to seek answers. You believe humans must take responsibility for our own lives and actions and should work to make the world more just. You believe our power to affect our individual and collective future is one of the most important spiritual truths.

Hindu UU — You find spiritual truth in the UU Principles and many UU Sources. One of the most important sources for you is wisdom from the religion of Hinduism. You particularly like two ideas shared by many other UUs: that all things are connected, and that individuals should personally search for truth.

Muslim UU — You find spiritual truth in the UU Principles and many UU Sources. One important source for you is the Koran, the religious book of the Muslim faith. You find that the words and lessons of the Koran are truths that inspire you to try to lead a good life.

Pagan/Earth-centered UU — You find spiritual truth in the UU Principles and many UU Sources, yet find your deepest truth in the divinity of the natural world. You believe that the Earth, humanity, and the natural cycle of life are inherently sacred, and interconnected. You live your truth by seeking harmony with nature, in all your words and deeds.

FIND OUT MORE

Gandhi and Truth

Mahatma Gandhi wrote that Truth was his real religion. He also wrote, "My Hindu instinct tells me that all religions are more or less true." On the [Mani Bhavan informational website](http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy_truth.htm) (at www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy_truth.htm), read some of Gandhi's [thoughts on Truth](http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy_truth.htm) (at www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy_truth.htm), excerpted from his writings.

The UUA's Beacon Press offers the only authorized American edition of Mohandas Gandhi's autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments in Truth*, with an introduction by Sissela Bok.

Social Lying

A [Child and Youth Health website](http://www.cyh.com/SubDefault.aspx?p=255) (at www.cyh.com/SubDefault.aspx?p=255) of the government of South Australia helps school-age children navigate the complex expectations of parents, society and conscience with regard to lying. See the topic page, [Telling Lies](http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=287&id=1485) (at www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=287&id=1485).

A 2007 paper in the International Journal of Behavioral Development, "[White lie-telling in children for politeness purposes](http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=2581483)" (at www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=2581483), reports on a study of when and how children learn to tell social lies.

SESSION 11: TOUCHING ALL

INTRODUCTION

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.
— John Muir

Big Question: How am I connected with everything else?

Sixth graders stand at the brink of adolescence, finding new relationships, new challenges and a new sense of the self's place in the universe. This session makes the conceptual UU "interconnected web of all existence" concrete and meaningful for them. The youth consider their place in the many spheres that comprise their expanding lives. They learn about Henry Bergh, founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a Unitarian who created a new way for humans to connect respectfully with other species. A Faith in Action activity focused on animal welfare invites sixth graders to make a tangible connection on the web of life. In WCUU, youth consider that being well-connected means accepting responsible membership in community. The final activity asks youth to express their ideas about connection on a tee shirt design.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "How am I connected with everything else?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses
- Help youth discover to what they are connected
- Explore the Unitarian Universalist image of the web of all existence and engage youth to reflect on their own place within the web.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Strengthen their communal connections
- Understand how a sense of belonging is linked to a sense of responsibility

- Reflect on human connection to one another and to all life
- Learn about Henry Bergh, Unitarian founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Explore Unitarian Universalist statements about connection.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Henry Bergh	7
Activity 2: Concentric Circles	15
Activity 3: WCUU — Good Connections	20
Activity 4: WIT Time — Tee Shirt Design	10
Faith in Action: Working Together in Community	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — The Earth Is Our Mother	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Making Message Tee Shirts	45
Alternate Activity 5: Connection Fruit Basket	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

With everything set to go, carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Consider the connective nature of spirituality. In spiritual moments, we connect with deepest self, with other, with ultimate other, with Great Mystery. Smile in the knowledge that simply joining your youth in their search of life's mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant (Session 1) or revised covenant (Session 9)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant (Session 1 and/or Session 9)
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and post a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants to make their own.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.

- Optional: Post the group covenant.
- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to (make and) wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the paper back in the bag or box. Or, if the group decided during Session 8 (Activity 1) to change how the Kid for the Day is selected, follow the new procedure now.

If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. Explain that you use this same ritual—chalice lighting, followed by silence—at each session.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted a covenant made by the group in Session 1, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process any suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—How am I connected with everything else?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice. Move the chalice table aside as necessary to allow movement in the room.

Set aside the "Today's Big Question" sign and the Kid for the Day bag or box, with the names and extra pieces of card stock, for re-use.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — HENRY BERGH (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[Henry Bergh](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out the story.

Description of Activity

Read the story aloud. Then ask:

- Do you agree with Henry Bergh that people have a responsibility to treat animals well?
- Are animal rights as important as human rights? Is it okay for people to worry more about their connections with other people than they do about their connections with animals?
- Does the seventh UU Principle say enough about how humans should treat other species? Does it say anything at all? Should we have a new Principle that talks specifically about how to treat animals? If so, what should it say?
- Is the seventh Principle only talking about a human/animal connection? What about human/human? Is there a human/plant connection or a human/Earth or human/Universe connection?

ACTIVITY 2: CONCENTRIC CIRCLES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Washable fine-point color markers
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Circle Possibilities
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , Connection Possibilities
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#)

(included in this document) or a poster in your meeting space)

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how you will form groups. If you plan to give each group both of the leader resources, make copies.

Description of Activity

In this activity, participants draw concentric circles indicating the various circles and spheres within which they live. To these circles they add radii showing how they connect with the circles and spheres beyond themselves. The results look like spider webs to reinforce the meaning of the seventh UU Principle.

Explain that "concentric circles" means one circle inside another. Illustrate the point on newsprint. Put a dot in the center of the circle you have drawn and say, "Imagine that this dot is you. You are standing inside concentric circles. The first circle might be your family." (Draw a small circle around the dot.) "The second, wider circle might include your friends." (Draw a second circle around the first.) "And so on, one circle around the other, as far as you can imagine."

Divide participants into groups of three or four. Give each small group a sheet of newsprint and several markers. Invite them to start with a dot or an X in the middle to represent a single person (like one of them), then draw a series of concentric circles around the point to represent some of the groups to which they belong, such as family, schools, clubs and organizations, their community, state, nation, etc. and label each circle with very small letters. (Demonstrate the lettering on the newsprint.)

You may offer Leader Resource 1, Circle Possibilities; invite the youth to use these ideas along with their own. After about five minutes, ask the groups to add some lines to show how the person in the center connects to everything else. They can add as many such lines as they want, spacing them more or less evenly around the circles and drawing them out to the circle where they might logically go. For example, they might draw a straight line from the center to the family circle, and write the word "love" along the line; "taking care of" might go to a world or environment circle, or somewhere in a family circle. Demonstrate on your newsprint.

You might provide Leader Resource 2.

When the small groups have finished their drawings or time is running out, call them together to compare results.

- How are the drawings the same and how are they different?

- What do they look like? (If nobody suggests "webs" or "spider webs," do so yourself, and ask if what the idea of webs has to do with Unitarian Universalism. Point out, if no youth does so, that the seventh UU Principle speaks of "the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." Many Unitarian Universalists think of a web when they think of the way we are all connected to each other and everything else in the whole universe.
- Read the seventh Principle aloud, and note that it says everybody should "respect" the interdependent web. Ask what "interdependent" means. Note that the word means that all parts of the web or all parts of existence depend on each other. Ask if youth agree with that idea. How do other parts of the web depend on them? How do they depend on other parts?
- How does the idea of responsibility fit into the seventh Principle? How does "responsibility for" connect with "belonging to" any of the concentric circles?
- Human beings are social animals, like all primates. What is the importance of belonging to groups for social animals? Are there people who don't belong to any groups at all? If so, what do you think that feels like?
- How can we make people feel connected to a group? Think of examples from your own life. How do you know what concentric circles and lines of connection to draw?
- How does your UU congregation connect people, help them feel they belong?
- Have you ever felt connected to a group that included members who denied that you belonged? What did that feel like? What does our UU faith have to say about who belongs and who doesn't?

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — GOOD CONNECTIONS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — Good Connections

- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece (minutes)
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling... " followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Copy Leader Resource 3 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has eight On-Air people: an Anchor, a NUUs Analyst, a UU Guru, and five actors to play UUs at different stages of life. The On-Air people will all need scripts. Studio Crew can include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor, and production assistants.
- Make name cards for Lost Soul, Little Kid, Sixth Grade Kid, Teen Kid, and Adult or set our supplies for the youth to make their own.

Description of Activity

Participants present a televised WCUU segment involving eight On-Air People—Anchor, a NUUs Analyst, Lost Soul, Little Kid, Sixth Grade Kid, Teen Kid, Adult, and UU Guru. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a

lighting director, a script supervisor, and production assistants.

Assign roles, using volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be the Anchor or the NUUs Analyst. If you do not have enough youth for all the On-Air people, ask some youth to play more than one part.

Give participants who will follow the script a moment to look it over. Review the script with the youth if any may have limited reading skills.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

After the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how typical UUs respond to today's Big Question: How am I connected to everything else? Do they think non-UU viewers would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing the broadcast? Did the broadcast give your participants any new ideas about their connection to everything else? Point out that in a positive sense, every UU is like the character Lost Soul; UUs typically seek truth and answers by visiting a number of different Sources.

Including All Participants

Arrange your WCUU activity with respect for any participant limitations. If some youth have limited reading skills, review the script in advance of its use, with them or perhaps the whole group. If some youth must remain seated during the broadcast, consider having all remain seated.

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — TEE SHIRT DESIGN (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- 8.5" X 11" sheets of paper
- Color pencils and/or markers

Preparation for Activity

- If you will have time after this activity (approximately 45 additional minutes), and youth want to put their designs on real tee shirts, do the Preparation for Activity steps in Alternate Activity 4, Making Message Tee Shirts.

Description of Activity

Announce that it is Wit Time, when each youth says "What I Think"— this time by designing personal tee

shirts with their own Unitarian Universalist messages about the connection of people to everything else.

Distribute the handout and pencils and/or markers. Ask youth to design a tee shirt that shows how they in particular, UUs together or people in general can and should connect with the rest of the Universe. Say they can use any words or graphic designs they like. Remind them that earlier they made concentric circles showing how they are connected beyond themselves (Activity 2), heard the story of Henry Bergh's work with animals and talked about how connection creates community and requires responsible action. Which ideas have spoken strongly to them? What ideas about connection do they most connect with? For example, how we connect with and treat animals, a particular meaningful connection with other people or an idea about a particular responsibility to people or other living things with which we are connected. Perhaps they will start with a slogan, perhaps a drawing; it is up to them.

Allow youth a moment or two to begin. If some seem to be struggling for ideas, you might suggest as starting points these words: like, love, help, support, care, Earth, environment, responsibility, UUs believe, dependence and interdependence. Appropriate illustrations to use might be a web, a vegetable garden, hearts, hands linked with other hands or hands linked with paws.

When the creations are complete, let youth share their efforts with the group. Consider displaying the designs where others using the room can see them. If you plan to have youth use the designs to make real tee shirts (Alternate Activity 4), collect the designs and put them with the other Alternate Activity 4 materials.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asks "How am I connected with everything else?" Our story about Henry Bergh told about a man who took his

responsibility to other species in the web very seriously. We drew concentric circles to show our many connections with just about everything else in the universe. These circles illustrated our seventh UU Principle. We saw how various parts of the web of life depend on each other. Today's WCUU showed what many UUs think about connection, community and responsibility. We put some of our ideas about connection into our tee shirt designs.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: WORKING TOGETHER IN COMMUNITY

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Determine a congregational committee, such as Social Justice, that might partner with the Riddle and Mystery group on project which will involve the full congregation. Find the committee chair and ask that person if the youth may propose a joint project at the committee's next meeting.
- Post a sheet of blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Invite youth to engage your congregational community in a project that honors connections among all life that shares Earth. If the group has an ongoing Faith in Action project, broaden it to include the full congregation. To highlight this session's theme, consider an effort on behalf of stray animals locally or endangered species globally.

Help the youth plan a presentation to the congregation's Justice or Social Action Committee to gain their support to involve the congregation in a Faith in Action project. Write the principal points on newsprint. Include concrete ideas such as holding an educational workshop at your congregation, adding the action to a worship service or inviting a guest speaker to a potluck/presentation. (Consider inviting a youth who has been affected by the

justice issue being addressed.) Practice the presentation. Arrange for as many youth as possible to join in making the presentation at the committee's next meeting. Gather props or handouts to strengthen the presentation.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session. How was the mix of discussion and action? Are you continuing to find ways to involve all youth fully in sessions despite any limitations they might have? Does the group have new behavioral issues you need to address?

Have you helped develop participants' sense of connection and responsibility to all parts of the web of all existence? Has the group found a Faith in Action project that excites them? If not, how might you change direction?

Session 12 asks "What should I do with my life?" Reflect on your own answers in the days ahead if you will lead Session 12.

TAKING IT HOME

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.
— John Muir

Talk about the quote. Do you agree with it? Can you think of anything that is not connected to something else in some way? Note that John Muir was a well known American naturalist and conservationist who lived from 1838 to 1914.

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "How am I connected with everything else?" We heard the story of Henry Bergh, a famous Unitarian who felt so strongly connected to animals that he started the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He also started the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, but that is another story. We talked about our connections to the whole universe, and drew concentric circles to show how connections spread out from each of us to family and community to nation and to the whole universe. When we drew some lines out from ourselves, the circles began to look like a web, with us in the center connected to everything else. In WCUU, we talked about connections, community and responsibility. Then we designed tee shirts to show our own ideas about connection.

REFLECT ON YOUR BELIEFS

Write some poems about how you are connected with something very far away—like the moon, or the Amazon River or a kangaroo in Australia. The poems can be silly and fun or very serious.

SHARED SEARCH

Play a connection game with your friends or family. Count the people you connect with in any one day. Include anyone you communicate with by phone or computer, in person... everybody you can think of. Compare the totals.

MAKE A RECONNECTION

Reconnect to somebody you have not seen for a long time. Maybe they moved away, or just got busy. Find out where they are and phone them to say hello or send an email or a postcard. Or, reconnect with a place you used to love but have not visited for some time. Think about how hard it would be to stay connected to every person you ever meet and every place you ever visit.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Ask somebody else to take a picture of you connecting with someone or something in one of your concentric circles. Tell the person taking the picture why this connection is important to you.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION — BEING RESPONSIBLE

Find a new way to be responsible for helping the environment that connects everything and everybody. Maybe it is as simple as helping clean up part of the Earth near your home. Maybe you will decide to eat more local foods to help reduce the expense and pollution of importing foods to your area.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve participants' Big Questions notebooks begun in Session 1.
- Set out supplies for any new participants to start an individual notebook.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide any new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "How am I connected with everything else?" Say they can write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — THE EARTH IS OUR MOTHER (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "The Earth Is Our Mother," Hymn 1073 in *Singing the Journey*—by reading the words, singing together or playing a recording. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Remind/tell the group that Unitarian Universalists express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "The Earth Is Our Mother." Point out that the song comes from the Native American tradition, an Earth-centered tradition and thus one of the Sources of Unitarian Universalism. Ask if participants agree with the song. Do they feel that Unitarian Universalists do enough to take care of Mother Earth? How about people in general?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

What responsibility do UUs have to mosquitoes?

Extend discussion with these additional questions:

- Does thinking about the balance of nature change your answer in any way?
- Do any species depend on mosquitoes as food? (Fish, birds, bats, frogs, toads and some plants are among the mosquito's many predators.)
- Who or what should decide how many mosquitoes there are—people? Nature? God? Birds? A combination of these things?
- Who or what should decide how many dogs there are? Or frogs? Or people?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: MAKING MESSAGE TEE SHIRTS (45 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape
- Plain tee shirts, one for each youth plus a few extra (50 percent/50 percent cotton/synthetic or 100 percent synthetic)
- Fabric markers in a variety of colors
- Tee shirt designs youth made in Activity 4, WIT Time — Tee Shirt Design
- Old newspapers
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Purchase tee shirts and fabric markers. It is better to buy shirts that may be too big than ones that may be too small.

- Make sure the meeting space has enough clean, flat work table area for all youth to spread tee shirts flat.
- Retrieve the tee shirt designs youth made in Activity 4.
- Optional: Write the instructions on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Have youth decorate real tee shirts using designs they made in Activity 4, WIT Time — Tee Shirt Design.

Distribute the designs youth have made. Invite any youth who have not created a design to do so now, and give them handouts and pencils/markers.

Explain the instructions:

1. Spread the tee shirt out, flat and wrinkle-free, on the work surface.
2. Place a few sheets of newspaper inside the tee shirt so fabric markers will not bleed through.
3. Tape down the edges of the shirt to keep the fabric tight and wrinkle-free.
4. If you wish, outline your design with black marker on a white paper that you put inside the tee shirt so you can see it through the cloth.
5. Use fabric markers to apply your design to the tee shirt. Work carefully. Draw slowly so the markers saturate the cloth.
6. Give the cloth plenty of time to dry.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: CONNECTION FRUIT BASKET (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Set up a circle of chairs for the number of participants, minus one.

Description of Activity

Have participants explore ways they connect with one another, using a game of fruit basket.

To play "regular" Fruit Basket, invite the group to sit in chairs in a circle, except for one person who will be "It" and stand in the center. "It" calls out a word or a phrase that applies to "It," and everybody else to whom the word or phrase applies jumps up and scrambles, along with "It," to sit in an empty chair. The person left standing becomes the new "It" and calls out a new word or phrase. Anybody leaving a chair must find a new one to sit in.

In Connection Fruit Basket, "It" must chose a word or phrase showing how two or more people in the game may connect with each other. For example, "It" might say "I live on Bridge Street" or "I go to X school" and all others who live on Bridge Street or attend the same school respond. This helps youth discover connections among them. "I like" phrases are good, because they reveal similar interests that individuals share but may not know about. Connection fruit basket is particularly good for groups whose participants do not know each other well.

After playing, ask youth if they discovered connections they did not previously know existed. How does this make them feel?

Including All Participants

If physical limitations prevent some participants from jumping up and running to empty chairs, find another way to share common interests. One possibility is simply to have each person in turn say "I like to _____," and letting others who like the same thing say, "Me, too."

STORY: HENRY BERGH

Adapted from "The Story of Henry Bergh and the First Humane Society" in the curriculum *Holidays and Holy Days* by Charlene Brotman and Barbara Marshfield (Brotman Marsh-Field Curriculums). Copyright 1983. Used by permission.

Sometimes, anger can be a good thing. Henry Bergh's anger was.

Bergh was a Unitarian who lived in the 1800s. He was also the man who founded the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and it was his anger about the way people often treated animals which got him started.

Bergh was a rich man who liked wearing silk hats and fancy vests. He loved the opera, and he traveled a lot in Europe. When he was 50, President Abraham Lincoln asked him to go to Russia as a diplomat. There, Bergh saw a man whipping a horse. He asked a policeman to stop the beating, but the policeman said the man owned the horse and could do anything he wanted to it. People who saw Bergh trying to interfere gathered around and shook their fists at him. Bergh had to leave, but he remembered what had happened.

He also remembered what he had seen at home in America—overworked and beaten horses, dog pits where people bet on which dogs would kill the others, fights to the death between roosters or between bulldogs and bears, and pigeon shoots where birds were blinded in one eye so they would fly around crazily while wealthy hunters tried to shoot them.

After leaving Russia, Bergh went to England, where he met the president of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This organization had the power to stop people from abusing animals. Bergh realized he could start a group like it in the United States. In 1866, he did just that—he created the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—the ASPCA.

Bergh helped New York State pass a law making abuse of animals illegal. But he did not stop there. As president of the ASPCA, the city and state of New York gave him power to arrest people and take them to court. Soon he

seemed to be everywhere at once, investigating cruelty, closing down dog pits and rooster fights, making dairy farmers clean up their barns. His battle to stop cruelty to animals became known as "Bergh's War."

Bergh made a lot of people angry right back at him. They called him "The Great Meddler," drew nasty cartoons about him and sent threatening letters with skulls and crossbones. One man attacked Bergh with an iron bar, but swung and missed. Other men threw fish heads and chicken guts at him.

But Bergh did not stop. When people gathered around while he was making an arrest on the street, Bergh preached kindness. He felt it would be a greater triumph to plant kindness in people's hearts than to build a new railroad across America, as some other men were then doing.

The ASPCA was active, but it was poor. Then an old man sent for Bergh. When Bergh entered the shabby little home, the old man said, "I've been reading about you in the papers. I like what you are doing for animals. I am ill, and I know I am dying. I'm going to leave everything in my will to the ASPCA."

Bergh thanked the old man, without expecting his gift to be of much help. But after the man died, Bergh found out he had been a millionaire who had lived as a miser. Now the ASPCA could move out of a small rental room into a building of its own. Now it could grow.

Within five years, Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had sprung up in 19 states and Canada.

One day Henry Bergh learned about a case of cruelty involving a small girl instead of an animal. He rescued her, and then, with other leaders, helped start the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. This was the first time people in the United States had organized to protect children.

By the time Bergh died, the meddling his anger had driven him to do had accomplished great things. People wrote poems about him and built monuments to him. The best monuments to him are not statues. They are organizations and volunteers all over the world that protect children and animals—some right near here.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

How am I connected with everything else?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: CIRCLE POSSIBILITIES

Family

Circle of friends

People we know

Organizations we belong to (bands, dance troupes, sports team, our congregation, neighborhood association, social justice group, etc.)

Town

State

Country

Continent

Environment

World

Galaxy

Universe

Whatever is beyond the Universe (e.g., God/Mystery/Spirit)

LEADER RESOURCE 2: CONNECTION POSSIBILITIES

Liking

Loving

Taking care of (like the environment)

Caring about (as with friends)

Buying

Selling

Sharing

Trading

Listening

Telling

Enjoying

Praying

Playing with

Working

LEADER RESOURCE 3: WCUU SCRIPT — GOOD CONNECTIONS

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU program is a news feature about how a lost soul named Lost Soul finds happiness. Your job is to follow the script, read your part and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you are alone, sitting or standing in front of a microphone.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name], and what a show we have for you today. It's a news feature about how Lost Soul found a happy new life. When I first heard the story from one of our roving reporters, I rushed out to interview Lost Soul. I found Lost Soul in an unlikely place—washing dishes in the sink of a Unitarian Universalist congregation. Let's see that clip now.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker the lights briefly. Cue Lost Soul to stand next to Anchor, pretending to wash dishes.]

Anchor: Hello, there Lost Soul. I hear you have a great story to tell.

Lost Soul: Sure do.

Anchor: Let's hear it from the top.

Lost Soul: Okay. There I was, miserable me. Nothing was right for me. No money, no job, no chance of getting one. And I knew why—no connections. People say you need good connections, the right connections, to get ahead, and that's what I wanted.

Anchor: So how does somebody get the right connections?

Lost Soul: That's what I wanted to know. I decided to walk down the street and ask the first happy-looking people I met.

Anchor: And?

Lost Soul: The first one I met was Little Kid. "Okay," I said. "I'll ask Little Kid."

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Anchor to step out and Little Kid to step into the set. Cue Lost Soul to stop washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Lost Soul.]

Lost Soul: Hey, there, Little Kid. You look happy. Got a good life?

Little Kid: Yes, except when I am talking to strangers.

Lost Soul: But I'm Lost Soul, and I need help. You got any good connections?

Little Kid: Sure. I'm connected to my family. We all love each other. We support each other. Everything's cool all the time. I've got great connections.

Lost Soul: So how can I get good connections? How can I get happy?

Little Kid: I have no idea. I'm just Little Kid. But everybody has a family, so everybody has connections. But look, I have to go. I'm not supposed to talk to strangers.

Lost Soul: Well, thanks for your help.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Little Kid to step out, Anchor to step back in, and Lost Soul to resume washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Anchor.]

Anchor: I guess that was a start. So what happened next?

Lost Soul: I met Sixth Grade Kid.

Anchor: So tell us about it.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Anchor to step out and Sixth Grade Kid to step into the set. Cue Lost Soul to stop washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Lost Soul.]

Lost Soul: Hey Kid!

Sixth Grade Kid: Can I help you?

Lost Soul: Yes. I'm Lost, and I've got no connections. You look happy as a clam. Does that mean you have connections?

Sixth Grade Kid: Of course I have connections. Everybody has connections. I learned that in science class.

Lost Soul: Maybe I should have stayed in school. What did they teach you about connections?

Sixth Grade Kid: Everything and everybody is connected from the Big Bang on. That was the beginning, see, this great Big Bang. Then dust flew all over the place and swirled around and in a whole bunch of years the Big Bang turned into the whole big cosmos, the Universe, with all the planets and stuff and all the stars and the sun and you and me and we're all connected.

Lost Soul: Just like that. I guess so. Maybe I am connected, just like that. But my connections keep slipping away. How can I stay connected?

Sixth Grade Kid: How should I know? I'm just Sixth Grade Kid. Maybe you have to work at it. That's what everybody tells me whenever I'm having trouble with something. You've gotta work at it.

Lost Soul: Okay, well thanks for your time.

Sixth Grade Kid: No problem.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Sixth Grade Kid to step out, Anchor to step back in, and Lost Soul to resume washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Anchor.]

Anchor: So, did you work on it?

Lost Soul: No. I didn't know how. So I talked to the next person I saw. That was Teen Kid.

Anchor: And?

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Anchor to step out and Teen Kid to step into the set. Cue Lost Soul to stop washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Lost Soul.]

Lost Soul: Hi, Teen. Got a minute?

Teen Kid: Yup. And you look like you can use it.

Lost Soul: I'm looking for a secret, the secret of good connections. I know I'm connected to this and that and everything else, but the connections aren't any good. How do I make them better?

Teen Kid: That's easy. The answer is love.

Lost Soul: Love? That's easy enough for you to say. But you are a teen, Teen Kid. Teenagers think about lovey-dovey stuff all the time.

Teen Kid: That's a stereotype, Lost Soul. Teens think about a whole lot more than that.

Lost Soul: So love is where it's at?

Teen Kid: Right! But not romantic love. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about bigger love than that, the love that is all over the place. You know, universal love.

Lost Soul: But where does that universal love come from?

Teen Kid: I'm not so sure. I'm just a Teen Kid. I just know you have to have it. I also know I'm running late, so I have to go.

Lost Soul: Okay. And many thanks.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Teen Kid to step out, Anchor to step back in, and Lost Soul to resume washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Anchor.]

Anchor: Were you feeling better by this time, Lost Soul?

Lost Soul: Yes, I sure was. But now I wanted to know more about universal love and where it comes from.

Anchor: So did you ask somebody else?

Lost Soul: Yes. The next person I met was Adult.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Anchor to step out and Adult to step into the set. Cue Lost Soul to stop washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Lost Soul.]

Adult: Wow! Where did you come from? First I'm standing here alone, and suddenly there you are!

Lost Soul: Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you. I'm Lost Soul and I'm getting a little bit found, but I still have a question.

Adult: So try me.

Lost Soul: It's about universal love. Are you up to that?

Adult: Sure. That's the love you feel when you look at the sky and say, "I love the moon, I love the stars, I love the whole big sky at night." It's the sort of love you feel when you wake up in the morning and you love being alive for another day. It's the sort of love you feel for all of life, for all the world and all the whole cosmos. Some folks call it agape [pronounced ah-GAH-pay] love.

Lost Soul: Right. But where does it come from?

Adult: It comes from me and it comes from you. That's where it comes from. At least that's what I think. That's my humanistic belief.

Lost Soul: Well this all sounds okay, but what if I don't have any love coming out of me?

Adult: I can guess at the answer to that, Lost Soul. My guess is you aren't receiving the love around you. If you don't let yourself receive, you have nothing to give. Open up and let the love come in, and then it will start going out, too. There's love all around you. That's what community is all about.

Lost Soul: Community?

Adult: Sure. Community. That's people being together and supporting each other. Working together. Caring about each other. Loving each other. And communities are all over the place. There are city communities and work communities and social communities and school communities and religious communities and more. I bet you're in one or two of 'em right now.

Lost Soul: Wow. I never thought about that. Thank you so much.

Adult: You are very welcome.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Adult to step out, Anchor to step back in, and Lost Soul to resume washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Anchor.]

Anchor: So you solved your problem!

Lost Soul: Well almost. Something was still missing. I was just beginning to think I knew what it was, when in came UU Guru.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue Anchor to step out and Lost Soul to stop washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue UU Guru to step in and surprise Lost Soul.]

Lost Soul: Hello, there, who are you?

UU Guru: UU Guru.

Lost Soul: Here's the thing. I started out wondering how to get the right connections. Then I began hearing that everybody is connected anyway, so we all have right connections. We all have love, too, or we should have, because it takes love to hold the connections together. I know this is all true, because it feels just right inside me, but something seems to be missing still, something I need to really have good connections.

UU Guru: You are right about that. What's missing is responsibility. That is the key to being part of any community. You share love to hold it together, but also responsibility. When everybody shares responsibility for their community, the community goes beautifully. Everyone feels love for each other, and everyone has wonderful connections.

Lost Soul: But does that ever really work?

UU Guru: It works in my UU community. At least it works most of the time. Nobody is perfect, but we do our best, and we have a great time trying to do better than that.

Lost Soul: Wow! It sounds great. Maybe I should try a UU community.

UU Guru: Then come along with me. I am heading to a potluck supper, and you can come as my guest. You even get to try my famous rhubarb-topped sauerkraut.

Lost Soul: Er, well, I'm not very hungry, but I'll come along.

[Director: Cue Floor Director to flicker lights. Cue UU Guru to step out, Anchor to step in and Lost Soul to resume washing dishes. Bring lights back up. Cue Anchor.]

Anchor: So that's how you wound up here, washing dishes?

Lost Soul: Right. The potluck was great. There was a lot of love... and a lot of food. I made some brand new connections with great people.

Anchor: Great people who made you wash the dishes?

Lost Soul: Nobody made me. That was my idea. I like this community and if I want to be part of it, I want to help it be a success. And you know what? I'm having a great time. Tomorrow I'm coming to the worship service and the sermon is going to be about connecting with the Great Mystery. Isn't that remarkable?

Anchor: It surely is. Thank you, Lost Soul. Thank you for sharing your story, and the best of good luck to you. And now it's back to the WCUU studio.

[Director: Cue Lost Soul to step out. Cue Camera Operator to focus only on Anchor as Anchor moves back to studio.]

Anchor: So that is the heartwarming story of Lost Soul's journey from despair to dirty dishes. Joining me now to talk about that journey is our wonderful, talented, and wise NUUs Analyst.

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to join Anchor on camera. Cue Camera Operator to show both of them.]

NUUs Analyst: That was a great story, [give Anchor's real or stage name].

Anchor: Yes, it was. But tell us NUUs Analyst. Did Lost Soul really discover the truth about making connections?

NUUs Analyst: Oh, yes. Lost Soul also discovered what most Unitarian Universalists believe about connections: Everything and everybody is connected, from the Big Bang on. We are connected to each other and to the stars. We are connected from the deepest points within us. Love is what cements our connections and holds them together, the love we humans all give and receive, the love that unites us with all. Combine the connections and love and you get community. Add responsibility and you get great community—not just UU community but broader community, national community, world community, someday even universal community.

Anchor: I guess that sums it up.

NUUs Analyst: I can sum it up even better than that. I can sum it up with the seventh UU Principle: "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

Anchor: Well done. Thank you, NUUs Analyst.

NUUs Analyst: Wait a minute, Anchor. Speaking of connections, did I ever tell you about mine? I traced my family tree recently, and I am connected all the way back to the time of Cleopatra! That's a whole lot of generations! I have ancestors going way, way back. Want me to draw a diagram for our viewing audience?

Anchor: No thanks, NUUs Analyst. I think it is safe to say everyone has ancestors way, way back, or else we would not be here. It's time to sign off. We'll be back next week for a wonderful new show. Don't miss it!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

FIND OUT MORE

Henry Bergh

Read the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography online article on [Henry Bergh](#), by Mark Ferguson. At the bottom of the article, find links to more information.

The website of the [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#) (at www.aspca.org/about-us/about-the-aspca.html) describes the organization's mission, current work and history, including biographical information about [Henry Bergh](#) (at www.aspca.org/about-us/history.html).

Find a [1967 article on Bergh](#) (at <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/great-meddler>), "The Great Meddler" by Gerald Carson, on the website of American Heritage Magazine.

Communities

In this session, youth identify the communities to which they belong, such as family, neighborhood or town, your congregation, school, sports team, group of friends or

even the global community. Ground your own definition of "community" before the session.

- Look at a [theoretical article by Mark K. Smith](#) (at www.infed.org/community/community.htm) in the encyclopedia of informal education which poses the question "What is community and why should educators be concerned with it?" The article suggests "community can be approached as a value, and as such it may well be used to bring together a number of elements, for example, solidarity, commitment, mutuality and trust."
- Robert Putnam's book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) illuminates contemporary social disconnection and suggests ways we can become better connected in our communities. His subsequent book, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), co-authored with Lewis Feldstein highlights models of community cohesion and spirit across the U.S.

SESSION 12: THE FUTURE AND ME

INTRODUCTION

We will be known forever by the tracks we leave.
— Native American (Dakota) proverb

Big Question: What should I do with my life?

Almost every sixth grader has wondered about their future. This session frames their wonderings as a Big Question which seeks a deeper answer than the right career to pursue. Youth learn how Unitarian Universalism can guide them toward intentional decision making based on their developing values. This session assures youth that they will find direction from a variety of sources including their inner selves, the examples and advice of trusted adults and the Principles affirmed by our faith.

The session takes participants ahead to their own 100th birthday parties for an imaginary look back at what they might have done with their lives. The story, "The Stonecutter," describes one man's circular and ultimately successful attempt to gain contentment. In WCUU, an advice panel offers Unitarian Universalist answers to youths' questions about shaping their lives. (Optional: Use Leader Resource 5, Outstanding UUs, to fill the advice panel with up to six prominent individuals from Unitarian Universalist history.) In WIT Time, participants consider how they can make their "little light shine" in the days and years ahead.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "What should I do with my life?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses
- Introduce personal choice and decision-making as integral aspects of life
- Demonstrate guidelines, based in Unitarian Universalism, which youth can use to make and evaluate their plans
- Present Unitarian Universalist ideas about life plans and accomplishments
- Introduce the concept of personal calling
- Explore the validity of happiness as a life goal.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Think about their own long-range and short-term goals and plans
- Expand their understanding of and skill at making decisions
- Consider a lesson learned by a stonecutter seeking happiness
- Identify who can best help them make life choices
- Learn how to find and use Unitarian Universalist guidance in making life plans
- Plan ways to make their own "little light shine."

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Happy Hundredth	12
Activity 2: Story — The Stonecutter	5
Activity 3: WCUU — Advice Panel	20
Activity 4: WIT Time — My Little Light	15
Faith in Action: Talking to Leaders	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Songs — Just as Long as I Have Breath and Love Will Guide Us	10
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Story — Oh, the Places You'll Go	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

With everything set to go, carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Consider the forward motion of a human life from birth to death and how we each help write the story between. You can help young UUs explore the opportunities and tools they have to set important goals and make plans for what they will do with their lives. Know that simply joining youth in their exploration of life and its mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant (Session 1) or revised covenant (Session 9)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant (Session 1 and/or Session 9)
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and post a sheet of blank newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants to make their own.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening. Obtain and test music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.

- Optional: Post the group covenant.
- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to (make and) wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the paper back in the bag or box. Or, if the group decided during Session 8 (Activity 1) to change how the Kid for the Day is selected, follow the new procedure now.

If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. Explain that you use this same ritual—chalice lighting, followed by silence—at each session.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted a covenant made by the group in Session 1, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process any suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—What should I do with my life?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice. Move the chalice table aside as necessary to allow movement in the room.

Set aside the "Today's Big Question" sign and the Kid for the Day bag or box, with the names and extra pieces of card stock, for re-use.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: HAPPY HUNDRETH (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tingsha chimes or other gentle sound instrument
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Guiding Lights
- Paper clips
- Fine-point markers
- Tape
- Optional: Snacks and other supplies appropriate for a birthday party

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how you will form groups of three or four and estimate how many small groups there will be.
- Make a copy of Leader Resource 1 for each small group plus one for yourself. Cut each copy so each guiding light is on a separate slip of paper. Paper-clip each stack of slips together, in random order.
- Optional: If you plan to dramatize the activity as a birthday party, set out decorations, snacks and supplies.

Description of Activity

This is a three-part activity. In Part 1, participants think ahead to their 100th birthday and imagine how the world will have changed and what they will have done with their lives. In Part 2, they prioritize people, organizations, goals and other forces to guide them along 100 years of life. In Part 3, the group considers the idea of "calling."

Part 1. Ask participants to prepare for a meditative reflection. Invite them to sit comfortably and, if they wish, to close their eyes. Say you will ask them to gaze into the future to answer three questions, and you will sound the tingshas to signal the beginning and end of each meditative moment. Sound the tingshas to begin the meditation and say:

Think ahead more than 80 years. Imagine that you are soon to turn 100 years old. At the sound of the tingshas, imagine that this is your 100th birthday. In your mind, look out a window or around the room where you happen to be on your 100th birthday; focus on one thing that is really different than what we know today.

Wait a few moments, then sound the tingshas again. Ask what they imagined that will be different on their 100th birthdays. After some sharing, ask participants to close their eyes again and sound the tingshas. Say:

Imagine one important thing you will have done with your life between now and your 100th birthday. Of course, it is impossible to really know at your age what you might do over the next 80-plus years. Think about things you enjoy now that you may still like to do when you are older, or things you have thought you might like to do when you are old enough. Just imagine.

Wait a moment, then sound the tingshas. Invite brief sharing.

Repeat the process a third time, saying, "Imagine one person or thing that has helped guide you along the way to your one hundredth birthday." Invite sharing.

Part 2. Invite the group to think more about their life guides with another activity. Display one set of guiding lights to the group. Point out that each item names a person, organization or other force that might help guide a person as they decide what to do with their lives. You might say:

We all have moments when it is difficult to know what we should do next. So now we are going to decide who or what some of our best guides might be.

Form small groups. Distribute the packets of guiding lights you have prepared. Invite the groups to rank their guiding lights from most to least important and useful. If they cannot decide between two or more guiding lights, they may place them side by side. Say:

When your group is satisfied you have your guiding lights in the right order, tape them together.

When all have finished, bring the groups together. Have them hold up their taped guiding lights to compare results. Do all agree? What were their reasons for their decisions? Point out there is no right way to respond to this challenge. People receive help from many different guiding lights in many different ways in life. What is important today is thinking about some guides we may use in the future.

Part 3. Ask if participants have heard of people who feel a "calling" to do something. Explain the concept:

Some people feel "called" to a specific profession or purpose in their lives. Ministers, for example, often speak of "being called" to the ministry. Many would say that the "calling" is a feeling deep inside them that they should be ministers. But the idea of calling is not limited to the ministry. People can feel called to other professions, as well — to teaching, or medicine, or working with animals, for example. Some people know from a very young age "what they want to be when they grow up." Some later change their minds, but others do not.

Ask if any of them are quite sure what they wish to do with their lives. Ask also if they know people who have felt called to do or be something. Do they hope that someday they will feel called to do something special and specific with their lives? Or would they rather just decide, step by step, as they go along?

Including All Participants

If you will serve snacks, first find out about any food allergies or restrictions in the group. Obtain "birthday" foods everyone can eat.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE STONECUTTER (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[The Stonecutter](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out the story.

Description of Activity

Read the story aloud. Then ask:

- Have you ever wanted anything badly, then found when you got it that you were just as happy without it... or that you wanted something else more?
- What did the stonecutter really want? Did he want power and finally realize he had the most power as a stonecutter? Or, did he really, deep inside, want to be content?
- Is personal happiness a reasonable goal to shape your life around?

Say, in your own words:

Most of us have to make many decisions in our lives. For the stonecutter, it was pretty easy—once he wished to become something new, he

got his wish. In real life, what would you have to do to accomplish your goals?

Do you think becoming rich is a good goal to shape your decisions in life? Would the results make you feel fulfilled and happy?

What other goals might be good ones to help you shape decisions in your life?

Explain that when you have thought about and set important goals for yourself or when you feel a calling from deep inside to do or be something, decisions about what you should do with your life can be clearer. Ask:

- Do you think the stonecutter in the story had a calling to be or do something? In other words, was there something he really had to be or do in his life just because of who he really was, deep inside?

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — ADVICE PANEL (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- Timepiece (minutes)
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — Advice Panel
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , UU Guest Panelists
- [Leader Resource 4](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Life Questions
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1](#), [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)
- Optional: [Leader Resource 5](#) (included in this document) , Outstanding UUs
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- Arrange furniture so as many panelists as you will have can face the Anchor and a studio audience. Set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling..." followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Copy Leader Resource 2 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has one Anchor who will moderate a panel discussion and field audience questions. You may have up to 11 Panelists and as many as you wish in the audience. If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew. If the group is large, Studio Crew members might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants; many of these can also be audience members.
- Decide how you will form the Panel. Print out Leader Resource 3 to prepare up to five youth to role play generic UUs at various stages of adult life. Print out Leader Resource 5 to prepare up to six youth to role play prominent individuals from Unitarian Universalist history.
- Make name cards for Panelists or set out supplies for the youth to make their own name cards.
- Print out Leader Resource 4 to provide audience members with questions to ask the Panelists.
- Decide how much time to give the broadcast and decide who will watch the time. Because this script is open-ended, you or a youth Studio Crew member (director or floor director) will need to watch the time and give the Anchor a signal when there are three minutes left, then

two, then one and finally when it is time to wrap up the show.

Description of Activity

Participants present a televised WCUU segment involving seven On-Air People—an Anchor, a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst, and Panelists including UU Parent, UU Minister, UU Religious Educator, UU Young Adult College Student and UU Faith in Action Person. Optional: Use Leader Resource 5 to give the youth role-play instructions to portray up to six additional Panelists, all prominent UUs from history. You will also need a few youth to ask questions from the audience. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants—some Studio Crew members can also be in the audience.

Explain that in this WCUU broadcast, a panel of informed UUs advise youth about how they can answer the question "What should I do with my life?" Youth who do not have other assigned parts will be audience members asking questions of the panelists.

Assign roles, using volunteers. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be the Anchor or the NUUs Analyst. Note that the script calls for the Anchor to improvise as they moderate a panel discussion.

Distribute the script, the roles (Leader Resources 3 and 5) and the audience questions (Leader Resource 4) to the youth who need them. Give participants who will follow the script a moment to look it over. Make sure the Anchor's script includes all of the Panelists' names. Review the script with the youth if any may have limited reading skills.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

After the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize a UU response to today's Big Question: What should I do with my life? Do they think non-UU viewers would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing the broadcast? Did WCUU provide any new ideas for making life decisions?

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — MY LITTLE LIGHT (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook

- Drawing paper and color pencils, markers or pastels
- Writing paper and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "This Little Light of Mine," Hymn 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*—the group is likely familiar with it.

Description of Activity

Use the song "This Little Light of Mine" to inspire youth to consider their own inner "lights" and how those lights can help them decide what to do with their lives. Then have participants create a simple drawing or poem to show either "their light" or some problem they are going to use their light to help solve.

Announce that it is WIT Time, when each participant says "What I Think". First, introduce "This Little Light of Mine" and ask the group to think about the words. Tell the group the song suggests we all have special lights that come from within us which we can let shine to light and help the world. Say in your own words:

What is your own special light? Thinking about how your own "little light" can help you decide what you should do with your life.

Knowing ourselves is an important part of making good decisions. If you are a good group leader now, it makes sense for you to be a leader later in life. If you are really great working with animals, you might consider school and career choices that involve animals. It makes sense to use any special talents and interests we find in ourselves, throughout our lives.

Point out that some people know their special talents early in life. Maybe they are naturally good artists or athletes or feel a calling to do something that is so strong that they know they must pursue it, study it, get better at it and share it with others. Some people discover talents later in life. But everybody has something good to share with the world, something they can begin using right now, just as the song suggests.

Invite the youth to create either a drawing or a poem about their own special light or about some problem they want to shine their light on to help solve, now or in the years ahead. Encourage them to use the idea of their own "little light" to think about today's Big Question—"What should I do with my life?" Assure them that they are not expected to know now what they will do with the rest of their lives. Maybe they will become important teachers or engineers or poets or doctors. Maybe they will make contributions that the world has not yet

imagined. This is a wonderful time to explore the future, not to make final decisions about it.

As Unitarian Universalists, we feel that everyone has a responsibility to help improve the world. Their "little light," whatever it turns out to be, will help.

Including All Participants

Youth this age may be unaware of their particular gifts or self-conscious about naming their own "little light" and letting it shine. Make sure youth understand they need not identify a special light or strength. Instead, they can write or draw about a problem that could use help and represent how they might shine light on it to help correct it—for example, world hunger or economic injustice.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session:

Today's Big Question asks "What should I do with my life?"

Individual responses will vary, of course, but perhaps all of us will share some ideas growing out of today's activities. In our first major activity, you imagined that you were celebrating your one hundredth birthday. We talked about who might best help guide you as you make decisions between now and that time, and then we discussed what it means to have "a calling." The day's story was about a stonecutter who kept changing his identity to achieve happiness. For WCUU, UU Panelists helped answer questions about making big life decisions. In WIT Time we created poems and drawings about the special "little light" we all have inside each of us and you considered how to make your own light shine, now or in the future.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: TALKING TO LEADERS

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Paper and pencils
- Optional: A directory of members and friends of your congregation

Preparation for Activity

- Post a sheet of blank newsprint.
- For Learning from Our Community Leaders:
 - Obtain a congregational directory
 - Identify a few adult congregational members willing to have Riddle and Mystery participants interview them about their lives. Find out when and where the adults can meet with one or more youth.

Description of Activity

If the group has an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, do this short-term Faith in Action activity:

Learning from Our Community Leaders

Ask participants who in the congregation they admire and why. Use a congregational directory to spark memories. Identify some individuals together. Let youth know which adults you have already spoken with about an interview. Assign two or more youths with an adult to interview. If possible, allow youth to choose whom to interview.

As a group, decide upon a list of interview questions. These might include:

- What do you hope will be your legacy (what you will be remembered for)?
- Did you feel called to your life's work?
- What or who inspired you as a young person?

- You seem to be really good at [whatever the youth admire about this interviewee]. Have you always wanted to do this? Were you always good at it or did you have to work at being good?
- What advice would you give a young person trying to decide what they should do with their life?

Invite participants to add additional questions specific to their interviewee.

Help participants set up a public meeting time with their interviewee. After the interviews have been conducted, gather the large group and compare interviews for similarities and differences.

Optional: You need not limit the interviews to the congregation. You can involve community leaders in this activity. Participants will need more assistance contacting adults outside your congregation and you will need to follow the congregation's safety policies, which include meeting in a public place and having parents or adult advisors present during the interview.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. How was the mix of discussion and action? Are you continuing to find ways to involve all youth fully in sessions despite any limitations they might have? Does the group have new behavioral issues you need to address? Did you engage youth to comfortably talk about their futures, or did you sense they had concerns that they have not yet decided what to do with their adult lives? Are you satisfied with where the group is with Faith and Action?

Session 13 asks, "Do I have a soul?" Reflect on your answers in the days ahead if you will lead Session 13.

TAKING IT HOME

We will be known forever by the tracks we leave.
— Native American (Dakota) proverb

Talk about the quote. What does it mean? Is it correct? Helpful to think about? Does it remind you of the butterfly effect we talked about in another Riddle and Mystery session?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "What should I do with my life?" We did not answer the question. It is not necessary for sixth graders to know what they are going to do with the rest of their lives. But it is good to think about the question and how you will answer it as your

life moves forward. We looked ahead to our 100th birthdays and wondered about the guides we might use to help us make decisions getting from here to there. We talked about what it means to have a calling. We heard the story of a stonemason who always wanted to be something else—until he decided what he wanted was to be content. In WCUI, an advice panel answered questions about making big life decisions. In WIT time we did art and poetry projects about the little lights we all have inside us.

TRYING OUT A CAREER

Close your eyes while a friend opens a phone book to the yellow pages and point your finger blindly to a spot on a page. Open your eyes and see where your finger is pointing. Think of a career choice that is close to what you are pointing to. (Maybe you are pointing to an ad for a car dealership, and one career choice would be working as a mechanic.) Think and talk about the good things there might be about that career choice. Then think and talk about the worst parts of that career choice. Did you just find the job of your dreams? Or do you need to keep looking? Then give your friend a turn.

FAMILY LEGACIES

Draw a family tree. Include everybody you can think of for two or three generations and ask older members of your family to help. Next to everybody's name, write one good thing they did with their lives (or have done so far, if they are still living).

SHARED SEARCH

Think about the quote we shared in this session. It comes from a Dakota proverb: "We will be known forever by the tracks we leave." Take a trip to see tracks left some time ago by a member of your family. Maybe a grandparent helped build a school you can go see. Maybe you yourself planted a bush or a tree you have not really looked at for a while. Of course, you are, in a way, a "track" made by your own parents.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something you used to really like but do not care much about any more. Maybe it is an old toy, or an old playground activity. Think about how you have changed since you were involved with what you photographed. Think how much you are likely to change in the future.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION — TRANSITIONS

Our lives are full of transitions—large and small. Think about individuals in your family that are going through transitions now or in the near future. How can you help them? Is there a new baby in the family? Maybe you can give the parent a "babysitting voucher" to be turned in

for a free night of babysitting. A younger cousin starting kindergarten? How about passing on your favorite pencil box, with a surprise note inside?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve participants' Big Questions notebooks begun in Session 1.
- Set out supplies for any new participants to start an individual notebook.

Description of Activity

Remind participants that this is a time to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell participants they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "What should I do with my life?" Say they can write about anything they want. If they have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONGS — JUST AS LONG AS I HAVE BREATH AND LOVE WILL GUIDE US (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the songs "Just as Long as I Have Breath," Hymn 6 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, and/or "Love Will Guide Us," Hymn 131—by reading the words aloud, singing together or playing a recording for the group. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "Just as Long as I Have Breath" and/or "Love Will Guide Us" as two of the most popular hymns sung in UU congregations. Be sure the group hears the words to at least the first verse of each song. Then lead a discussion about the song(s).

"Just as Long as I Have Breath." Tell the group the lyrics imagine somebody asking what they did well in life, and offers some answers. The answers begin in the first line; the question does not appear until the end of the third line. Ask participants how singers of the hymn wish to be remembered. (For saying "yes" to life, truth and love.) Ask if the group agrees with these answers. Point out that the words describe an attitude toward life, not a list of specific accomplishments like earning money and winning awards. How else might the group answer the question in the hymn?

"Love Will Guide Us." Point out that the lyrics talk about love as a force that will not just guide singers of this hymn, but also help them change the world in good ways.

To conclude, ask the group:

- What does it say about our Unitarian Universalist faith that these are two of our most popular hymns?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

Can you be happy all the time?

Extend discussion with these additional questions:

- Would we know happiness if we never knew sadness? Besides happiness and sadness, are there other states in which we can exist (such as contentment, confusion)?
- What percentage of happiness time would you consider necessary to feel you are living a happy life?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: STORY — OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the book *Oh, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss (New York: Random House, 1990)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and plan the discussion you will lead.

Description of Activity

Show the group the book *Oh, the Places You'll Go*. Some may be familiar with it. Tell them some people share it with very young children, and some like to give it to graduating high school seniors or to people retiring from their careers. People of all ages enjoy it.

Read the book aloud, asking youth to assist with the reading if you like. Then lead a discussion with these questions:

- Is Dr. Seuss predicting good things for the reader?
- How does the book answer today's Big Question ("What should I do with my life?")? (It suggests, we should be enthusiastic and optimistic. And not worry a whole lot.)

Including All Participants

Do not put any youth on the spot to read aloud. Ask for reading volunteers before you begin reading the book aloud. Give the volunteers a chance to see their parts ahead of time.

STORY: THE STONECUTTER

Based on a wisdom tale of Japanese origin.

Once upon a time, there was a stonecutter. He spent his life cutting up rocks for use in this and that and the other. He liked his work. He was a happy man. At least he thought he was, until one day he was cutting stone for the house of a rich family.

"Wow!" said the stonecutter. "Look at that palace! That's for me. I want to be fat-cat rich and have a house like that and be happy!" He sighed a deep, unhappy sigh.

Suddenly a mighty voice thundered through the air. "That's what you want, that's what you get," it said. "So shall it be."

"This is the life," said the rich man who once was a stonecutter as he looked out from his mansion. "How could life get better than this?"

But one day he had an answer. Out walking in the hot sun, he saw a prince ride by in a royal carriage. "Cool," said the rich man. "It's miserable out here in the sun, but I could be happy in that."

A mighty voice thundered through the air. "That's what you want, that's what you get," it said. "So shall it be." But the carriage was not all that cool, found the prince who once was a stonecutter and rich man. The sun still burned his face from time to time. "I know the fix for that," said the prince. "I want to be the sun so I can do the burning."

A mighty voice thundered through the air. "That's what you want, that's what you get," it said. "So shall it be."

"Hot stuff!" said the sun who once was a stonecutter and a rich man and a prince, and he smiled a great big smile. Until a cloud came along and blotted him out. "Hey," he said. "The cloud has a more interesting life than the sun. Look at it bouncing around in the sky raining and snowing whenever it likes. I want to be a cloud!"

A mighty voice thundered through the air. "That's what you want, that's what you get," it said. "So shall it be." "This is the life," said the cloud who once was a stonecutter, a rich man, a prince and the sun. "I guess I'll go cause a flood." Which he did. Rivers overflowed, and crops disappeared. But stones did not. Stones stayed right where they were. "The stone is stronger than I am!" cried the cloud. "I want to be a stone."

A mighty voice thundered through the air. "That's what you want, that's what you get," it said. "So shall it be." "At last," said the stone who once was a stonecutter, a rich man, a prince, the sun and a cloud. "I'm the mightiest thing on earth. Nothing can destroy me!"

Then "WHAM!" And "WHAM" again. "Oh no," said the stone who once was a stonecutter, a rich man, a prince, the sun and a cloud. "I am under attack! By a man with a chisel! He is mightier than the stone. I want to be him!"

A mighty voice thundered through the air. "That's what you want, that's what you get," it said. "So shall it be." And so it was. The man who once was a stonecutter and a rich man and a prince and the sun and a cloud and a stone was a stonecutter again. And happy again. So happy, in fact, that he never again wished to be anything other than what he was.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

What should I do with my life?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: GUIDING LIGHTS

Parents

A feeling deep inside you

Your teachers

Laws

Money you get paid

Friends

Your happiness

The government

Schools

Unitarian Universalism

Your doctors

Other peoples' happiness

Love

Status in society

The needs of the world

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WCUU SCRIPT — ADVICE PANEL

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU program features a guest panel of informed Unitarian Universalists answering questions from UU youth about what to do with their lives. Your job is to follow the script, read your part, and keep things moving. When the broadcast begins, you are facing the UU panelists.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name], and today's show features a highly informed panel of experienced UUs answering questions from younger UUs about what they should do with their lives. At the end of the show our own favorite NUUs Analyst will summarize what our panelists say. But beginnings come before endings, and I'll begin by introducing the panelists.

[Anchor: Read the following, giving each panelist time to say a quick greeting.]

UU Parent

UU Minister

UU Religious Educator

UU Young Adult College Student

UU Faith in Action Person

[Anchor: Add the names of prominent UUs from history if there are some on the panel.]

Now let's get started. I invite any member of the audience with a question to rise, come to the microphone, give your name, and state your question.

[Director: Cue audience members to raise hands to ask questions.][Anchor: Call on a member of the audience to ask a question. Then ask the panelists to respond. Let one or two panelists answer each question, then ask the audience for another question. Encourage all members of the audience to ask questions, and allow all panelists to reply to one question or another, but not to all. Politely stop a panelist if you need to move on to the next panelist or questioner. You might say: "I'm sorry, but let's hear from [another panelist] now." Or, "Thank you [panelist]. [Other panelist], what do you think?" Watch for a leader or the Director to signal that you have just three minutes left... then two... then one... then none, at which point you may wrap up the panel part of this broadcast.]

Thank you all, thank you all so much. Now let's hear from our NUUs Analyst.

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to join Anchor on camera.]

NUUs Analyst: Good morning. I have certainly enjoyed hearing you all.

Anchor: And what have you heard, NUUs Analyst? Will you summarize please for our at-home audience?

NUUs Analyst: I'll be glad to. Here is what most Unitarian Universalists think about how you should lead your life: Know yourself and be yourself. Look for your inner calling and follow it. Make religion and spirituality part of your life. We hope your faith will be Unitarian Universalism, but other faiths are good, too. Respect and follow the UU Principles in whatever you do. Respect and follow the Golden Rule in whatever you do. Be healthy and whole. Be your own person. Help others. Take your time deciding what to do with your life. There is no rush.

Anchor: Wow! That is a mouthful of very good advice. Thank you, Panelists. Thank you NUUs Analyst.

NUUs Analyst: Wait a minute! You haven't heard my own advice!

Anchor: That is true, NUUs Analyst, but I have my own advice for you.

NUUs Analyst: And what's that?

Anchor: Keep it to yourself, because this show is over!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: UU GUEST PANELISTS

UU Parent

You are a UU Parent on a WCUU panel helping young people decide what to do with their lives. Here are some ideas you may base your answers on. You can think of other ideas yourself.

- Know who you are and what you want.
- Make your family proud of you.
- You have plenty of time to decide what to do with your life. Do not try to grow up too fast.
- Remember what we (UU parents) have taught you about making decisions.

UU Minister

You are a UU Minister on a WCUU panel helping young people decide what to do with their lives. Here are some ideas you may base your answers on. You can think of other ideas yourself.

- Figure out your inner calling and follow it.
- Make religion and spirituality part of your whole life.
- Do things that affirm the UU Principles.
- Try not to make choices that hurt others.

UU Religious Educator

You are a UU Religious Educator on a WCUU panel helping young people decide what to do with their lives. Here are some ideas you may base your answers on. You can think of other ideas yourself.

- Grow up healthy and whole.
- Follow the Golden Rule.
- Stay in touch with our congregation.
- Remember the decision making skills we have developed in our groups.

UU Young Adult College Student

You are a UU Young Adult College Student on a WCUU panel helping young people decide what to do with their lives. Here are some ideas you may base your answers on. You can think of other ideas yourself.

- Be your own person. Do not follow the crowd.
- Take some classes or read some books about making good decisions. Then make them.
- Do not think you have to do the same things all your life. Try different stuff.

UU Faith in Action Person

You are a UU Faith in Action Person—someone who does social justice projects and service, on your own or with your UU community—on a WCUU panel helping young people decide what to do with their lives. Here are some ideas you may base your answers on. You can think of other ideas yourself.

- Help other people.
- Save the environment and everything in it.
- Do good. Then do better.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: WCUU LIFE QUESTIONS

You are in the audience at a WCUU panel discussion about how to decide what to do with your life. When the Anchor invites questions, ask anything you want. Use one of these, if nobody else has yet asked it, or make up your own.

- I am just a sixth grader. How am I supposed to know what to do with the rest of my life?
- My parents want me to take over the family business when I grow up. Do I have to do that?
- My minister was talking about having a purpose in life the other day. My only purposes right now are going to school and making friends and having a good time. Is that good enough?
- When do you have to decide what to do with your life?
- Do I have to be a Unitarian Universalist to do good things with my life?
- I want to be rich and famous. Is that okay, and how can I do it?
- Do I have to go to college? I hate school!
- I want to be the world's greatest singer but my teacher says I can't sing on pitch. What should I do?
- I want to help others. But the world needs so much help; I don't know where to start? What should I do?
- Do I have to wait until I'm an adult to have a meaningful life?

LEADER RESOURCE 5: OUTSTANDING UUS

Use these descriptions to prepare youth to role-play a prominent historical Unitarian Universalist on the WCUU advice panel (Activity 3).

Susan B. Anthony

You were a famous Unitarian who was born in 1820 and died in 1906. You fought hard for women's rights—especially the right to vote. You never gave up, but you died before that battle was won. If you were alive today, you would probably agree with ideas many Unitarian Universalists now have about what people should do with their lives. People should . . .

- Find and follow your individual calling.
- Do what is right—actions that affirm the UU Principles and the Golden Rule.
- Respect and help everybody else, but do what is right, not just what others say.
- Be honest about who you are and what you want to do.
- Live what you think and live what you say.
- Practice the religious faith that feels right to you.
- Believe and act in love, freedom and dignity for all.
- Honor the independent web of all existence.

Here are a few of your ideas:

- People are equal. Period.
- Do not follow unjust laws. Do not pay unjust fines.
- Never, ever give up. Failure is impossible.

Today you will be on a WCUU guest panel answering young people's questions about what to do with their lives. Use the above information when you answer. These guidelines will not answer every question exactly. You will have to think about how to apply them.

Rachel Carson

You were a famous Unitarian Universalist scientist and environmentalist. You wrote a book called *Silent Spring* that helped convince the world chemical pesticides were destroying nature. You did much to change and improve the world. If you were alive today, you would probably agree with ideas many Unitarian Universalists now have about what people should do with their lives. People should . . .

- Find and follow your individual calling.
- Do what is right—actions that affirm the UU Principles and the Golden Rule.
- Respect and help everybody else, but do what is right, not just what others say.
- Be honest about who you are and what you want to do.
- Live what you think and live what you say.
- Practice the religious faith that feels right to you.
- Believe and act in love, freedom and dignity for all.
- Honor the independent web of all existence.

Here are a few of your ideas:

- Humans have damaged up the world and humans can help save the world.
- Be brave and strong enough to fight against enemies like the big companies that try to defeat you and your ideas.
- Science is wonderful but it can do both good and bad things.

Today you will be on a WCUU guest panel answering young people's questions about what to do with their lives. Use the above information when you answer. These guidelines will not answer every question exactly. You will have to think about how to apply them.

Sophia Fahs

You were a famous Unitarian religious educator who lived from 1876 to 1978. You grew up and worked in Christian congregations, but became a Unitarian later in your life, when you were 61. You were even older when you became a minister—82. You were the mother of four children, two of whom died at young ages. You developed the religious education programs that UU children did at their congregations for many years. If you were alive today, you would probably agree with ideas many Unitarian Universalists now have about what people should do with their lives. People should . . .

- Find and follow your individual calling.
- Do what is right—actions that affirm the UU Principles and the Golden Rule.
- Respect and help everybody else, but do what is right, not just what others say.
- Be honest about who you are and what you want to do.
- Live what you think and live what you say.
- Practice the religious faith that feels right to you.
- Believe and act in love, freedom and dignity for all.
- Honor the independent web of all existence.

Here are a few of your ideas:

- Children and youth should learn from their own experience, from reason and science, and from the wisdom of many religions and cultures including Hebrew and Christian scriptures and our own Unitarian Universalist faith.
- Children and youth should be free to develop their own ideas about religion, not just follow the ideas of others.
- Science and nature are among the very best sources of information and knowledge.

Today you will be on a WCUU guest panel answering young people's questions about what to do with their lives. Use the above information when you answer. These guidelines will not answer every question exactly. You will have to think about how to apply them.

James Reeb

You were a famous Unitarian minister who was born in 1927 and died in 1965. You were killed by angry white men when you went to Alabama to demonstrate for the rights of black people. Partly because of your death, the United States Congress passed some great civil rights laws. If you were alive today, you would probably agree with ideas many Unitarian Universalists now have about what people should do with their lives. People should . . .

- Find and follow your individual calling.
- Do what is right—actions that affirm the UU Principles and the Golden Rule.
- Respect and help everybody else, but do what is right, not just what others say.
- Be honest about who you are and what you want to do.
- Live what you think and live what you say.
- Practice the religious faith that feels right to you.
- Believe and act in love, freedom and dignity for all.
- Honor the independent web of all existence.

Here are a few of your ideas.

- Some things are worth risking your life for. Some things are worth dying for.

- People are equal. Period.
- People can solve the problems that people create.

Today you will be on a WCUU guest panel answering young people's questions about what to do with their lives. Use the above information when you answer. These guidelines will not answer every question exactly. You will have to think about how to apply them.

Adlai Stevenson

You were a famous life-long Unitarian and politician who lived from 1900 to 1961. You ran for president of the United States as a Democrat, but lost both times. You served the country under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. You were intelligent and funny and honest. If you were alive today, you would probably agree with ideas many Unitarian Universalists now have about what people should do with their lives. People should . . .

- Find and follow your individual calling.
- Do what is right—actions that affirm the UU Principles and the Golden Rule.
- Respect and help everybody else, but do what is right, not just what others say.
- Be honest about who you are and what you want to do.
- Live what you think and live what you say.
- Practice the religious faith that feels right to you.
- Believe and act in love, freedom and dignity for all.
- Honor the independent web of all existence.

Here are a few of your ideas:

- People should let nothing stop them in their search for peace.
- Great problems can be turned into great opportunities.
- There is nothing to fear in being different.

Today you will be on a WCUU guest panel answering young people's questions about what to do with their lives. Use the above information when you answer. These guidelines will not answer every question exactly. You will have to think about how to apply them.

Whitney Young

You were an important civil rights leader and Unitarian Universalist who lived from 1921 to 1971. A black man, you were head of the National Urban League and a key assistant to the Rev. Martin Luther King. You managed to be very effective working with white people against racism, at a time when the nation was very divided. Some blacks said you should not be part of Unitarian Universalism because it was so white. You replied that your congregation needed you to help change it. If you were alive today, you would probably agree with ideas many Unitarian Universalists now have about what people should do with their lives. People should . . .

- Find and follow your individual calling.
- Do what is right—actions that affirm the UU Principles and the Golden Rule.
- Respect and help everybody else, but do what is right, not just what others say.
- Be honest about who you are and what you want to do.
- Live what you think and live what you say.
- Practice the religious faith that feels right to you.
- Believe and act in love, freedom and dignity for all.
- Honor the independent web of all existence.

Here are a few of your ideas:

- You do not have to be the loudest or the mightiest, but you should use the talent you have to try and create a better world.
- You should respect but not give in to people who disagree with you, no matter how important they are.
- You should stand up for what you know is right, even if your friends disagree.

Today you will be on a WCUU guest panel answering young people's questions about what to do with their lives. Use the above information when you answer. These guidelines will not answer every question exactly. You will have to think about how to apply them.

FIND OUT MORE

"This Little Light of Mine"

Hymn 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition* has a strong association with the Civil Rights movement, sung at many 1960s anti-segregation demonstrations by Fanny Lou Hamer, Pete Seeger and others. Originally written by evangelical composer Harry Dixon Loes (1895-1965), the song joined the American folk music tradition after [John Avery Lomax](#) (at

memory.loc.gov/ammem/lohtml/lojohnbio.html), Honorary Consultant and Curator of the Archive of American Folk Song, and his wife, [Ruby Terrill Lomax](#) (at memory.loc.gov/ammem/lohtml/orubybio.html), included it in a collection of field recordings for the Library of Congress in 1939.

Outstanding UUs

The Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography offers an in-depth article on [Adlai Stevenson](#).

SESSION 13: OH MY SOUL

INTRODUCTION

If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. — Chinese proverb

Big Question: Do I have a soul?

The word "soul" appears in Unitarian Universalism in the names of some congregations, in hymns and in readings, in articles, sermons and books. "Soul" is a word that means different things to different people and within different faith traditions. Sometimes "souls" is simply used as a synonym for "people." But as a religious term, UU youth have a right to wrestle with its meaning for them, and a right to know that it is a concept UUs can find meaningful. Help youth think about the range of possible meanings for UUs. For example, for some UUs "soul" refers to the center of individual self — one's most true self. To some, it stresses the connective nature of the spiritual self to the Divine or to all other life. To some, it means one's inner light or inner life. Conduct this session as an exploration.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "Do I have a soul?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses
- Offer the concept of soul as a way of understanding the nonphysical self
- Introduce some traditional religious ideas about soul
- Encourage youth to explore their core spirit and beliefs
- Help youth understand the connective nature of "soul."

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand the soul as one's inner self or core spirit
- Expand their ideas about and appreciation of the concept of "soul"
- Explore connections among "soul," "God" and "Divine"

- Consider various Unitarian Universalist ideas about the soul.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Meditative Moment	5
Activity 2: Soul Stands	8
Activity 3: Story — Why and Where God Hides	7
Activity 4: WCUU — Soul Talk	15
Activity 5: WIT Time — Inside, Outside Masks	17
Faith in Action: Soul Messages	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Voice Still and Small	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Two Quotes	5
Alternate Activity 5: Music and Art of the Soul	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Explore your own soul, the central nonphysical part of your being. What does "soul" mean to you? Your core being? Your spiritual life? A concept linked to your identity? A religious concept that you do not apply to yourself? Has your concept of soul changed during your life? Think about how a concept of soul could help youth develop their sense of self and understand others. Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their exploration of life and its mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock for all participants' names
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant (Session 1) or revised covenant (Session 9)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve materials from Session 1 (or if needed, make new ones):
 - "Today's Big Question" sign
 - Kid for the Day bag or box, filled with participants' names on card stock; extra card stock and pen/pencil for newcomers' names
 - Optional: Nametags and supplies to make new nametags
 - Optional: Group covenant (Session 1 and/or Session 9)
- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign with a sheet of newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text.
- Optional: Choose soft background music for the Opening and test the music player. Begin playing the music before participants arrive.
- Optional: Post the group covenant and the session agenda.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to (make and) wear one. If new youth join this

session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the card back in the bag or box. Or, if the group decided during Session 8 (Activity 1) to change how the Kid for the Day is selected, follow the new procedure now.

If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted a covenant made by the group in Session 1, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process any suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—Do I have a soul?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: MEDITATIVE MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tingshas or other signals for beginning, ending meditation

Description of Activity

Say that it is time for some soul-seeking. Ask the youth what they think "soul-seeking" might mean. Accept

some ideas. Affirm that to do some "soul-seeking" you need to have an idea of what "soul" means. Say something like:

Some people say your soul is the core of your nonphysical self, the center of your being. If you go soul-seeking, you explore your inner self, the parts of you that are not your body. You might find your essential self.

Invite the group to try a brief meditation. Ask them to relax, sit comfortably and close their eyes or stare at one spot on the wall or in the center of the room to avoid visual distractions. Say that you will sound the tingshas, lead a meditation, and sound the tingshas again at the end of the meditation.

Sound the tingshas. Guide the group's meditation:

Let your thoughts drift away from your body . . . let the events of the day and the clutter of the room move off into space . . . let your mind float free. . . . Then gradually . . . slowly . . . move into yourself . . . center yourself . . . find the place you cannot see . . . that you still know exists . . . the core of yourself . . . the deepest part of you. . . . Experience your center, your soul . . . Let it come to you . . . let it show you who and what you are . . . let your soul be you Let it drift on beyond you . . . Let it show you who and what you are [Allow a long pause.] . . . Now slowly, gradually, come back into your body . . . return to where you were . . . return to all of us . . .

Sound the tingshas to end the meditation. Ask youth what the meditation was like. Did they visit a nonphysical part of themselves? Did it seem like the center of them, the deepest part of them? Do they think that "soul" is a good name for the place where they looked? How do they think it differs from character? From personality? From self?

ACTIVITY 2: SOUL STANDS (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 1](#), (included in this document) Soul Statements

Preparation for Activity

Familiarize yourself with Leader Resource 1 and add other statements to reflect your congregation if you wish.

Description of Activity

Explain that different people and different religions have different ideas about the concept of "soul."

Say that you will read a variety of statements about soul, and will invite everyone to move around the room to show to what degree they agree or disagree with the statements. Participants will also guess which religion or philosophy each statement represents.

Point out a wall where participants can line up according to their opinions. One end of the wall will represent strong agreement and the other end will represent strong disagreement. Youth can stand anywhere between the two ends.

Read the first statement from Leader Resource 1 and invite participants to choose a position along the wall. . . Once youth are in place, invite comments on their positions. Why are they where they are? Allow them to move and change position as they like when they hear the reasoning of others.

Continue in this fashion, reading as many statements as you like, and adding some of your own if you wish. Share as much italicized information as helpful.

Including All Participants

Adapt this activity as necessary to include youth of limited mobility. One possible approach is to have youth remain seated, decide where to place themselves on an imaginary line evenly spaced from 1 to 10, write the appropriate numbers on pieces of paper, then hold the numbers up for comparison and discussion.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — WHY AND WHERE GOD HIDES (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[Why and Where God Hides](#) (included in this document)"

Preparation for Activity

- Print out the story. Prepare to tell the story to the group.
- Include Alternate Activity 2, Song — Voice Still and Small, if you have time.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story aloud. Then ask:

- Did you like it? Why/why not?
- Does the story say anything directly about soul? (No.) Is it possible that soul is the place where God hides in every human?
- Does the story suggest there is something holy or divine in every person? Is that "something" the same thing as soul? Why/why not?

- Is that "something" at least connected with soul in some way?

ACTIVITY 4: WCUU — SOUL TALK (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — Soul Talk
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , Reporter Stories
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)
- Optional: Audio player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling... " followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.

- Copy Leader Resource 2 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has seven On-Air people: An Anchor and a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst, who will need scripts, and five Reporters who will improvise based on the role descriptions on Leader Resource 3. If the group is small, plan to can omit some parts or ask some youth to play more than one part; co-leaders can be Studio Crew. If the group is large, expand the Studio Crew to include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.
- Print out Leader Resource 3. Cut the stories onto separate slips of paper.
- Make name cards for the On-Air People or set out supplies for youth to make their own.

Description of Activity

Participants present a WCUU show involving seven On-Air People—an Anchor, a NUUs Analyst, First Reporter, Second Reporter, Third Reporter, Fourth Reporter and Fifth Reporter. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.

Assign roles, using volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be the Anchor or the NUUs Analyst. Tell the On-Air People that all except the Anchor and NUUs Analyst will need to improvise some of their on-air dialogue.

Distribute the reporter stories (Leader Resource 3) to the five Reporters and invite them to read their individual notes carefully so that, on the broadcast, they can say the ideas in their own words. Tell them they need not say everything on the notes, just a few key points.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Give participants who will follow the script a moment to look it over. Review the script with the youth if any may have limited reading skills.

Begin the broadcast.

At the end of the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize how Unitarian Universalists respond to today's Big Question: "Do I have a soul?" Which UU responses resonate for the youth? Allow comments.

Ask whether the youth think non-UU viewers would understand Unitarian Universalism and its ideas about the soul better after seeing this WCUU show.

ACTIVITY 5: WIT TIME — INSIDE, OUTSIDE MASKS (17 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , Making Soul Masks
- Heavy, plain 11"x14" card stock or paper plates
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors)
- Fine-point color markers
- Optional: Single hole-puncher and string
- Optional: Long wooden craft sticks

Preparation for Activity

- Place art supplies on work tables.
- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- This activity invites participants to make simple paper masks. Feel free to create more complex masks if you have the time and experience.

Description of Activity

Youth explore their own souls by making simple masks. Introduce it with words spoken by Reverend Mykel Johnson at the Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church in Portland, Maine:

Each of us has a mask we wear. There is a face we present to the world, perhaps more than one, which is not quite the same as the face inside of us.

Tell the group, when Reverend Johnson said these words, she held up a mask. On the outside were words like "woman" and "man," reflecting what people might see on the outside when they look at another person. On the inside of the mask were more mysterious words reflecting the inner person, words like "wisdom," "healer," "music," "goddess" and "meditate."

Here is more of what Rev. Johnson told her congregation:

It is a central purpose of the spiritual journey to learn to become our true selves, to share our true story and song. Whatever masks we wear, whatever roles we take on with society, we are called to look on the inside of the mask to see what is hidden there, what is waiting to be revealed. In some traditions, this inner side of the mask is called the soul. And even when we have sung our songs, and told our stories, the

soul continues to be shy at times, to hide itself or reveal itself in mysterious ways.

Ask the group to think about that. Then distribute Handout 2, and invite youth to decorate the outside and inside of their own, simple masks.

When they have finished, let them put on their masks and walk around and display the outsides to each other. Invite them, if they like, to share some of what they have written on the insides of the masks. (Some may like to share with a few peers near them, rather than with the whole group.)

Re-gather the group. Ask if making the masks is a good way to think about their souls. Do they believe they have an inner side that nobody else sees? Might they, in the future, share the inner side? How, when, with whom?

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the Taking It Home section and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the day's session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asks "Do I have a soul?" We talked about that in several different ways, starting with a soul-searching meditation. We responded to some statements reflecting other people's ideas about soul. Then we heard a story, "Why and Where God Hides," and talked about how a soul could be the place where something Divine and eternal hides and resides in each of us. In WCUU, we explored what various Unitarian Universalists have had to say about soul. And in WIT Time we made soul masks to help us explore our own inner selves.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: SOUL MESSAGES

Materials for Activity

- Unlined paper, cut into strips 1/2"x4"
- Bright pens

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how youth can distribute cheerful soul messages to the congregation or other groups; arrange with other adults as needed.
- If you like the idea of inserting the messages into traditional restaurant fortune cookies to distribute, find a [recipe](http://chinesefood.about.com/od/diningout/r/fortunecookie.htm) (at chinesefood.about.com/od/diningout/r/fortunecookie.htm) on these Chinese food pages or on a site called [Fancy Fortune Cookies](http://www.fancyfortunecookies.com/recipe.shtml) (at www.fancyfortunecookies.com/recipe.shtml). Note: Forming the cookies requires wearing gloves and rolling up dough that is still hot from the oven. Sixth graders will need adult assistance and close supervision. You can also purchase fortune cookies and insert your own messages. Find cookies locally or order from [e-fortunecookie](http://www.e-fortunecookie.com) (at www.e-fortunecookie.com).

Description of Activity

If the group has chosen an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, do this short-term Faith in Action activity:

Making and Distributing Soul Messages. Ask if the group has ever heard somebody described as "soul weary." Say, if participants do not, that somebody who is soul weary is tired to the very core of themselves, as the term suggests. Ask what we can do for people who are soul weary. Affirm that one response could be to try to cheer the people up. While people who are deeply, truly exhausted may need rest more than anything else, people do appreciate kind and cheerful messages. Suggest youth give the soul weary a lift, and at the same time build awareness of the need for economic justice, by making and distributing message slips like those found in restaurant fortune cookies. On one side can be a cheerful greeting and on the other brief words about economic justice.

The group may like to distribute the messages inside traditional restaurant fortune cookies. The cookies can

make it fun, and tasty, to distribute the messages distribution at a congregational event such as a coffee hour. You can also, of course, wrap the messages in another tasty treat.

Ask youth to create brief, cheerful messages they can write small enough to fit on a slip of paper the size you have provided (to insert in a cookie, if you are using cookies). You might suggest they write a greeting on one side and a justice message on the other. Youth will probably have little difficulty coming up with cheerful greeting messages. If they struggle with wording about economic justice, you might suggest these possibilities: Good fortune is economic justice. Good fortune is to share. Good fortune is for U and U and all of us. Good fortune is a UU goal for all.

Invite the youth to create messages individually, in pairs or in small groups— (but watch carefully to make sure no youth feel left out of the groups). Allow five or ten minutes for the creation. Then ask youth to share what they have done. Collect the messages until it is time for the group to pass them out.

Be sure that everybody who wants to will be involved in the distribution.

Including All Participants

Check with your religious educator to make sure no children or youth in the program have an allergy or food restriction that precludes their eating of the cookies you plan to distribute.

If the youth will make cookies, make sure the work spaces and supplies are accessible to all. Assign individuals tasks they can manage safely and successfully.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session. How was the mix of discussion and action? Are you continuing to find ways to involve all youth fully in sessions despite any limitations they might have? Does the group have new behavioral issues you need to address?

How do youth feel about the idea of soul? Do they speak in terms of their own souls? Or do they prefer other terms for describing their deepest selves? Is Faith in Action going well, or do you need to make some adjustments? If so, who will take the lead? Note that the Big Question for Session 14 asks, "Can we ever solve life's mysteries?" Plan to reflect on your own answers to that in the days ahead if you will be leading Session 14.

TAKING IT HOME

If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. — Chinese proverb

Talk about the quote. Do you agree with what it says? What does it mean to have light in your soul? Is having light in your soul the same as having love in your soul? How do you get light into your soul? How do you get light into somebody else's soul?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "Do I have a soul?" We began with a meditation and talked about the general meaning of soul. We talked about what other people say about soul, and reacted to their ideas. We heard the story "Why and Where God Hides," and learned that some people think God or the Divine is in each of us, maybe even in our souls. During WCUU, we heard about what various UUs have said about soul in different times and places. Our NUUs Analyst said that many UUs today use the word "soul" when they speak of their deepest, nonphysical selves, but they do not think of the soul as something that lives forever and goes to Hell or Heaven when we die. Most UUs are more concerned about what we are and do in life than in death. Finally, we made masks to explore our own inner selves and souls.

FIND YOURSELF

Did you ever hear about people "finding themselves"? Talk to your family about what that means. Some people say that finding yourself means learning to know your deepest self. Other people can support you while you do that, but in the end, you are the only person who can really go inside yourself, and you are the person who can understand yourself best. Do other members of your family agree with that? Do they think that "soul-searching" is a way to find yourself? Can meditation help with that?

REFLECT ON YOUR BELIEFS

Here is a traditional prayer poem that children have sometimes said just before going to bed:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

Are you familiar with that poem? Have people in your family ever said it? How do you react to it? What do you think would happen to the soul in the poem, if the person died in the night and the Lord took the soul? What sort of religious belief about soul does the poem reflect?

SHARED SEARCH

Travel to a place where the word "soul" or the idea of "soul" is important. Maybe it is a church or a cemetery. What do you find there?

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph the spirit of yourself. How do you do that? Maybe you photograph a place where you have made a difference. Or maybe you photograph something that represents an idea of yours. You decide.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION — DEEPER CONNECTIONS

As a family, reach out to another family of people you like but could get to know better. Try to connect, and to understand each other. (Do this together with adults, because not everybody is safe and easy to get along with). Making better connections with other people can be very rewarding. You and they get to know more about who everybody really is inside.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve participants' Big Questions notebooks begun in Session 1.
- Set out supplies for any new participants to start an individual notebook.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide any new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "Do I have a soul?" Say they can write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — VOICE STILL AND SMALL (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "Voice Still and Small," Hymn 391 in *Singing the Living Tradition*—by reading the words aloud, singing together or playing a recording for the group. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.
- Optional: Ask the music director or choir director to make a recording of the song.

Description of Activity

Remind/tell the group that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "Voice Still and Small" in a manner comfortable for you, being sure that the group hears the words to at least the first verse.

Ask the youth what they think of the hymn. What does the idea of the "voice" mean to them? Does it have anything to do with soul? What do they think the composer, John Corrado, meant by the words?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

Can your physical self affect the way the nonphysical part of you feels?

Extend discussion with these additional questions:

- If you are really starving or if you have stomach flu, how could that change the way your mind thinks? The way your spirit feels? Does that mean your soul is changed, too?
- How could a long-term physical illness affect your soul?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: TWO QUOTES (5 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Ask the group to respond to two quotes from Rabbi Harold S. Kushner. Say that he is a Jewish rabbi in the Conservative (moderately traditional) movement and a popular author. His books include *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough: The Search for a Life That Matters* and *Who Needs God?*

Read aloud:

Our souls are hungry for meaning, for the sense that we have figured out how to live so that our lives matter, so that the world will be at least a little bit different for our having passed through it What frustrates us and robs our lives of joy is this absence of meaning Does our being alive matter?

Pause. Then read the second quote. (You may like to remind youth that they heard part of this in Activity 2.)

The soul is not a physical entity, but instead refers to everything about us that is not physical—our values, memories, identity, sense of humor. Since the soul represents the parts of the human being that are not physical, it cannot get sick, it cannot die, it cannot disappear. In short, the soul is immortal.

Ask the youth if they like Rabbi Kushner's idea of what the soul is. Extend with more questions:

- Is he saying our memories and our sense of humor can never die, even when our body dies?
- What does it feel like when your soul is "hungry for meaning"?

Ask the youth, do they sometimes think and wonder about the meaning of life? Does the idea that we each have a soul add to their understanding? How do they think Unitarian Universalism can help them answer today's Big Question?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: MUSIC AND ART OF THE SOUL (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Recorded music and player
- Long piece of mural paper and tape
- Paints, paintbrushes, containers for water and paints and clean-up supplies
- Newspaper or tarps to protect floor
- Optional: Color pastels, thick markers or other media
- Optional: Smocks or old tee-shirts to protect youth's clothing

Preparation for Activity

- Choose up to ten minutes of "soul" music to play for the group.
 - You may like to use music from the soul genre. First, read up on why it is called "soul." The website History of Rock has a [Soul Music page](http://www.history-of-rock.com/soul_music.htm) (at www.history-of-rock.com/soul_music.htm) with a map of soul artists, links to many audio selections and this definition: "A merger of gospel-charged singing, secular subject matter, and funk rhythms, soul grew out of Fifties rhythm & blues, spurred by Ray Charles' eclectic, decidedly secular late-Fifties hits." Hear classic soul hits including Arthur Conley's "Sweet Soul Music," on the CD *The Muscle Shoals Sound*.
 - Use songs with lyrics about the soul, such as "Song of the Soul" by Cris Williamson and two Unitarian Universalist hymns from *Singing the Living Tradition*, Hymn 108, "My Life Flows on in Endless Song," and Hymn 123, "Spirit of Life."
 - Or, use music that touches your own soul.
- Protect surfaces under and near the mural with a tarp or newspaper.

- Decide where you can post enough mural paper so each youth can have some individual space on it and all can reach it. Post the mural paper.
- Set out supplies for painting and any other media.

Description of Activity

In this activity, youth use music and art to explore their souls. Introduce it with words like these:

A writer named Krista Tippett has said, "In many ways, religion comes from the same place in us that art comes from." Some people would say art comes from the soul. Other people might use a different word. They would say religion and art come from our centers, our cores, our deepest spirits, instead of our souls. But most would agree that both come from somewhere deep inside us. You may think of your deepest inner self as your soul, your center, your spirit—whatever you like. And I hope you will reach deep inside as you listen to music and let your art out onto a community mural.

Invite the youth to sit comfortably and listen to music you have chosen. Tell them they may, when they feel moved to, go to the mural paper and express themselves by drawing or making marks in a section of the mural paper. They can draw something realistic if that is what they feel like doing, or they can make abstract lines and figures—whatever their deepest, inner self wants to do. Ask them to work, without speaking, in their own section of the mural paper as the music continues.

Once all the youth have begun working in a section of the mural paper, ask them to step back and see if their deepest, inner self might like to move out of their section and connect to other places. Suggest they expand their art, out to the art of the next person and maybe the art of the next person beyond that. Tell them it is fine if everybody's art connects.

Give them a few minutes. Then, stop the music and ask everyone to stop drawing. Invite them to step back, without speaking, and look at the group's creation.

Ask participants to quietly put the art supplies away and resume their seats. Ask questions like these:

- What does the group think of its creation?
- How did the experience feel?
- Did youth sense that they were reaching into their soul or center and drawing out of that place? What did that feel like?
- How did the words or the tunes of the music work on them? Did anything in particular feel

like it touched their inner self, their spirit, their soul?

- What was the act of connection like? Did they feel they were connecting at a deeper level than they usually do? If not, what got in the way? Was it self-consciousness about being in a group, creating together? If they made more such creations, would they become more open and comfortable expressing themselves together?
- Has this experience in any way changed their answer to today's Big Question, "Do I have a soul?" What is their answer at this point?

Including All Participants

Post the mural paper where all youth, including any with limited mobility, can draw on it.

A youth with limited sight can work creatively in their own space in a textured medium such as acrylic paint or wax crayon. Engage others to connect to the youth's work space, also using textured media and explaining what they are drawing as they do it.

STORY: WHY AND WHERE GOD HIDES

A speaker in the Bible says to God: "Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel." This is verse 15 from Chapter 45 in the Book of Israel. But the Bible is not the only place people talk about God hiding. Stories from different times and cultures tell of the same thing.

These stories give different reasons why God wanted to hide.

Some say that God became tired of being badgered by people with requests for everything.

Some say that God decided being hard to find would help people grow in their search for the holy.

Some say that God just needed a place to live.

The stories also disagree about who helped God decide where to hide. Some say it was angels. Others say it

was advisors, like a president might have. Still others say it was animals.

Many different ideas floated around. One was to have God hide on the moon. But God said no, because God could see the future and knew people would someday land on the moon. A second was to have God hide at the bottom of the sea. But God said no, because God knew people would someday visit the bottom of the sea. A third was to have God hide deep in the earth. But God said no, because God knew people would someday be mining the earth.

These things have all come to pass, of course. People have been to the moon and to the bottom of the ocean and deep into the earth, and they have not found God in any of those places.

Where did God hide that was so successful? Here's where the stories come closer together. They all say in one way or another that God decided to hide inside each of us.

And that is where God remains today.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

Do I have a soul?

HANDOUT 2: MAKING SOUL MASKS

To create a soul mask:

1. Make an outline of your head on heavy card stock. You can do this by placing the card stock on a table, pressing your face down on it, and drawing an outline around your head with a pencil. Or, ask a friend to draw around your head.
2. Use scissors to cut the mask out in the shape of your head.
3. On the outside of the mask, use markers to write words or draw pictures reflecting the self you show to the world. Words like these: boy, girl, basketball player, student, sibling, and so on.
4. On the inside of the mask, use markers to write words or draw pictures reflecting the inner self you do not show to the world. Words like these: brave, religious, deep thinker, mysterious, smart, scared and so on. You will not have to share the inside of your mask with anybody if you do not want to. If you prefer, you can use abbreviations or invent codes for the inside of the mask. Just be sure you can remember what they mean.
5. Cut a small hole on each side of your mask, where the ears would be, and attach a string so you can wear the mask. The string is optional. If you do not use it, you can hold the mask over your face. Or, glue a large wooden stick to the bottom of the mask and hold it up to your face.
6. Cut eyeholes in the mask. Add a nose hole if you like.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: SOUL STATEMENTS

1. When you die, your soul lives on and goes to one of three places: Heaven, or Hell or Purgatory.

This is the Roman Catholic belief. Purgatory is a nasty place where souls are purified until they are ready for heaven. Some other Christians have similar beliefs about what happens to the soul after death.

2. When you die, your soul lives on and goes to one of two places: Paradise or Hell.

This is a Muslim belief. It is similar to some Christian beliefs. This is not surprising, because the religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam have much in common. For example, the prophet Abraham plays a major role in all three religions.

3. The soul "refers to everything about us that is not physical." It "cannot get sick, it cannot die, it cannot disappear."

These thoughts are from Harold Kushner, a Jewish rabbi in the Conservative (moderately traditional) movement and a popular author. He said the soul "refers to everything about us that is not physical." He also said, "Our souls are hungry for meaning, for the sense that we have figured out how to live so that our lives matter."

4. The soul in us is reincarnated from one form of life into another.

This is a Hindu belief. The Hindu idea of reincarnation says that people's current lives reflect the way they lived in the past. People's present lives help determine what their next lives shall be. The better you are in this life, the better your next life will be. When you have lived enough lives, your spirit—your soul—no longer takes a human form and instead lives with God.

5. People are not the only creatures who have souls. Animals do, too

This is the belief called animism. In fact, some animists say that not just animals but plants and objects like stones have souls. Animism has sometimes been a part of pagan religions and is still a belief in some of today's other philosophies and religions.

6. Soul is God in us.

Many people who believe in God say something like this. They say that this explains why the soul is eternal and never dies.

7. Soul is the Divine or holy part of us.

This is similar to the idea that God is in us, but you can say it whether or not you believe in God. You do not have to believe in any god to believe some things are holy or Divine. You might say your divine soul connects you to the Great Mystery, or the cosmos or the spirit of life.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WCUU SCRIPT — SOUL TALK

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU program is a report on UU ideas about soul. Your job is to follow the script, read your part, and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you are alone, sitting or standing in front of a microphone.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name], and I am here in the WCUU newsroom with a series of stunning reports about UU ideas on soul. Today we will hear from five reporters who have risked their lives traveling through time and space in search of truth and news. We will then hear from everybody's favorite NUUs Analyst. But first things first, and here is First Reporter. [First Reporter joins Anchor at the microphone.] Tell us your story, First Reporter.

[First Reporter reports.]

Anchor: Wonderful, First Reporter. Now let's hear from Second Reporter.

[First Reporter leaves. Second Reporter joins Anchor.]

Anchor: So what's the news from you, Second Reporter?

[Second Reporter reports.]

Anchor: Fascinating. But time is short. Come in, Third Reporter.

[Second Reporter leaves. Third Reporter joins Anchor.]

Anchor: You are on, Third Reporter.

[Third Reporter reports.]

Anchor: Thank you, thank you, Third Reporter. Time for Fourth Reporter now.

[Third Reporter leaves. Fourth Reporter joins Anchor.]

Anchor: I am sure that you, too, have fascinating news for us, Fourth Reporter. What is it?

[Fourth Reporter reports.]

Anchor: Another wonderful story. Now, where is Fifth Reporter?

[Fourth Reporter leaves. Fifth Reporter joins Anchor.]

[Fifth Reporter reports.]

Anchor: Wow! Good stuff! So many different ideas from so many different times and places. I think we need our NUUs Analyst to sort it all out.

[Fifth Reporter leaves. NUUs Analyst joins Anchor.]

Anchor: Good morning, NUUs Analyst. Well we certainly have a big pile of information to sort out.

NUUs Analyst: We sure do. But I think I can help.

Anchor: Please do. So, what do most UUs have to say about soul?

NUUs Analyst: Well here is something helpful one UU minister said. He is Reverend Joel Miller. He was giving a sermon in Buffalo, New York, and he said that soul "is a frustrating word for most people." And, he added, "Soul is a word that is like Unitarian Universalism: There isn't just one right way to describe it."

NUUs Analyst: Oh yes. A lot of UUs talk about soul. But most of them are not thinking of the eternal sort of souls that some other religions believe in, souls that go to heaven or hell. UUs concentrate more on life than on death, and they think the soul counts more in life than in death.

NUUs Analyst: That is right. The soul has no weight or measurement. It is your deepest self, the place inside yourself you go to meditate or pray. From here you reach out to connect with other people's souls and centers. It is the place where you connect with the Great Mystery.

NUUs Analyst: A lot of people would say so, yes. If every human being has a divine spark, then it lives in the soul. That is how we think about connecting with the holy. And the holy is the mystery.

Anchor: Doesn't holy mean God?

NUUs Analyst: Some UUs find the concept of God helpful. Others do not. Many UUs say there is something larger than themselves, maybe larger than the Universe and all that we can ever know, maybe even more than that. It's a mystery, they say.

NUUs Analyst: Most UUs seem to think the idea of soul is helpful, and they use it to talk about themselves and their spiritual centers, all that they are in the deepest parts of themselves.

Anchor: Well thank you so much, NUUs Analyst. But our time is just about up.

NUUs Analyst: Hey, guess what? When I heard what this show was about, I had a full body X-ray taken. I was looking for my soul.

Anchor: No! We are smack dab out of time. Bring on the music!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: REPORTER STORIES

First Reporter

Here's your story. Tell the WCUU audience about it in your own words.

You traveled to visit Washington, DC, in 2008. You visited a big Unitarian Universalist congregation there, called All Souls, Unitarian. You wanted to know where the name came from.

You found a large, impressive building that really looks like a church. You went in, and the people were friendly.

Where did the name come from? It was first used in 1877, and it came from words of William Ellery Channing. He was a Unitarian minister who lived from 1770 to 1842. Today he is known as one of the founders of Unitarian Universalism. Back then, he said, "I am a member of the living family of all souls." He thought everybody had souls, and he referred to people as souls.

The members and friends of All Souls still do that today. Its web site says, "For more than 180 years, All Souls has sought to live up to its name. We welcome all souls to join us in pulling down the walls that separate us so that we may see ourselves as one human family."

So, you learned that UUs sometimes refer to people as "souls." That suggests that every person has one.

Second Reporter

Here's your story. Tell the WCUU audience about it in your own words.

You have always admired Clara Barton. She was a famous nurse who helped Union soldiers during America's Civil War. She was also a Universalist, and you decided to travel back through time to see what she said about soul.

Unfortunately, people were shooting cannons and rifles at each other during that war. Some of the shells came very close to Clara Barton, and some came close to you as you wandered through time.

But you were lucky. You did not get hurt. You were lucky again when you read a letter Clara Barton wrote to her cousin. She spoke in the letter of her pain at thinking about the mothers, wives and sisters of the soldiers injured and killed in the war. She wanted God to pity and strengthen every one of them.

She said she wished that "Christ would teach my soul a prayer that would plead to the Father" God on behalf of the families.

So Clara Barton thought of the human soul as a place of prayer, and you had something to report on WCUU.

Third Reporter

Here's your story. Tell the WCUU audience about it in your own words.

You are a little irritated. All the other reporters were assigned to travel through time and space to hear what UUs have to say about soul. You were sent home to read the UU hymnals. That was not as exciting as traveling, but at least you learned about souls.

In the big gray book, *Singing the Living Tradition*, you found Hymn 100. It is called "I've Got Peace Like a River," and if you read the whole first verse, it says, "I've got peace like a river in my soul." The other verses say you have peace joy, love, pain, tears, and strength, all in your soul.

In *Singing the Journey*, the small green supplement to the hymnbook you found Hymn 1007, "There's a River Flowin' in My Soul." When you read through all the verses, you found that the river was also flowing in your heart and your mind. "Aha," you said. "The soul is connected to the heart and the mind. It is a place where we experience many strong emotions, such as peace, pain, and joy."

So you made two discoveries to report on WCUU.

Fourth Reporter

Here's your story. Tell the WCUU audience about it in your own words.

You traveled through time and space to nineteenth-century Massachusetts. You wanted to find out what Ralph Waldo Emerson had to say about soul. He was once a Unitarian minister, and he was a great and famous philosopher.

You found out that Emerson had tons and tons to say about soul. Not all of it was easy to understand. He often wrote and talked about the "over-soul." That is a huge and universal force that he said contains the individual souls of all people. The over-soul is huge to Emerson. It is a type of deep, divine thought. It unites everybody. It looks forward, toward the future, toward eternity.

Emerson also talked about the soul in every individual. Soul is the part of a person that sees and knows truth. It is deep power. It is the part of the whole in everything. It is beauty.

You wish your trip had been longer so you could have learned more. But you had to get back to give your report.

Fifth Reporter

Here's your story. Tell the WCUU audience about it in your own words.

You sort of like staying home. So you traveled by Internet, and you found a UU connection to soul you had never seen before. It was a poem written by Tess Baumberger. She was a UU minister in 2008, and here is some of what she wrote:

Wouldn't it be great if you could take a picture of your soul?

Then when your mother wanted to brag about you she could show people the picture and say,

"That's my daughter, doesn't she have a beautiful soul,

All sparkly and many-colored and flowing all around her?"

Wouldn't it be great if we walked around

Surrounded by our souls,

So that they were the first things people saw

Instead of the last things?

Then people would judge us by who we really are

Instead of how we look.

So some UUs think of the soul as an important core part of us that it might be good for other people to see. Seeing other people's souls is not easy, they add, and that is too bad.

FIND OUT MORE

Music for Souls

Unitarian Universalist Association. *Singing the Journey: A Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005. This hymnbook supplement includes "There's a River Flowin' in My Soul" as Hymn 1007

Unitarian Universalist Association. *Singing the Living Tradition*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1993. This hymnbook contains the hymns "I've Got Peace Like a River," Hymn 100, "My Life Flows On in Endless Song," Hymn 108, and "Spirit of Life," Hymn 123

"[Song of the Soul](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-7yjMLNops) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-7yjMLNops), sung by Cris Williamson

Tippett, Krista. *Speaking of Faith*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2007; This is the source of the quote in Alternate Activity 6 (on page 48)

"All Souls" and Unitarian Universalism

The Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing (1770-1842) is known today as one of the founders of Unitarian Universalism. His words, "I am a member of the living family of all souls," are echoed in the many Unitarian Universalist congregation names that include the phrase "All Souls."

Poetry about the Soul

A poem by Tess Baumberger called "[Soul Lifts](#)" is posted on the Unitarian Universalist Association WorshipWeb. The poem begins, "Wouldn't it be great if you could take a picture of your soul? Then when your mother wanted to brag about you/she could show people the picture... "

SESSION 14: LIFE AS MYSTERY

INTRODUCTION

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science... It was the experience of mystery, even if mixed with fear, that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty—it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude. In this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man. — Albert Einstein

Big Question: Can we ever solve life's mystery?

Here is another question which may prompt a quick "no." The session examines this seemingly obvious answer inviting youth to revisit a few Big Questions from previous sessions. A story, in the form of a drama, suggests that questioning is basic to human nature. In WCUU, youth create UU entries for a Mystery Day Parade modeled on the traditional Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. WIT Time leads them to consider the big questions most important in their own lives.

The playlet and the parade can both be done simply or with elaborate creative participant input. Read both activities carefully. Determine realistic parameters for each based on the time available and the energy of the group.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "Can we ever solve life's mystery?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses
- Re-examine Big Questions from previous sessions
- Present mystery as an essential part of human life
- Show how answers generate new questions
- Demonstrate Unitarian Universalist joy in mystery, as well as our need to explore it.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand mystery as natural and compelling to humans, and an experience celebrated in our faith
- Refresh their thoughts about Big Questions previously posed
- Hear Unitarian Universalist ideas about the nature and importance of questioning
- Identify the Big Questions most important to their lives
- Grow in comfort with questioning, accepting that questions sometimes produce ambiguous, contradictory answers
- Celebrate mystery.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Questions and Responses	10
Activity 2: Story — Why? A Playlet in Four Scenelets	10
Activity 3: WCUU — Mystery Day Parade	25
Activity 4: WIT Time — Oh, You Mystery	7
Faith in Action: A Big Practical Question	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Gathered Here	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

With everything set to go, take a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Breathe several deep breaths. Consider your own big questions. If you were guaranteed an answer to just one, which would you ask? Would you really want an answer? If you could help youth find a satisfactory answer to one, single Big Question in Riddle and Mystery, which would it be?

How does it feel to help youth with big questions? Has this effort changed your perspective on big questions and Unitarian Universalism in any way?

Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their exploration of life and its mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box, card stock cut into uniform size pieces for all participants and pencils or markers
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant (Session 1) or revised covenant (Session 9)

Preparation for Activity

- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and a sheet of newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text. To increase mystery, you might place it in an envelope and address the envelope to "Kid for the Day."
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants.
- Optional: Post the group covenant.
- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and return the card to the bag or box (unless the group decided to change how the Kid for the Day is selected).

If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all to introduce themselves. You might ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from previous sessions and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted a covenant, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1. Write the question—Can we ever solve life's mystery?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , Big Questions and Small Answers
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , UU Responses to Big Questions
- Optional: Single-hole punch and string or ribbon

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt Leader Resource 1 to include only the Big Questions (and short answers) that the group has covered in previous sessions.
- Decide whether you want each youth to (1) hold a slip of paper with a question or an answer (print Leader Resource 1 and cut as shown) or (2) wear one question or answer as a name card on their back, without reading it first (enlarge the text and print Leader Resource 1

on multiple pages, so you can make a name card for each youth). **Note:** Matching the unseen name cards will take longer. Make these slips of paper or name cards.

- Copy Leader Resource 2.

Description of Activity

This activity reviews Big Questions posed in previous sessions and gives youth a context for considering today's Big Question: "Can we ever solve life's mystery?"

Say, in your own words:

Today's Big Question asks if we can ever solve life's mystery. Doing that would mean having pretty clear answers to all the Big Questions. So let's review those we have done so far and see how we are doing.

Hand each participant either a question or an answer from Leader Resource 1. Make sure you distribute both the question and its answer. If you have a large group, provide some questions or some answers to a pair of youth. If the group is small, play the game in two rounds.

Ask participants to find the person who has their match and stand quietly together. When all youth have a match, let each pair read its question and answer. Ask the group whether the answer fits and whether it is complete. Does it really answer the question, or is it just a partial answer? (In every case, the answer is partial.)

As time allows, ask youth if they recall a Unitarian Universalist response to each question. Use the information from Leader Resource 2 as you wish to help the youth develop answers that are more encompassing. Point out that Unitarian Universalist responses to Big Questions are very helpful, but incomplete or still open.

Including All Participants

Adapt the activity to involve the full group, being mindful of participants with limited mobility. You might have the youth with questions remain seated, and the youth with answers walk around to look for their matching question.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — WHY? A PLAYLET IN FOUR SCENELETS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- The story "[Why? A Playlet in Four Scenelets](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Materials for characters' name cards
- Optional: Props for characters

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out the story, "Why? A Playlet in Four Scenelets." Make eight copies for participants to use as scripts.
- Decide how you will assign the eight roles: Narrator, Parent, Little Kid, Pediatrician, Adult, UU Minister, Old Scientist and Old Scientist's Young Friend. Plan to ask for volunteers rather than assign roles and, if possible, give each performer a copy of the story well ahead of time.
- Arrange the meeting space for a simple dramatic play.

Description of Activity

Have participants perform and discuss the playlet.

The group's performance can be as simple or complicated as you wish. If time is short, participants can simply read their lines aloud. With enough time and an ambitious group, let participants prepare the scenelets in advance and add any props or actions they like.

At the end of the presentation, ask the group to identify the play's central messages. Suggest these ideas, if others do not:

- Many big questions can never be completely answered.
- Unitarian Universalism does provide answers to all the big questions. Many UUs share their responses to help themselves and others think about the mystery.
- Mystery is part of why life is interesting.
- When we do find answers to questions, the answers often raise new questions and create new mystery. (In Scene Four, for example, Old Scientist creates something new (the fummagaroochit) from two known things (the thingamadoojit and the whatsamajig). Now scientists and others might have questions about the fummagaroochit. Some will want to find out what happens if you combine the fummagaroochit with something else.

Including All Participants

Present the playlet in a way that involves all enthusiastic participants. Do not put any youth on the spot to read aloud. Provide scripts to volunteers, ahead of time if possible. Offer to help all performers prepare their roles, in order to include youth who may have reading or vision limitations.

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — MYSTERY DAY PARADE (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- Timepiece (minutes)
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Masking tape
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document) , WCUU Script — The Parade
- [Leader Resource 4](#) (included in this document) , UU Mystery Messages
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)
- Large cardboard box or boxes and a utility knife (for adult use)
- Arts and crafts supplies such as large color markers; newsprint or a large roll of paper; poster paper or construction paper; colored ribbons; scissors (including left-handed scissors); cellophane tape; masking tape; tissue paper; and rubber bands
- Optional: Supplies to make props for a celebratory parade; such as balloons (and permanent markers); dowels or sticks and paper for making pennants or banners; cloths or crepe paper for covering floats; and musical instruments
- Optional: Copy(ies) of *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how ambitious to make the group's Mystery Day Parade and floats. Gather supplies.

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- Arrange furniture for a small group arts and crafts project followed by a WCUU broadcast of a parade. Set out arts and crafts supplies and materials. Set up and test equipment and post the backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - Plan a parade route that will allow the camera to capture both video and audio. Either the youth could parade past the camera, or a camera operator could move the camera past the youth in a way that makes it look like the parade, instead of the camera, is moving.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling..." followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Copy Leader Resource 3 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. On-Air People include two Co-Anchors and a NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst. Other youth will make and display Mystery Day Parade floats; some may be interviewed by the Co-Anchors. If the group is small, co-leaders can be Studio Crew. If the group is large, Studio Crew members might include a director, floor director, camera operator, sound engineer, lighting director, script supervisor and multiple production assistants; most of these can also help create parade floats.
- Make a few copies of Leader Resource 4 to share.

Description of Activity

Participants prepare a UU float and/or other entries such as banners and signs, for a Mystery Day Parade, and then present WCUU parade coverage involving three On-Air People (two Co-Anchors and a NUUs Analyst) and an unlimited number of parade participants.

Ask participants if they have ever watched the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on television. Tell them to imagine that the United Nations has proclaimed a worldwide Mystery Day and, this year, there will be a Mystery Day Parade in a large city near you. WCUU is going to televise the parade, and their group is asked to create a float (and whatever else you want in the parade) that includes messages expressing Unitarian Universalist attitudes toward mystery.

Assign roles, using volunteers. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be a Co-Anchor or the NUUs Analyst. Note that the Co-Anchors will improvise as they interview parade participants.

If the group is small, engage all the youth to make a single float from the largest cardboard box you find and decorate it with messages. On-Air People and Studio Crew can work on the float, as well. You might suggest the youth cut wheels from sturdy cardboard and attach them to a cardboard box, using pencils or dowels for axles. Rubber bands around both ends of the dowels will keep cardboard wheels from sliding off.

If the group is large, have small groups make multiple floats and banners with written messages. Use permanent markers to write messages on balloons.

Musicians in the group might plan a marching presentation of Hymn 1003 in *Singing the Journey*, "Where Do We Come From?"

The first two activities in this session should have prepared the group to come up with UU messages about mystery. To help them, distribute copies of Leader Resource 4, *UU Mystery Messages*. If the group is large, consider dividing the resource and giving just two or three ideas to small groups and individuals; that will decrease the time youth need to select ideas and ensure that the parade features a few different messages.

Give the youth at least ten minutes to plan and construct parade contributions. Then explain where you want the camera, On-Air People and parade participants to stand and to move.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

After the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize UU responses to today's Big Question: "Can we ever solve life's mystery?" Help them see that most Unitarian Universalists feel life's mystery cannot be fully solved, but they are content with that and, in fact, celebrate mystery. Ask participants if they

think non-UUs would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing the WCUU Mystery Day Parade coverage?

Including All Participants

Make sure all participants can participate in the parade and can maneuver around equipment or furniture. Make sure supplies are accessible to everyone.

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — OH, YOU MYSTERY (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Handout 2](#), (included in this document) Four Questions
- Pencils/pens

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Read Alternative Activity 3, Challenge Question. Consider moving directly from this activity to the challenge question, if time will allow.

Description of Activity

Youth explore their personal answers to today's Big Question.

Say:

It is WIT Time—or, What I Think time. Imagine you have somehow been chosen as the one person on Earth who will receive the answer to one single Big Question. Imagine—but wait a minute. I'll give you a handout to help with your imaginings.

Distribute the handout and pencils or pens. Review it with the group, and invite the youth to write. Then ask for volunteers to share their responses.

If the group does not like or do well with individual writing, consider forming groups of three to five to talk through the handout with an adult's assistance.

To conclude, ask whether participants agree in their basic answer to today's Big Question: "Can we ever solve life's mystery?"

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with reading and writing, form small groups and let each group talk their way through the handout's challenge with an adult's assistance.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt Taking It Home for the group and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asks, "Can we ever solve life's mystery?" Our general answer to the question is "no." We cannot expect to find absolute answers to the Big Questions. Today we reviewed some of the Big Questions we have considered so far, along with some UU responses to them. Then we performed a playlet showing that people ask important questions all their lives. In fact, asking questions is part of what it means to be human. For WCUU we made UU contributions for a Mystery Day Parade. In WIT Time we talked about what Big Question we each would ask if we knew that it was the only one we could have answered.

Hand out any Taking It Home activity suggestions you have prepared.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to speak these closing words with you: "May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions."

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or chimes.

FAITH IN ACTION: A BIG PRACTICAL QUESTION

Materials for Activity

- Computers with internet access
- Optional: Wireless internet connection

Preparation for Activity

- This activity will be easier if your congregation has a wireless Internet connection and you have access to three or more computers in the same space. Recruit volunteers to provide laptops for use. Let them know you will need to download a

game from the Internet. Security software should be installed on the computers. Once Food Force is downloaded, you will no longer need Internet access to play. However, there are other games on the World Food Programme site that can only be played on the Internet.

- [11 Myths about Global Hunger](http://www.wfp.org/stories/11-myths-about-global-hunger) (at www.wfp.org/stories/11-myths-about-global-hunger) from the World Food Programme website has information you can share on hunger and nutrition.

Description of Activity

Choose from the following possible activities for the group.

Ongoing Faith in Action Project: If the group has chosen an ongoing Faith in Action project to do during Riddle and Mystery, continue work on it now.

Food Force: Sponsor a Food and Fun Night at the congregation, a local school, or other community-gathering place. Download [Food Force](#), a game where you are responsible for dispersing resources to a mythical village that has experienced a natural disaster. Let people play the game.

If the meeting space has internet access, you can set up a computer to play [Darfur is Dying](http://www.darfurisdying.com/) (at www.darfurisdying.com/), which simulates life in a refugee camp.

After playing the games, discuss using the following questions as prompts:

What was your experience in playing the game?

What was surprising? What was disappointing? What gave you hope?

Did you gain any insight into coping with a disaster?

Have you ever participated in anything similar to this experience in real life? If so, how did it compare?

What can we do to help support the United Nations in their relief services? If a group is interested in taking further action, the website includes ideas for actions to take at school and at home. Most of these are adaptable for a congregation.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. How was the mix of discussion and action? Are you continuing to find ways to involve all youth fully in the sessions despite any limitations they might have? Does the group have new behavioral issues you need to

address? Were youth excited about the idea of mystery? Do they not just accept but also celebrate the idea that the Universe is a mystery we can never totally solve?

Look ahead to Sessions 15 and 16 for ways to build on participants' understandings of the programs' themes.

TAKING IT HOME

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science... It was the experience of mystery, even if mixed with fear, that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty—it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude. In this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man. — Albert Einstein

Talk about the quote. Do you agree with it? Are you religious in the same way Albert Einstein said he was? When you look at the stars at night, do you have an appreciative sense of wonder and mystery?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "Will we ever solve life's mystery?" We reviewed UU responses to some of the other Big Questions we have asked in Riddle and Mystery. We saw UUs have many responses to mystery, but mystery will never be completely "solved." Our story showed that questions lead to more questions, and that exploring mystery can lead to more mystery. For WCUU, we created UU materials for a Mystery Day Parade. In WIT Time, we talked about the big questions we most want to have answered.

MYSTERY TOOL KIT

If your family had a mystery tool kit, what would you put in it? Maybe someone knows a lot about science, and knowledge could go in it. Maybe others are very familiar with UU Sources, and our Sources could go in the tool kit. Someone who likes to dance or sing might have tools for celebrating mystery. What else? You decide.

FAMILY MYSTERY

When is the last time someone in your family said: "I don't know. It's a mystery to me." What is the biggest mystery your family has talked about in the last week? Did you solve the mystery? Will you ever solve it?

SHARE YOUR FAVORITE MYSTERY BOOKS AND TV SHOWS

What are some of your own or your family's favorite mystery books, films or television shows? What about

your friends'? If you have a favorite mystery book or movie, share it with a friend or family member. If you really love mysteries, start a mystery book club at your school or congregation.

SHARED SEARCH

Travel to a mysterious place. Maybe it will be a haunted house. Maybe it will be a place where most people do not think about mystery—but you do.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph a mystery or try just the opposite: Photograph something that has no mystery to it at all. Can you think of such a thing? Before you answer "yes," remember some of the Big Questions you have talked about—like where things come from, and what they are. Now see if you can find something that has no mystery at all.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Container with participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1, Notable Thoughts)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Description of Activity

Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "Can we ever solve life's mystery?" Say they can write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks. When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — GATHERED HERE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "Gathered Here," Hymn 389 in *Singing the Living Tradition*—by reading the words aloud, singing together or playing a recording. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Remind/tell the group that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "Gathered Here" in a manner comfortable for you and the group.

Invite participants to respond to the hymn. What does "the mystery of the hour" mean? Do the words suggest that mystery is part of all religious services where the hymn is sung? Do youth feel a sense of mystery when they attend the congregation's worship services? When do they feel a sense of mystery?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

Is there value in asking big questions if we already know we might not ever find the answer?

Extend discussion with these additional questions:

- Would you rather have someone tell you an answer or work it out yourself?
- How are the acts of questioning and looking for an answer holy work/religious work?

- Is there value in asking big questions if we think we already know the answer?

STORY: WHY? A PLAYLET WITH FOUR SCENELETS

Characters

Scenelet One: Narrator, Parent, Little Kid

Scenelet Two: Narrator, Pediatrician, Parent, Little Kid

Scenelet Three: Narrator, Adult, UU Minister

Scenelet Four: Narrator, Old Scientist, Old Scientist's Young Friend

SCENELET ONE

Narrator: A Parent and a Little Kid were at the beach on a nice summer day.

Parent: Look at the sky! It's just as blue as can be! It's a perfect day.

Little Kid: Why?

Parent: Because we won't get wet.

Little Kid: Are we going to swim?

Parent: Sure. That's why we're here.

Little Kid: Why?

Parent: Because it's such a hot day. It will feel good to get wet.

Little Kid: Why?

Parent: Because it will!

Parent: Goodness, the sky is getting dark. I think we'd better go.

Little Kid: Why?

Parent: Because it's going to rain. We might get all wet and yucky. Come on, let's go.

Little Kid: Why?

Parent: Because.

Little Kid: Because why?

Parent: BECAUSE I SAID SO!

Narrator: So the Parent and the Little Kid went home.

SCENELET TWO

Narrator: The Little Kid kept asking so many questions that the Parent was getting very flustered. The Parent made an immediate appointment with the Little Kid's Pediatrician.

Pediatrician: (to Parent) Good morning. What can I do for you?

Parent: The Little Kid never seems to say anything except why and what and when and who and where. I don't think that's normal and it's getting really aggravating! And I'm concerned!

Pediatrician: Well let's have a look. (To Little Kid.) Hi, there, Little Kid. What's the story here? What seems to be going on?

Little Kid: When?

Pediatrician: Anytime. Does anything feel strange? Hurt?

Little Kid: Where?

Pediatrician: Anywhere.

Little Kid: Why?

Narrator: At this point the Pediatrician turned to the Parent and smiled.

Pediatrician: I think everything is just fine. Young children ask a lot of questions, that's all.

Parent: Why?

Pediatrician: One reason is that they are curious. The world is new to them, and they want to know how it works. Also, questions are a child's way of making conversation. They don't have a whole lot to say, but they want to keep talking because that is what other people do. So they ask a lot of questions. I'm sure things will begin to change very soon. Then the Little Kid will say a lot more, and some of it may be harder to hear than the questions.

Parent: Why?

Pediatrician: Kids grow up, that's all.

Parent: When?

Pediatrician: I can't tell you that. It differs from kid to kid.

Parent: How?

Pediatrician: Oh-oh. I think the Little Kid's questions may be contagious.

Parent and Little Kid (together): Why?

Narrator: That's enough for now.

SCENELET THREE

Narrator: The Pediatrician was right. The Little Kid did grow up, and eventually became both an adult and a scientist. One day the Adult who used to be the Little Kid went to talk with a Unitarian Universalist minister.

Minister: Hi, there, Adult. What's on your mind today?

Adult: Questions. All the time I have questions. At work. At home. In worship. On vacation. Questions.

Minister: Any particular kind of questions?

Adult: Big questions. Like why do I exist? Why did my friend have to die at such a young age? Why doesn't my UU congregation have all the answers?

Minister: Because we cannot know for sure the answers to big questions like the ones you just asked.

Adult: So why come here, if you aren't going to give me answers?

Minister: UU congregations and ministers don't have all the answers to big questions. But we do have responses.

Adult: Responses? I don't get it.

Minister: Responses are ideas about the big questions that help us understand life and its meaning. UU responses help us all to think about the mysteries of life and death, the mysteries of everything.

Adult: To think about the mysteries but not to solve them?

Minister: That's right. And that's okay with me. I think the mystery is what makes life life. I think it is wonderful. There will always be big questions and there will always be mystery.

Adult: Maybe you are right. But I have to go to work now. Thanks for your time.

Minister: You are very welcome. Merry mystery and happy questioning.

Narrator: So the Adult went off to work.

SCENELET FOUR

Narrator: The Adult who used to be the Little Kid went off to work. In fact the Adult who used to be the Little Kid went off to work in a science laboratory over and over again, for many, many years. After a few decades, the Adult turned into the Old Scientist, and the Old Scientist kept right on working. Sometimes the Old Scientist's Young Friend worried about that.

Young Friend: How come you keep working, Old Scientist? You are old and deserve some rest.

Old Scientist: Because I have been trying to answer the same question for decades, and I cannot rest until I find the answer.

Old Scientist: The question is: What happens when you combine a thingamadoojit with a whatsamajig?

Young Friend. Oh. Well, good luck with that.

Narrator: Then one day, success!

Old Scientist: Eureka! I did it! Problem solved! End of puzzle! Mystery revealed!

Young Friend: Congratulations, Old Scientist! So tell me! What happens when you combine a thingamadoojit with a whatsamajig?

Old Scientist: You get a fummagaroochit!

Young Friend: Wow! That's great to know. It is also great to know that now you can stop working and get some rest.

Old Scientist: Oh no. Not yet.

Young Friend: Why?

Old Scientist: Because a fummagaroochit is not the only thing you get when you combine a thingamadoojit with a whatsamajig.

Young Friend: What do you get besides a fummagaroochit when you combine a thingamadoojit with a whatsamajig?

Old Scientist: You get a whole bunch of new questions!

Young Friend: What are they?

Old Scientist: That's the first one right there. What are the questions? Another question is: What does a fummagaroochit do? I am just beginning to write down all the new questions. So pardon me while I run back to the lab.

Narrator: So the Old Scientist who used to be the Adult who used to be the Little Kid ran back to the lab. And that's where you will find the Old Scientist today, still answering questions and creating more, still moving deeper into mystery.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

Can we ever solve life's mystery?

HANDOUT 2: FOUR QUESTIONS

Imagine that Mystery has suddenly arrived on earth in a spaceship. Mystery is the wisest being in the universe, who knows all the big questions there are—and the answers. Mystery has agreed to answer just one question from just one person. All the people on Earth have put their names into a giant hat. Mystery has pulled out just one name. Congratulations! The name is yours. You get to ask just one question. So...

1. What is your biggest and most important question? Write it here:
2. Now, imagine a little bit of how Mystery might answer your question. Write it here:
3. Would that answer satisfy you? If so, write "okay" below. If not, write a follow-up question you would want to ask Mystery.
4. Can we ever solve life's mystery? Answer "yes" or "no" what do you personally think?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: BIG QUESTIONS AND SMALL ANSWERS

In addition to these, create your own pairs from the discussions of your group in previous sessions.

Where do we come from?	From mystery and stardust.
What are we?	We are what we do.
Where are we going?	Toward goals we set for ourselves.
Does God exist?	Not on a throne in heaven.
How did life begin?	A Big Bang, and evolution.
What happens when we die?	Nobody living knows
Why do bad things happen?	Because of people and nature.
Is life fair?	No.
How can I tell right from wrong?	The Unitarian Universalist Principles can help.
What is truth?	A mix of what we know and feel.
How am I connected with everything else?	Like a strand of a spider web.
What should I do with my own life?	Follow your calling.
Do I have a soul?	You have a core inner self.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: UU RESPONSES TO BIG QUESTIONS

1. Where do we come from?

Most Unitarian Universalists believe everything in our known universe comes out of the stardust created by a Big Bang. Our history from then to now can best be traced by science. Why there was a Big Bang, and why there is anything at all remains a mystery.

2. What are we?

We are Unitarian Universalists. We are what we say. We are what we do. We are what we make ourselves. These are some of our humanistic beliefs.

3. Where are we going?

We agree that we humans play a huge part in deciding where we are going. We have the power to move individually and together toward goals like peace and justice and equality—goals reflected in our Unitarian Universalist Principles.

4. Does God exist?

Most Unitarian Universalists do not believe in a god who resembles a human, who lives in Heaven and who decides what will happen to people. Many Unitarian Universalists feel there is a power beyond us, a mysterious power we can never fully know. Some believe this power is the power of love. Some UUs, even some Humanists, call that power God, and their ideas of what God is like may vary tremendously. Others call a power beyond us the Spirit of Life, Great Mystery or other names.

5. How did life begin?

Unitarian Universalists believe that science and the theory of evolution best explain how life began. Many UUs enjoy stories and myths about the beginning of life. They see these as artistic and poetic explanations and may find in them some meaning or some truth—but not literal truth.

6. What happens when we die?

Most Unitarian Universalists say we do not know what happens when we die. That is a mystery we cannot fully solve while we are still alive. Most UUs do not believe in a physical afterlife, but a natural ending to our physical beings. UUs have different beliefs about how one's spirit may exist after physical death, but most UUs would agree that we may leave a "spirit legacy" in the people who loved us and the good things we did to make the world a better place.

7. Why do bad things happen?

Not because God or the Devil makes them happen. Nature causes some bad things, and people cause a lot more. The idea of human agency and the tools of science help us understand how, if not why, bad things happen. As Unitarian Universalists, we like to know how and why bad things have happened when that information helps us make things better.

8. Is life fair?

No. Unitarian Universalists generally agree that life is not fair. Our humanist ideas say our job as people is to work for justice and equality and do all we can to make life more fair.

9. How can I tell right from wrong?

Unitarian Universalists find guidance in our Unitarian Universalist Principles, the Golden Rule and ideas from many UU Sources. A very important guide is our inner feelings, especially our conscience. It is helpful to discuss moral issues and decisions with others you respect, and to explore these issues in a faith community like our UU congregations.

10. What is truth?

There are different kinds of truth, such as scientific truth, which can be supported by evidence, and spiritual and moral truths that are based not on science, but on reason, values, opinions, beliefs, and even feelings. These non-scientific truths — such as "all people are created equal" — are some of the most important truths. UUs find their own spiritual truths, with the help of their UU communities and UU Sources. Some truths that UUs share are expressed in the Principles.

11. How am I connected with everything else?

Unitarian Universalists say they have been connected with everything from the Big Bang on. UUs believe all life is connected. Love cements our connections and helps build community. Because of these connections, UUs believe we should act responsibly toward others and all life that shares our planet.

12. What should I do with my own life?

Unitarian Universalists say people should follow their inner calling. Most UUs try to live according to their own beliefs and values. Most find their own beliefs and values reflected in our UU Principles as well as the Golden Rule.

13. Do I have a soul?

Many Unitarian Universalists use the word "soul" to speak of their deepest inner self. They likely do not think of "the soul" as the piece of them that travels to a place called heaven or is reincarnated on earth after death.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: WCUU SCRIPT — THE PARADE

To the Co-Anchors:

Today's WCUU program features the UU entries in a Mystery Day Parade. Your job is to follow the script, read your parts and keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you have a microphone. The parade can be seen in the background.

Co-Anchor 1: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the theme music. Cue Co-Anchor 2.]

Co-Anchor 2: Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name].

Co-Anchor 1: And I am [give your real or stage name]. Today's broadcast comes to you live from the fantastic Mystery Day Parade. We are here to see the wonderful Unitarian Universalist contributions to that parade.

[Director: Cue the parade participants as previously arranged—for example, if they need to move toward the Co-Anchors or begin a parade.]

[Co-Anchors: Describe the UU contributions to the parade as the camera shows them. Talk to each other and to parade participants if you like. Ask participants to tell you about the message of their parade floats and other decorations.]

[Director: Cue Co-Anchors to wrap up parade interviews when they are out of time.]

Co-Anchor 2: Well, [use Co-Anchor 1's real or stage name], it is time to wrap up our coverage of this year's parade.

Co-Anchor 1: Right, [Co-Anchor 2's real or stage name]. Let's get NUUs Analyst to join us.

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to join the Co-Anchors.]

Co-Anchor 2: Good morning, NUUs Analyst. What can you tell us about the UU contributions to this year's Mystery Day Parade?

NUUs Analyst: They are wonderful, Co-Anchors, very wonderful, as your viewers have just seen. You see, nobody enjoys mystery more than UUs do. They truly celebrate mystery. UUs do not expect to ever know all the answers to all the big questions. They love to move through mystery, to solve parts of the mystery and to see new pieces of mystery unfolding before them.

Co-Anchor 1: Thank you NUUs Analyst. That is a very helpful summary.

NUUs Analyst: But wait a minute. Want to know what the biggest mystery of all is?

Co-Anchor 2: And what is that, NUUs Analyst?

NUUs Analyst: Why it is me, of course! I might look simple on the outside, but I am fascinating and complicated on the inside. You can tell that from my dreams. Want to know what I dreamt last night?

Co-Anchor 1: No!

Co-Anchor 2: Sound the theme music!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Co-Anchor 1: This is [your name] signing off for WCUU.

Co-Anchor 2: That is W-C-U-U for Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists. And this is [your real or stage name] signing off, too.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: UU MYSTERY MESSAGES

Here are some UU ideas about mystery. Put the ideas into your own words and use them any way you like as you make a float or another contribution to the Mystery Day Parade.

- Mystery is fun and fascinating.
- The whys of life and death will never be completely known. So mystery grows out of both our experiences of life and our wonderings about death.
- "Life is a riddle and a mystery." These words are in "Where Do We Come From?" Hymn 1003 in *Singing the Journey*.
- Often when we try to answer a question, we find we are asking more questions. So the mystery gets larger, not smaller.
- One of the UU Sources is our own, direct experience of mystery and wonder.
- The fourth UU Principle talks about the search "for truth and meaning," a search that involves exploring mystery.
- Some UUs use "Great Mystery" as a name for a power larger than human life—a power others may know as God.
- UUs celebrate wonder and awe. Neither would exist without mystery.
- Reading 452 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, says we celebrate the "glories and the mysteries" of the gift we call life.
- Many UUs are Humanists. They believe in the power of humans to shape and change our world. Part of that power is our ability to ask questions and search through the mystery for answers.
- UUs accept ambiguity. That means we accept doubt and uncertainty about the big questions.
- UUs accept contradiction, too. If their response to one big question contradicts their response to another big question, they can live with that while they continue to explore and sort things out. If two UUs have each found a different answer to the same big question, they can still share many beliefs, values and Principles—while they both keep exploring.
- UUs accept that an answer to a big question can change. Even if they settle on an answer now, they are willing to think about that big question again, if someday they find that answer unsatisfactory.
- Albert Einstein was not a UU, but many UUs like his ideas. Here is one thing he said: "The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle."

LEADER RESOURCE 5: REV. KOWALSKI ON EINSTEIN

"The Relationship between Religion and Science" by the Reverend Gary Kowalski.

Put on your bifocals to read from the book of Genesis and you're relying on the same laws of optics that astronomers use to tell us the universe could not possibly have been created the way the Good Book says. The irony would be delicious if it weren't so dangerous.

At least since the time of Galileo, science and theology have been in conflict. While the vast majority of Americans profess belief in a deity, ninety-five percent of biologists in the National Academy of Sciences call themselves atheists or agnostics.

The chasm between the two camps is worrisome. For if religion has the power to unleash the best and worst in human nature—from Mother Teresa to Osama bin Laden—technology has the ability to harness the creative and destructive potential of the universe itself. The world can no longer afford either heartless science or mindless faith.

But like a pair of bifocals, science and religion may simply offer differing lenses on our experience. One lens focuses our curiosity, while the other magnifies our awe. The point where the vision converges is in mystery.

Whether discussing divinity or dark matter, a little humility is in order. Isn't plain not knowing better than being absolutely sure of "facts" that just aren't so? Neither science nor religion can completely unscrew the inscrutable. Ultimately, both may be better at questioning our answers than answering our questions.

Science punctures our certainties through a process of falsification. Hypotheses can be invalidated but never conclusively verified. Every assertion about the cosmos contains a grain of tentativeness.

And theology is not so different. "Proofs" of God are seldom convincing (except to those who already believe), and every statement about the ineffable by its very nature is partial and imperfect. Like physicists, who know that an electron can sometimes behave like a particle and other times like a wave, but realize that neither simile matches the utter peculiarity of the subatomic realm, theologians need to recognize that creeds and doctrines are far from capturing the wonders they purport to describe.

Faith comes to us in the form of questions and quandaries. In the book of Job, for example, God speaks in the interrogative mood rather than imperative. "Brace yourself," the Almighty warns Job. "I will ask questions and you will answer." From the whirlwind, God queries, "Where were you when I created the heavens and the earth? Have you comprehended the vast expanse of the world?" A lengthy list of inquiries ensues. "Who sired the drops of dew? Do you know when the mountain goats are born, or attend the wild doe when she is in labor?" And as a result of this relentless quizzing, Job is finally reconciled—not because he has been given any answers or rationalizations that could account for his fate, but because he has been forced to encounter the enigma of existence at deeper, more daunting levels.

Einstein was one who cultivated a taste for mystery. In the last decades of his life, he was regarded as a bit of a crank by other physicists, bent upon a seemingly quixotic quest for a unified field theory when scientific fashion was headed elsewhere. Now, fifty years, later, researchers have rejoined Einstein's pursuit, understanding that while he never did obtain his elusive quarry, he was at least asking the right questions, drawn on by an almost romantic attraction. "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious," he wrote. "It is the source of all true art and science," and also a source of authentic spirituality.

"To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling," proclaimed Einstein, "is at the center of true religiousness."

The lens of science and the lens of faith can complement each other if we realize that neither one offers a complete picture of universe we inhabit. Both are needed if we are to see clearly and walk steadily through this world. For as Einstein said, "religion without science is blind; science without religion is lame."

Rev. Gary Kowalski is the author of best-selling books that explore spirit and nature, including [The Souls of Animals](#) (Stillpoint 1999), [Goodbye Friend: Healing Wisdom For Anyone Who Has Ever Lost A Pet](#) (Stillpoint 1997), [The Bible According To Noah: Theology As If Animals Mattered](#) (Lantern 2001), and [Science & the Search for God](#) (Lantern 2003). His next volume, [Revolutionary Spirits: The Enlightened Faith of America's Founding Fathers](#), will soon be published by BlueBridge.

FIND OUT MORE

Albert Einstein and the Mysterious

Albert Einstein was not a Unitarian Universalist, but his writings often resonate with UUs. Einstein wrote, "The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle."

[Leader Resource 5, Rev. Kowalski on Einstein](#) (included in this document) features a brief article on the relationship between science and religion talks about Albert Einstein and his "taste for mystery."

When Young Children Ask "Why?"

The WCUU script for this session plays on the developmental stage when a child will constantly ask "Why?" In fact, when young children persistently ask

"Why?" they do not necessarily yearn to solve life's mystery, nor might they even have a specific question. Fielding a parent's query on his [website](http://www.drgreene.com/21_564.html) (at www.drgreene.com/21_564.html), Dr. Alan Greene says:

[... By] the time children are able to speak in sentences, it sounds deceptively like they mean the same thing we do. This happens at about the same time their curiosity, imagination, and creativity skyrocket.

They begin to ask, "Why?" "Why?!?" "WHY, Mommy, WHYYYYY?"

I've found that, when I try to answer children at this stage of development with the reason for something, they are left cold. After conversing with thousands of children, I've decided that what they really mean is, "That's interesting to me. Let's talk about that together. Tell me more, please?"

SESSION 15: WHAT TO BELIEVE

INTRODUCTION

Don't believe everything you think. — Bumper sticker

Big Question: How can I know what to believe?

"We teach children that all big questions have many answers, and that it is their duty to search responsibly for the answers that feel right to them." That statement comes from *Welcome: A Unitarian Universalist Primer*, a small book published in 2009 by Skinner House Books. But how will youth know what answers feel right to them?

Most sessions of Riddle and Mystery begin with a big question and then move on to stories and activities that illuminate the question. This session reverses the order, beginning with a fictional treatment of a real event and then inviting the youth to discover the big questions it raises. An art activity reveals that youth differ in what feels right. WCUU involves a group of detectives sharing ideas about finding answers that feel right philosophically. In WIT Time, youth consider which Sources mean the most to them.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "How can I know what to believe?" and explore Unitarian Universalist responses
- Demonstrate that life events open big questions
- Demonstrate that different answers work for different people
- Show that we can best rely on reason, science and observation for answering some questions; we need subjective feelings to answer others; and sometimes we use a mix of reason and feeling to find a satisfactory answer.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify big questions raised by an imagined but realistic event and explore answers to those questions
- Understand that reason, science and observation provide answers most UUs accept

- Consider how individual feelings and personalities lead UUs to different responses to some questions
- Explore various sources for ideas and beliefs
- Identify Unitarian Universalist Sources that resonate for them.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Miracle on the Hudson	8
Activity 2: Soul Art	17
Activity 3: WCUU — The Dream	17
Activity 4: WIT Time — Favorite Sources	10
Faith in Action: Wisdom of the Unitarian Universalist Community	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	5
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Faith Is a Forest	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Thinking of Cats	15
Alternate Activity 5: Covenant Beliefs	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

With everything set to go, carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Reflect on how you find your truths. Do you generally rely on empirical data or a primary source? How much credence do you give your gut feelings about things? Can you compare two answers that both might be true, and sense which one suits you better? Are you comfortable knowing that your own mix of answers to life's big questions may be different from those of close friends, family members and other Unitarian Universalists?

Smile in the knowledge that simply joining your youth in their exploration of life and its mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question and (optional) a plain envelope
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant (Session 1) or revised covenant (Session 9)

Preparation for Activity

- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign and a sheet of newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text.
- Optional: Set out nametags and supplies for new participants.
- Optional: Choose soft background music to play during the Opening.
- Optional: Post the group covenant.
- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the card back in the bag or box. Or, if the group decided to change how the Kid for the Day is selected, follow the new procedure now.

If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas. If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

If you have posted a covenant, direct the group's attention to it and ask if anybody wants to suggest changes. Process suggestions quickly, and amend the covenant as needed.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—How can I know what to believe?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you routinely allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — MIRACLE ON THE HUDSON (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[Miracle on the Hudson](#) (included in this document) "
- Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out the story.

Description of Activity

Introduce the story with words like these:

Often in Riddle and Mystery we have heard a big question and then heard a story to help us come up with some possible answers. Today we will hear a story first. Then, I will ask you to share the big questions it raises in your mind.

The story is based on a true event that happened in January of 2009. U.S. Air Flight 1549 did crash-land in the Hudson River after colliding with birds. All 150 passengers and five crew members were safe. But this version of the story has you in it.

Read the story.

At its conclusion, ask:

- Do you wish you had really been aboard US Airways Flight 1549 on January 15, 2009?
- Would that have been exciting? Frightening? What else?
- The story mentioned a few people's reactions as the airplane was going down. Which stick in your mind? (Affirm, or prompt if needed: prayers to God, saying "Oh, God!" without really believing in God, organizing and helping other passengers get to safety)

Choose one or two reactions (praying, helping others) and ask the youth what beliefs they think the person had who showed each reaction. Help them articulate some beliefs statements, such as "belief that God/Jesus can save them," "belief that what really matters is helping others/doing what you can to fix a bad situation/being optimistic even in a bad situation," "belief that there is a God that listens to prayers in an emergency."

- If you had been on that flight, what big questions might you have asked before you knew you would be safe?
- What big questions might have occurred to you afterward?

As youth frame big questions, record them on newsprint. If needed, prompt with Big Questions from other Riddle and Mystery sessions, or variations:

- Why do good things happen?
- Why do bad things happen?
- What does prayer accomplish?
 - Did God really hear those people praying and answer them?
 - If your answer is yes, did God hear all the prayers, or only the ones that had the right wording?
 - Did God hear the prayers of only good people?
 - What is another way prayers can "work," whether or not there is a God? Whether or not the person praying believes in

any sort of God or gods, can prayer work? How?

To conclude, ask the youth if they agree or disagree with this statement:

People's beliefs are the answers they have found to their own big questions.

Ask them to think about it.

Point out that big questions first came up when people saw events they could not explain. Somebody died, so they asked, "What happens when you die?" They had a mystery on their hands, and that, says Albert Einstein, is why religions came about—to help solve the mystery. Do youth agree with that idea? Do they also agree that religions may have grown stronger when they seemed to provide right answers? (If a religion led people to pray for good things and then good things happened, would that reinforce those religious beliefs?)

ACTIVITY 2: SOUL ART (17 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Arts and crafts supplies such as pipe cleaners, fine-point color markers, water colors and brushes, oil pastels, construction paper, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and tape and glue sticks
- Clean-up supplies such as paper towels and sponges
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain diverse arts and crafts materials—the more variety, the better.
- Set arts and crafts and clean-up supplies at work tables.

Description of Activity

Youth use art to express their feelings about the big questions.

Introduce this creative activity with a quote participants may have considered earlier in Riddle and Mystery (Alternate Activity 6, Session 13), by author Krista Tippett:

In many ways, religion comes from the same place in us that art comes from.

Ask the youth what they think that means. Where is that place that art and religion both come from? Many artists would say it is a place somewhere deep in us which some would call the soul.

Say you want the group to create some simple art now. Point out supplies and invite youth to use any materials they like. The only rule is that the art must have something to do with big questions. Tell the youth they will have ten minutes, and let them begin.

After ten minutes, signal the group with the tingshas to step back from their own work. Invite them to look around at what everybody did. Say, in your own words:

Everybody had the same assignment, yet look at the different responses. What was it that led people to do what they did?

Invite responses. If no one says this, offer, "You each did what felt right to you."

Conclude with comments like these:

People are all different, so we create different art. We do what feels right inside—maybe in our souls—and our souls are all different. If the art we make about big questions is all different, maybe it should not surprise us that the ways we answer big questions can also be very different. Even close friends and relatives, even people who come to our UU congregation, can have different answers to big questions.

Allow a few minutes for youth to complete their artwork, and a few more minutes for clean-up. Make sure all youth are engaged in clean-up.

Including All Participants

Do not put youth on the spot to share artwork. Avoid discussion that may lead to subjective criticism or teasing; the point of the activity is to reveal and celebrate each individual's different approach to big questions and making art.

ACTIVITY 3: WCUU — THE DREAM (17 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set
 - Backdrop made in Session 1
 - Painter's tape or masking tape
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document), WCUU Script — The Dream
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece (minutes)

- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#), (included in this document) or a poster in your meeting space)

Preparation for Activity

- Retrieve real or simulated television studio equipment, backdrop made in Session 1 and other WCUU materials.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting. Do not set On-Air People in front of a sunlit window.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling..." followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.
- Copy Leader Resource 1 for everyone who will need a script for the broadcast. This script has eight On-Air People: Anchor, NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst, a UU Kid and five Detectives. If the group is small, omit some parts or ask some youth to play more than one part; co-leaders can be Studio Crew. If the group is large, expand the Studio Crew.

Description of Activity

Participants present a WCUU show involving eight On-Air People—Anchor, NUUs Analyst, a UU Kid and five Detectives.

Assign roles, using volunteers for On-Air People and Studio Crew. The Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants. You might invite the Kid for the Day to be the Anchor or UU Kid.

Give all who need to follow the script a moment to look it over. Review it with the youth if any participants have limited reading skills.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (director or floor director) to watch the time.

Let the broadcast begin.

At the end of the broadcast, ask participants how it went. Ask them to summarize a Unitarian Universalist response to today's Big Question: How can I know what to believe? Ask the youth:

- Now how would you answer the question?
- Is it reasonable for people to have different answers to the big questions—just as people create different kinds of art and like different kinds of music?
- Do you think non-UU viewers would understand Unitarian Universalism better after seeing this WCUU broadcast?

Including All Participants

Youth with limited mobility can be On-Camera People or Studio Crew; arrange the "studio" so they can perform their role or tasks seated.

ACTIVITY 4: WIT TIME — FAVORITE SOURCES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , Starring Sources
- Pencils/pens

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Be ready to provide specific examples of wisdom Unitarian Universalists draw from specific UU Sources and examples of how your congregation's worship services and other practices draw from the wisdom of specific Sources.

Description of Activity

Participants name people in their lives and identify UU Sources that do or can help them know what to believe.

Distribute the handouts and pencils/pens. Tell them the handout is a worksheet to help them identify Sources they trust and use as they develop their beliefs. Say they need not put their names on the handouts; these are worksheets for their own use. You will discuss the pages together, but they need share only what they wish to.

Review the instructions with the group; make sure youth understand what to do. Point out that the entries in the

first list refer to people and experiences in their lives. The second list describes our UU Sources. Give youth four or five minutes to work on the handouts.

Invite volunteers to identify the five-star item on their first list. What other items on the first list had high marks? Invite comments on their lists and rankings. Who else did they add to the list?

Now turn to the second list. Ask volunteers to share their rankings. It may be helpful to solicit and provide examples of where specific Sources wisdom appears in your congregational life.

Tell the group you hope they will continue to think about who and what they trust most to assist them as they develop their belief systems in the days and years ahead. Say that their sources, as well as their beliefs, are likely to change as time goes by, and that is fine.

Say in your own words:

Most Unitarian Universalists actively engage in a search for answers to life's big questions, not every day but from time to time throughout their lives. We find this search rewarding and encourage one another in their searching, too. We believe it is natural and good for many of our ideas and beliefs to change from time to time.

Including All Participants

If you have participants with limited reading skills, consider reading through the handout with the whole group. Then assist individuals as needed.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt Taking It Home and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session with words like these:

Today's Big Question asks, "How can I know what to believe?" We began with a story that led us to ask some new big questions of our own. Our "soul art" made us think about how different people can be, in terms of both art and religion. In our WCUU broadcast, some detectives talked

about different places people can get help deciding what to believe. For WIT Time, we talked about our own favorite places to look for help shaping our beliefs.

Hand out any Taking It Home activity suggestions you have prepared.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to speak these closing words with you: "May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions."

Extinguish the chalice. Sound the bell or chimes.

FAITH IN ACTION: WISDOM OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COMMUNITY

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Approach your minister, your religious educator and/or lay worship leaders to arrange a time when the Riddle and Mystery group can participate in a worship service.
- Optional: Invite a worship coordinator or your congregation's music director to join the youth for this activity and help plan their part of a worship service.

Description of Activity

If the group has begun an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, consider this short-term Faith in Action project:

Wisdom of the Unitarian Universalist Community

Remind youth that one way Unitarian Universalists find answers to big questions is in community. Say, in your own words:

When we come together, we hear the experiences of others and are ourselves heard. Sharing helps us understand the range and depth of responses to big questions. One place where we commonly share is in worship.

Ask participants if they would like to present some of their learnings from Riddle and Mystery in worship. The group could participate in whole congregation worship, a religious education year-end worship, multigenerational worship or a worship specifically for the religious education community of children and youth.

Assist participants as they decide how they would like to be involved. You might suggest that participants present

a WCUU script, or show a videotaped WCUU segment. They could lead a short Q&A after the service to elicit congregants' ideas about answers to one of the program's Big Questions.

Plan another meeting before the worship service to rehearse. Be sure to offer youth the support, tools and practice they need to be successful.

Including All Participants

Do not pressure youth to take speaking parts if they do not want them; find a variety of ways to involve everyone.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with your co-leaders after the session. How did the session go? How has Riddle and Mystery gone in general? If the group is doing the sessions in sequence, decide whether you could do something special for Session 16, which completes the curriculum. The final WCUU broadcast in Session 16 includes a small celebration. If you are leading Session 16, give some thought to the Big Question it poses: "What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?"

TAKING IT HOME

Don't believe everything you think. — Bumper sticker

Talk about the quote. Have you ever seen it on a bumper sticker? What kind of people do you think have bumper stickers saying that? Would UUs use a bumper sticker like this?

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "How can I know what to believe?" We began with a story that led not to new beliefs but to new big questions. We saw that big questions grow out of our experiences. We said that mystery and big questions are among the reasons that religion exists. We made some art that came from deep inside us and saw that everybody has different art ideas, just the way everybody has different beliefs. In WCUU, a group of private detectives searched for help in knowing what to believe. In WIT Time, we thought about our favorite places, at this time in our lives, where we look for help shaping our beliefs.

FAMILY BELIEFS

In *UU World* magazine of Spring 2008, a father talks about sharing his beliefs with his seven-year-old son. The son had asked about Heaven and death. His father said he believed that when people die they live on in the memories of other people, but not in Heaven. The son

replied this way, "I'll believe what you believe for now, and when I grow up I'll make up my own mind." Talk about this story. Is that how most UU kids decide on their beliefs? Is that the way it is in your family? What age do you think most kids are when they start to develop their own responses to the big questions?

BUILD A FAMILY BELIEF TREE

Use a piece of poster paper and some markers to create a family belief tree. Draw a traditional tree diagram if you like, using horizontal and vertical lines to show all the generations descended from somebody who lived long ago. Write the names of all the family members you know, along with their religions and their core beliefs if you know them. One might have been a Buddhist, for example, or a Roman Catholic, or a UU. Or draw a realistic tree, and hang tags with names and beliefs from the branches of that. The point is to have fun with the drawing and get an idea of some of the most important beliefs held by members of your extended family.

SHARED SEARCH

Visit a place you have never been that can help you decide what to believe. Maybe it is a library, or a museum, or a different Unitarian Universalist congregation.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something that represents a belief of yours. Share the photo and belief with someone.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION — ACTING ON A BELIEF

Think about something your whole family believes related to the Unitarian Universalist Principles, then act on it. Maybe you will choose belief in "acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth." How can your family act upon this belief? Can you participate together in a program at your congregation? If the Riddle and Mystery group will design a worship service, could family members help? Maybe it's as simple as inviting someone you don't know well from your congregation to lunch and listening to their story. Beliefs are more meaningful when you act on them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Participants' Big Questions notebooks (see Session 1, Alternate Activity 1)
- Blank notebooks for new participants
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts is the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Provide new participants with notebooks. Say that the notebooks are private; you will keep them between sessions but not read them.

Tell the youth they will have about five minutes. Remind them of today's Big Question: "How can I know what to believe?" Say they can write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

When time is up, offer that they may seal their notebooks with masking tape before handing them in. Collect the notebooks.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — FAITH IS A FOREST (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "Faith Is a Forest," Hymn 194 in *Singing the Living Tradition*—by reading the words aloud, singing together, or playing a recording. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Remind/tell the group that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "Faith Is a Forest." Invite participant responses to the hymn. Do they like it? How does the hymn connect belief and action? What does it mean by the plea that the singer's beliefs "speak through me in all I do and say"? What is the relationship of faith and belief?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

What happens inside you and to you when you act against your own beliefs?

If discussion is slow to start, offer an example: you believe everybody should be treated fairly and with dignity. You also believe in the Golden Rule. But when your friends start teasing another friend about that friend's looks, you join in. What happens to you? How do you feel? What if you don't join in the teasing, but you don't do or say anything to stop it, or to help your friend?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: THINKING OF CATS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document) , Cat Questions
- Pencils/pens
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)

Preparation for Activity

- Make a copy of Leader Resource 2 for each small group of three or four youth.

Description of Activity

This activity helps youth understand how beliefs about big questions can help shape responses to daily events.

Tell the group they are going to look at beliefs and cats. Divide participants into groups of three or four. Give each group a pencil and a copy of Leader Resource 2. Say that the groups will meet separately and to consider answers to the "Cat Questions" on Leader Resource 2. They can use the pencil to make notes on the page if they wish, but they do not have to write whole answers. They will share their thoughts in a few minutes when the groups get back together.

Give the groups seven or eight minutes to answer the questions. If some finish very quickly, encourage them to think again and see if they can find some alternate ideas.

Bring the groups together to share their ideas. How did having new "religious" ideas change what they thought about the cat? How would the ideas change their actions? How do they think ancient people decided that cats were divine or reincarnated humans? How have they decided in their own lives what to believe about cats?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: COVENANT BELIEFS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Group covenant (Session 1) or revised covenant (Session 9)
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources ([Session 1, Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document) , or a poster in your meeting space)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the group's covenant.

Description of Activity

Ask the group to review its covenant and decide what basic beliefs it reflects. If discussion is slow to start, direct the group's attention to your posted UU Principles. Ask them whether the group's covenant reflects any of the Principles. Which ones? How? What other beliefs does the covenant reflect (not all will be found in the Principles)?

Encourage discussion with these questions:

- Does this covenant reflect your beliefs about how people should act together and treat each other? Which ones? Does it reflect the Golden Rule? How?
- Do you think this covenant is a good one?
- Is it missing anything? What?

Including All Participants

A group review of the behavior covenant may raise personal or interpersonal issues. Be ready, as needed, to gently suggest individuals talk further with you alone about any specific conflicts or disappointments they express. Be sure to set a specific time for that conversation before the end of the session.

STORY: MIRACLE ON THE HUDSON

The date is January 15, 2009.

The time is 3:06 p.m.

You are on board U. S. Air Flight 1549, still on the ground at LaGuardia Airport in New York City. You are excited. This is the first time you have been on a plane without your family.

Today is a Thursday. You got out of school early to catch the plane. You are going to Charlotte, North Carolina, to be with your cousins and help prepare for a weekend wedding. The rest of your family will join you there Saturday.

You have a middle seat on the plane, between two large adults. You strain your neck to look out, and the woman in the window seat asks if you wish to switch seats. You smile and say yes.

You take your new seat, fasten your seat belt and watch out the window. In the distance, you see a flight of geese, and you wonder what it would be like to fly like that. You hear all the regular announcements about seat belts and stuff, but you do not pay much attention. After all, you have flown before.

You think about the great gift you are bringing in your suitcase to the wedding. The plane starts to taxi.

The time is 3:26 p.m. You feel the plane lift up off the runway. You watch out the window and hope for a great view of New York.

You sit back and hope they will serve a good snack. Suddenly there is a jolt. Now the whole feeling of the plane changes. You sense that it is going down, not up.

You lean forward and look out the window. The engine is on fire!

"Look!" you say to the woman who gave you her seat.

"We're going down!" she says. "Put your head on your knees!" And you do.

You hear voices around you. Some of them are praying. You hear yourself speaking out loud. "Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh my God!" you say over and over again. (Whenever your friends ask, you always tell them you do not believe in God. But you do not think about that now.)

"Brace for impact!" the captain says from the cockpit. Flight attendants are telling other passengers to put their heads down.

You wait. It seems like forever. The woman beside you puts a hand on your shoulder. It feels good.

You wait. Then WHAM. The plane hits.

You wonder if you are dead. You do not think you are. You raise your head. "Where are we?" you ask.

"I think we are floating on the Hudson River," the woman says. "I hope this thing floats! Let's get out of here!"

People are beginning to stand up. They are talking about what to do, how to get off. Somebody says "Children first!"

"Let's go!" the woman says. She takes you by the hand.

You want to say that you are okay. You are not a little kid. You can wait with everybody else. But the words never get out of your mouth.

You crawl past the two adults. You reach the aisle and look toward the back of the plane. You see water, and you do not like that. You turn the other way and head for the opening, where people are already climbing out of the airplane.

Some people are crying. You move with the crowd. You reach the door. You go out, and there you are, standing in the cold on the airplane wing.

Somebody hands you a life vest and says to put it on. Five different people ask if you are okay. "Yes," you say. "Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes."

Ferries and other boats are heading toward the plane. Helicopters are zipping around in the sky.

"Get into that raft," somebody says. You want to tell them, "No, I can wait." But your mouth won't do that. You get into the raft, and off it goes, away from the plane.

Minutes later, you are on a ferry heading toward shore.

More minutes later, you are in a building somewhere, with everybody else. You see the woman who was sitting next to you and wave. She waves back. You hear that there were 156 people on the plane, and that every single one of them is safe.

"Wow!" you say. You begin sharing stories with other passengers. You wish you had been picked up by a helicopter. That would have been cool.

"I said about a thousand 'Hail Marys' up there," somebody says. You know that is a form of Catholic prayer. Other people also say they were praying.

You wonder if your family knows what has happened. You hope they are not worried.

People keep asking your name and checking it off on lists.

"Stay right there!" somebody tells you, and you do. "Come with me," the same somebody says, and the somebody looks official, so you do. You hope you are

not being kidnapped. You have already had enough trouble for one day.

"Look over there," the somebody says, and you see your family. They have not yet seen you. They look very upset and worried.

"Hey!" you yell. "Here I am! I'm okay! I'm okay!"

You have survived an airplane crash. You want to walk slowly and proudly to your family. But your feet have a different idea. They start running.

Your family has a lot of arms. You hope you will not be smothered in everybody's hugs. You have already had enough trouble for one day.

You say your terrific wedding gift is gone. "Don't worry about it," everybody replies. "We can get another gift. We can never get another you."

Later, as you stand around arranging a new flight, you remember last Sunday. Your Riddle and Mystery group was talking about big questions. You are glad that you still do not know the answer to the one about what happens when you die. You just came way too close to finding out.

"Come to think of it," you tell yourself, "after what just happened, I have some other big questions." You know you will be thinking about those questions on your next flight.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

To the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs. The first is getting your group excited about hearing today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one leg first, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal "Stop!" Then read today's Big Question. Here it is:

How can I know what to believe?

HANDOUT 2: STARRING SOURCES

We all develop our own belief systems as we move through life. Beliefs live inside us, but they develop with lots of help from outside ourselves.

Here are two lists. The first names different people you might find helpful as you try to answer life's big questions. The second names different UU Sources you might find helpful.

Read the first list carefully. Draw five stars next to the people you now trust and talk with most as you develop your beliefs. Then give as many stars as you like to everybody else on the list. Some of them might get zero stars. The rest can get up to four stars each.

Repeat the process with the second list.

Then relax. You are done.

List 1

Parent(s) or caregiver

Other family member(s)

Friend(s) your age

Friend(s) who are older

Teacher(s)

TV/Film star(s)

Sports star(s)

Favorite musician(s)

Adults or older youth in our UU congregation

Adults or older youth in your school community

Other (write it in) _____

List 2

1. 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 that create and uphold life. (Your own experience of mystery and life.)
2. Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. (Great men and women.)
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life. (All the world's religions.)
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves. (Judaism and Christianity in particular.)
5. Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit. (Science and reason.)
6. Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature. (Pagans and others who learn from the earth.)
7. Unitarian Universalist history, heritage, and faith.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: WCUU SCRIPT — THE DREAM

To the Anchor:

Today's WCUU program is a UU Kid's dream. Your job is to follow the script, read your part, and otherwise keep things going. When the broadcast begins, you are alone, sitting or standing in front of a microphone.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the theme music. Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

Good morning. I am [give your real or stage name], and I am here in the WCUU newsroom with an unusual report, a wonderful report, call it a dream report. Let's bring UU Kid in to explain.

[Director: Cue UU Kid joins Anchor at the microphone.]

Anchor: Good morning, UU Kid, and welcome to our show.

UU Kid: Thanks for having me.

Anchor: You look wide awake this morning, UU Kid. I understand that was not the case a couple of Sundays ago.

UU Kid: That is correct, [use Anchor's real or stage name], but I can explain. I was up very late the night before.

Anchor: Working on homework, I assume?

UU Kid: No. I was at a party. When I got home I watched TV. My parents went to bed, and I stayed up.

Anchor: And they got you up for church the next morning.

UU Kid: Right. And that was a day we had no RE, so the kids were in the worship service.

Anchor: Sermon and all?

UU Kid: Sermon and all. I guess it was a good one.

Anchor: You guess? Don't you know? Weren't you there?

UU Kid: I was there, but I kind of went to sleep.

Anchor: Did your parents wake you up?

UU Kid: They tried. They gave me a big nudge every time I snored, but I stayed asleep.

Anchor: I understand it was a great sleep because it had great dream.

UU Kid: I thought it was great.

Anchor: [to camera] So did our producers, and that's why they asked UU Kid to come here and tell us about the dream. So it's all yours, UU Kid.

[Director: Cue Anchor to step aside. UU Kid is alone on camera.]

UU Kid: I did hear part of the minister's sermon. It was about standing up for what you believe. That can be tough, the minister said. But not as tough as figuring out what you believe, to begin with. That sounded right to me, and that's what I was thinking of when I dozed off. So there I was, snoring away, and I dreamt I was rich. Rich, and wondering what to believe. But I couldn't even figure out how to know what to believe. So I hired a squad of private detectives.

[Director: Cue the Detectives to gather around UU Kid.]

First Detective: Yeah, boss?

UU Kid: You guys must be good at knowing what to believe, right?

Second Detective: Sure, boss. We believe whatever we find out.

UU Kid: So how can I know what to believe?

Third Detective: Sounds like a job for us, boss.

Fourth Detective: Right. As long as money's no object.

UU Kid: Money's no object. You're hired.

Fifth Detective. Okay, boss, we're on it. We'll let you know when we've got something.

[Director: Cue Detectives to move off camera.]

UU Kid: The detectives reported back one at a time.

[Director: Cue First Detective to join UU Kid.]

First Detective: Hiya, UU Kid.

UU Kid: Hiya, back. Did you find out how to know what to believe?

First Detective: I found one thing. Trust is a big part of it. If you trust someone, you might hear some useful beliefs from them.

UU Kid: You mean, people I trust the way I trust my family?

First Detective: You got it, boss. In fact, your family is a good place to start with beliefs. Ask your mom or dad what they believe and see if it fits for you.

UU Kid: Do I have to believe what they believe?

First Detective: No. A lot of kids start off that way, and that's great. Then as they grow older, they develop their own beliefs.

UU Kid: But how do I know whether what they believe fits me?

First Detective: Trust again, boss. Trust yourself. You will know if it fits. You will know if it doesn't.

[Director: Cue Second Detective to come in and First Detective to step out.]

UU Kid: Hey.

Second Detective: Hey.

UU Kid: So, what have you got?

Second Detective: Community. That's what I have got. You have a community of friends. You have a UU community. You have a school community. People in all those communities will help you know what to believe.

UU Kid: But they will say different things. How do I know which ones to believe?

Second Detective: You have to know who to trust, boss. That's what you have to figure out.

UU Kid: How do I do that?

Second Detective: You got me there, boss. All I know is community works. Ask one of my partners.

[Director: Cue Third Detective to come in and Second Detective to step out.]

UU Kid: Wow! This dream moves fast.

Third Detective: We're a dream team.

UU Kid: Then tell me how to figure out what to believe.

Third Detective: Easy. Three words: observation, reason, science. Trust your own eyes and your own ears. Trust your brain to figure things out, boss. Trust science because scientific proofs work over and over again. That's what they are all about. Science rules!

UU Kid: I think you are right about that. That is pretty easy as far as it goes. But what about the stuff that can't be proved? Like belief in God and life after death and all that?

Third Detective: Well, I only looked at science and reason and observation. See what Fourth Detective has to say about all that other stuff.

[Director: Cue Fourth Detective to come in and Third Detective to step out.]

UU Kid: So, Fourth Detective, what have you got to say?

Fourth Detective: Gut.

UU Kid: Gut? What does that mean? Gut?

Fourth Detective: [slaps own stomach] Gut. That's what it means. Gut. You know in your gut what to believe. That's what you can trust most of all. Your gut.

UU Kid: You mean all my beliefs are already in my gut?

Fourth Detective: No. Some ideas come from inside, but a lot come from outside. What your gut tells you is what feels right to you.

UU Kid: What if nobody else agrees?

Fourth Detective: That's okay. It's your gut. Everybody else can trust their own gut. It's sort of like art. What feels right to my gut in terms of art could feel wrong to your gut in terms of art. That's okay. It's like our gut is testing things for our soul, our inner self.

UU Kid: Wow. That's deep!

Fourth Detective: Yeah. [Slaps stomach again.] That's where the gut is, really deep. But look, I gotta go.

UU Kid: But I need to find out how to get all those outside ideas you talked about.

Fourth Detective: Try Fifth Detective for that.

[Director: Cue Fifth Detective to come in and Fourth Detective to step out.]

UU Kid: So where do I get all these big ideas for my gut to react to?

Fifth Detective: Hah! It's right over there on the wall!

UU Kid: [looking around] It is? Where?

Fifth Detective: [pointing] Right over there, boss. The UU Sources.

UU Kid: I should have known.

Fifth Detective: Think about it. All those Sources! Every one of them represents years of wondering and thinking and writing and talking and meditating and thinking again. And all those Sources have something useful to say, something that serious people somewhere believe.

UU Kid: But all the Sources are different. I bet they tell you to believe different things.

Fifth Detective: Right. And parents are different, too. Communities are different. And scientists are different, too. So are guts. You have to decide what beliefs fit you best.

UU Kid: All by myself?

Fifth Detective: No, not by yourself. A lot of people will help. UU communities are really good at that. But look, I'm on my way. Another client is calling.

[Director: Cue Anchor to come in and Fifth Detective to step out.]

UU Kid: Then I woke up. I was still in the worship service. But I think my dream really helped.

Anchor: Does that mean you are working on your beliefs?

UU Kid: Yes, [Anchor's real or stage name]. I'll be talking with the minister about that at my appointment this afternoon.

Anchor: You have an appointment with the minister?

UU Kid: Yes. My parents said I had to apologize for falling asleep in the sermon. But I don't mind. Now I have something to say.

Anchor: Well thank you, UU Kid, thanks very much.

UU Kid: My pleasure.

Anchor: Now for a quick analysis by our favorite NUUs Analyst!

[Director: Cue UU Kid to step out and NUUs Analyst to join Anchor.]

Anchor: So, NUUs Analyst, did that dream really help the UU Kid figure out how to know what to believe?

NUUs Analyst: Yes, it did. The dream detectives said what most UUs believe: Your family, your friends and your UU community can all help you figure your beliefs. Science, reason and observation also mean a lot. But when it comes to beliefs you cannot prove, it is time to turn to some other UU Sources. As you search through them and everywhere else, you will find wonderful ideas that somebody, somewhere, believes. Then it is up to you. Only you can decide which beliefs fit you best.

Anchor: That sounds like a lot of work.

NUUs Analyst: It is. But you don't have to do it right now or all at once. Many UUs enjoy a lifetime of search and increased understanding. They wonder at the mystery of life and they delight in the detective work of trying to solve it.

Anchor: Thank you, NUUs Analyst. That is just what we needed to know. Which brings us to the end of our show.

NUUs Analyst: Wait a minute! We were talking about dreams. I had a great dream last night. Do you have an hour or two to hear about it?

Anchor: No! We have under a minute and that is for music!

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: CAT QUESTIONS

In your small group, try to answer the following cat questions. Take notes if you like, but you need not write full answers. You will discuss your ideas when the small groups get together.

Part 1. Somebody tells you, "There is a cat in a tree."

1. How do you decide whether to believe that statement?
2. Imagine that you know there really is a cat in a tree. How will you decide what to believe about how the cat got there?
3. Which Unitarian Universalist Sources can help you most to decide why the cat is in the tree?
4. How many different explanations can you come up with of how the cat got into the tree? What are they?
5. What should you do about the cat in the tree?

Part 2. Now, assume that you live in ancient Egypt and you believe:

- Cats are divine.
- Any cat could be a deity in disguise.
- Any cat could be the reincarnation of a dead Egyptian empress.
- Cats should never be harmed or killed.

Now:

1. Why do you think the cat is in the tree?
2. What should you do about the cat in the tree?
3. How are your answers different from what they were before?

FIND OUT MORE

Individual Beliefs, Shared Faith

Watch the 10-minute video, "[Voices of a Liberal Faith](#)," on the UUA website. As diverse members and ministers share their thoughts on worship and community, a picture emerges of how being together as Unitarian Universalists supports each individual in an ongoing search for authentic, personal beliefs.

Harvest the Wisdom Our Six UU Sources

This session answers the question "How can I know what to believe?" by providing strategies for a lifelong search. One such strategy is to seek the wisdom of our Unitarian Universalist Sources. The Winter, 2009 Families pages in UU World magazine highlights our Sources. Read a story about how Mahatma Gandhi harvested a variety of sources in his own, dynamic search for true beliefs.

SESSION 16: UU ME

INTRODUCTION

Be ours a religion which, like sunshine, goes everywhere;

Its temple, all space;

Its shrine, the good heart;

Its creed, all truth;

Its ritual, works of love;

Its profession of faith, divine living.

— Theodore Parker

Big Question: What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?

Unitarian Universalist youth often first think seriously about what our faith means to them when they enter a Coming of Age program, typically in eighth or ninth grade. Asking sixth graders to ponder the question can nurture and support their developing lives of faith through the middle school years. This session offers potential answers and a fun, thoughtful conclusion to Riddle and Mystery. It asks youth to identify common UU ideas about mystery, faith and big questions. They consider a UU teen's story about her Unitarian Universalist experience and create a final WCUU broadcast.

Plan to spend a little more prep time than usual on WCUU; it includes a presentation of WCUU lifetime press passes and a party.

GOALS

This session will:

- Pose the Big Question "What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?" and explore a variety of responses
- Guide youth to explore the roles of religion, spirituality, faith and faith community in their life journeys
- Offer one teenager's experience of Unitarian Universalism
- Help youth shape simple statements of what Unitarian Universalism means to them
- Celebrate the conclusion of Riddle and Mystery.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Deepen their understanding of religion, spirituality, faith and faith community, and how these concepts apply to their own lives
- Gain ideas about what Unitarian Universalism does or can mean to them
- Articulate what Unitarian Universalism means to them in a simple statement
- Celebrate the conclusion of Riddle and Mystery.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: UU Understandings	12
Activity 2: Story — My UU Experience	8
Activity 3: WIT Time — Human Chalice	5
Activity 4: WCUU — UU Youth Speak	27
Faith in Action: Unitarian Universalist Service Committee	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Notable Thoughts	15
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Be Ours a Religion	5
Alternate Activity 3: Challenge Question	5
Alternate Activity 4: Parent Time	30
Alternate Activity 5: Youth Visits	15
Alternate Activity 6: School Bus Talks	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

With everything set to go, carve out a meditative moment for yourself. Relax. Take several deep breaths. Think for a moment about what Unitarian Universalism means to you. Were you raised UU? If not, how did you first find UUism? How do you explain Unitarian Universalism to friends and family members who are not UUs? How might you briefly state what being a UU means to you?

Smile in the knowledge that simply joining youth in their exploration of life and its mysteries is good and rewarding.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- [Handout 1](#) (included in this document) , Today's Big Question
- "Today's Big Question" sign
- Kid for the Day bag or box
- Optional: Nametags and markers
- Optional: Quiet background music and music player
- Optional: Group covenant (Session 1) or revised covenant (Session 9)

Preparation for Activity

- Post the "Today's Big Question" sign with a sheet of newsprint beneath it.
- Write the chalice lighting words on another sheet of newsprint, and post.
- Print out a copy of Handout 1. Fold it to conceal the text.
- Optional: Prepare to play background music during the Opening.
- Optional: Post the group covenant.
- Optional: Post an agenda for the session.

Description of Activity

Greet youth as they enter, and introduce yourself to any you do not already know. If the group uses nametags, invite everyone to wear one. If new youth join this session, add their names on card stock to the Kid for the Day bag or box.

Sound the bell or tingsha chimes to call for silence.

Reach into the Kid for the Day bag or box and select a name without looking. Announce the name and place the card back in the bag or box. If the group decided to change how the Kid for the Day is selected, follow the new procedure.

If a Kid for the Day seems reluctant, allow them to pass. Draw another name or invite the participant to select one.

Indicate where you have posted the chalice lighting words. Invite the Kid for the Day to light the chalice while you lead the group in reciting "May this chalice light show the way as we search for answers to our biggest questions and seek to understand life's deepest mysteries."

Invite the group to share a moment of silence. End the silence by sounding the bell or tingshas.

If new participants have joined the group, invite all, in turn, to introduce themselves. You can do more of a check-in, but keep it focused.

You may wish to ask if anyone did any Taking It Home activities from the previous session and would like to briefly share what they did.

Announce that it is time to hear the Big Question of the day. Hand the Kid for the Day a copy of Handout 1 and help them understand and implement the instructions. Write the question—What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?—on the newsprint under the "Today's Big Question" sign.

Ask the Kid for the Day to extinguish the chalice.

Including All Participants

If the group includes youth who may have difficulty reading, be sure you allow the Kid for the Day to pass.

ACTIVITY 1: UU UNDERSTANDINGS (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Handout 2](#) (included in this document) , UU Ideas
- Pencils/pens
- Description of Activity and (optional) newsprint with the group's ideas about religion, faith and spirituality from Session 2, Activity 5, Then What's a Religion?
- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Session 2, Activity 5, Then What's a Religion? Retrieve and read the newsprint notes from that activity. You may wish to post them for this activity.
- Copy Handout 2 for all participants. Decide how you will present and process the Handout 2 activity, depending on the learning styles in the group. Either:

- Provide Handout 2 to be filled out as an individual worksheet and then processed as a group.
- Or, read aloud each statement on the handout to the whole group and record their "votes" on each statement. Then process their answers as a group.

Description of Activity

This activity reinforces UU ideas from previous sessions about big questions, faith and mystery.

Distribute Handout 2 with pencils/pens and ask participants to check ten statements with which they think most UUs would agree. Once participants have marked their handouts, read the statements with them and decide as a group which best express UU ideas. The exceptions are 5 ("If I study hard enough I can correctly answer every big and little question there ever was.") and 9 ("The UU religion is the only religion with the right answers to the big questions.") Regarding statement 5, explain that most UUs agree we can never completely answer some big questions. Regarding statement 9, explain that UUs include among our Sources other religions which may offer wise responses, but not exact answers, to big questions. Say, in your own words:

When it comes to most big questions, UUs believe there are few "right" answers—only answers that are right to you. We believe that no one religion has the only right answers for everyone. We respect that different people and different religions embrace different answers to the same big questions. We can often learn from the answers or ideas of others.

When you have finished with the statements, review some ideas about faith, spirituality and religion presented earlier in Riddle and Mystery. You might re-use some discussion prompts or re-post newsprint from Session 2, Activity 5. Reviewing these concepts now will give youth confidence to speak about their UU faith, religion and spirituality as this session proceeds.

Variation

Add motion to the activity by reading each statement aloud and asking the youth to stand or raise their hand if they think it represents the thinking of many Unitarian Universalists. Count the responses to each statement and note them on your handout or on a posted sheet of newsprint.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — MY UU EXPERIENCE (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[My UU Experience](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it interactively, as suggested.
- Decide whether you want to do Alternate Activity 6, School Bus Talks, immediately after youth hear and process this story.
- Find out whether your congregation has ever engaged its older UU youth to talk with adults or younger youth about their personal experiences with faith, religion and/or spirituality. Be ready to tell the group about such programs that have occurred in the past. If possible, plan a similar event for them. Alternate Activity 5, Youth Visits, describes such an event in more detail.

Description of Activity

Tell the group that in today's story a high school senior from Massachusetts talks about her experiences in Unitarian Universalism. Mention that the story is a little like an "elevator speech" about our religion—a very short explanation of Unitarian Universalism that a person could give in the time it takes to travel between floors on an elevator. You might also call it a "school bus speech." If youth will do Alternate Activity 6, School Bus Talks, suggest they listen for ideas in the story that they might include in their own elevator or school bus speech about being a UU.

Read the story interactively, as guided.

At the end of the story, ask:

- In what ways does Margaret's experience sound like yours?
- Did you hear any examples of religion, spirituality or faith in Margaret's story? (Affirm the examples youth contribute. You might restate a definition of religion, spirituality or faith, if appropriate, but do not worry too much about the shades of definition. It is most important that the youth identify aspects of Margaret's UU story that resonate for them.)
- After hearing Margaret's story, what do you think "faith community" means? What do you think it means to Margaret?

Mention, as appropriate, any programs in your congregation where older youth speak to the congregation or younger groups about their own faith.

ACTIVITY 3: WIT TIME — HUMAN CHALICE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Flashlight(s), preferably a durable, larger model
- Optional: Examples of UU chalices

Preparation for Activity

- Assess the size and physical capacities of the group.
 - See "Including All Participants" if anyone has mobility limitations.
 - If the group is large, plan to bring several flashlights and invite youth to work in small groups to make multiple chalices.
- If possible, darken the room.
- Note that the human chalice is also part of Activity 4, WCUU — UU Youth Speak. Adapt the WCUU script to incorporate the method of human-chalice building you have chosen.
- Optional: Visit the UUA website Leader's Library to view and print out a variety of images of [Unitarian Universalist chalices](#).

Description of Activity

Participants create a human chalice.

Explain that you will invite participants to think like a group of Unitarian Universalists and collaborate to make a symbol of our shared faith.

Gather youth in a tight circle (or, multiple, small group circles) on the floor, sitting with their legs extended so their feet meet in the center of the circle. Place a flashlight in the center of the circle. Invite the group to work cooperatively to create a common Unitarian Universalist symbol: a chalice. There is a challenge: they cannot use their hands.

Acknowledge the chalice variations found across our faith, including the off-center chalice. Show the group examples of UU chalices you have printed out. Invite the group(s) to design and construct a human chalice as they wish.

One way to create a human chalice is for participants' extended legs to represent the bottom of a chalice bowl, and their upper bodies the wall of the bowl. The flame is represented in the center by the flashlight. Using only

their feet and working together cooperatively, they can raise the flashlight so it points upward. For an additional challenge, see if the youth can light their chalice using only their feet.

After the youth create the chalice(s), ask if this work had anything in common with the work the group has done in Riddle and Mystery. Affirm that the program has asked them to work together, to find common answers while acknowledging we won't all agree on everything, to explore our faith which is co-created by all the individuals who choose to be part of it.

Including All Participants

Consider the physical capabilities in the group.

If any youth who cannot sit on the floor with their legs stretched out, have the group form a tight circle of chairs. They can form a human chalice in a few different ways: For example, they might turn their backs to the center of the circle, allowing their raised arms and upper bodies to be the side of the chalice bowl, their upper legs the bottom of the chalice bowl, and their lower legs will be the pedestal.

Another option: choose a few volunteers to form a human chalice in silence. Invite others to work together on a plan and coach the volunteers to implement it.

ACTIVITY 4: WCUU — UU YOUTH SPEAK (27 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Flashlight(s) for human chalice (Activity 3, WIT Time — Human Chalice)
- Newsprint, easel, markers and tape; or, a sheet of poster board
- Snack and beverages
- Microphone(s), video camera(s) and tripod(s), real or simulated
- For studio set: Backdrop made in Session 1
- [Leader Resource 1](#) (included in this document), WCUU Script — UU Youth Speak
- [Leader Resource 2](#) (included in this document), About Unitarian Universalism, and a basket
- [Leader Resource 3](#) (included in this document), Lifetime WCUU Press Passes
- Paper for On-Air People's name cards, markers and string or tape
- Timepiece (minutes)

- Optional: Music player for theme song (see Session 1)
- Optional: Studio lights (flashlights will do)

Preparation for Activity

- Make copies of Leader Resource 1 for everyone who will need one. If needed, adapt the WCUU script to incorporate the method of human-chalice building you chose for Activity 3, WIT Time. The script has two On-Air People—the Anchor and NUUs (pronounced "News") Analyst. If the group is large, the Studio Crew might include a director, a floor director, a camera operator, a sound engineer, a lighting director, a script supervisor and multiple production assistants.
- Print out Leader Resource 2. Cut the statements into strips of paper, and place the strips in a basket.
- Prepare lifetime WCUU press passes (Leader Resource 3).
 - On newsprint or poster board, write these instructions: (1) Read your UU statement. (2) Share: What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me? Post the newsprint near where the camera operator will stand, as you might post a cue card.
- Obtain snack treats and beverages. Be mindful of participants' food allergies or restrictions and plan accordingly. Plan for a co-leader and youth volunteers to set out the refreshments while other youth prepare for the broadcast.
- If necessary, arrange furniture, set up and test equipment and post backdrop. If you plan to record WCUU:
 - Make sure electrical outlets are nearby if you will need them.
 - Pay attention to lighting.
 - If you are using on-camera microphones, direct On-Air People to speak toward the camera. Invite the Director or Floor Director to use the phrase "Quiet on the Set... Rolling..." followed by a silent countdown from five, using the fingers of one hand, ending with pointing to the On-Air Person to cue them to begin speaking.

Description of Activity

This WCUU broadcast has four parts and involves all the youth on-camera. The parts will flow easily as the Anchor and Director, following the script, guide the participants. Here is an overview:

Part 1. Some youth will form a "youth chalice" based on the human chalice they made in Activity 3, WIT Time — Human Chalice.

Part 2. Individual youth, in turn, do two things on camera: (1) Read a statement about Unitarian Universalism and (2) share any personal responses they have to today's Big Question: "What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?"

Part 3. A co-leader joins the youth on camera, distributes lifetime WCUU press passes and announces a special end-of-program snack.

Part 4. Anchor and NUUs Analyst close the show while the group enjoys the snack.

Explain the roles in this WCUU broadcast: two On-Air People (Anchor and NUUs Analyst), youth who will make a human youth chalice and a Studio Crew. Tell the group:

Unlike our other WCUU broadcasts, today everyone including at least one leader will also have a speaking part—you will find out what these are in a moment.

Assign roles. You might offer the Kid for the Day a chance to be the Anchor or NUUs Analyst. The NUUs Analyst should be someone who is also willing to be part of a human youth chalice. Determine who will make the human youth chalice(s) and explain where they will do it—a space well clear of video equipment.

Show the group where you have posted the instructions that tell individuals what to say when they are on camera. Show everyone the basket filled with slips of paper from Leader Resource 2, About Unitarian Universalism. Explain that they will choose a slip of paper from the basket and read aloud the statement on it. Then, they may say a response of their own to today's Big Question ("What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?").

Suggest they each take a moment to plan what they might say. If the group did Alternate Activity 6, School Bus Talks, remind them of some phrases they used.

Distribute scripts to all who will need them. Engage the Director and the Anchor to determine where the human chalice will be and how youth will line up to take their turns on camera.

Make sure the Anchor has the basket of slips of paper and the on-air co-leader has the Lifetime WCUU Press Passes.

Tell the group when the show should end to keep the session on schedule; assign a Studio Crew member (Director or Floor Director) to watch the time.

Begin the broadcast.

Afterward, ask participants how it went. Suggest they keep their lifetime WCUU press pass someplace where it will remind them of their Unitarian Universalist connections and how our faith helps us each approach big questions.

Ask youth to put aside any remaining snack and gather for the Closing.

Including All Participants

Use your knowledge of each youth's capabilities to gently make sure everyone is comfortable with and ready for their on-camera role. Offer to help prepare any youth who have reading, vision or other limitations. Have all the youth choose a slip of paper from the basket before beginning the broadcast so anyone who needs extra time or help can have it. If someone cannot move easily to a position in front of the camera, plan to move the camera instead of the participants. Let anyone who wishes "pass" on being on camera.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Bell, tingsha chimes or other sound instrument
- Taking It Home handout

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt Taking It Home and copy it for all participants.
- Write the closing words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Briefly summarize the session:

Today's Big Question asks "What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?" We reviewed UU ideas about faith, mystery and big questions. We heard a young woman's story about her experiences being a UU. In WIT Time we showed our religion is made up of people by making a human UU chalice. For our last WCUU we shared our ideas about Unitarian Universalism. You each received a lifetime

WCUU press pass, and we had a snack to celebrate Riddle and Mystery.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout. Suggest participants use the activities to continue exploring the themes of today's session.

Relight the chalice. Ask the group to say these closing words with you:

May this light shine on in each of us as we search for the answers to our own biggest questions.

If you wish, add a few extra, formal words of closing:

May the light shine on in each of us. May our search continue through all the years of our lives.

Add some informal words saying that you enjoyed Riddle and Mystery, and you hope the youth did, too. Thank them for being part of the program. Tell the youth, as appropriate, what lies ahead for them in religious education for the remainder of the year or their next year.

Ask a few volunteers to remain when the session ends to help clean up.

Extinguish the chalice (or ask the Kid for the Day to do it). Sound the bell or tingshas to end the session.

FAITH IN ACTION: UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Computer(s) with Internet access and/or print-outs of information from the [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee \(UUSC\) website](http://www.uusc.org/) (at www.uusc.org/)

Preparation for Activity

- If this is the last meeting of the group, plan to start the Faith in Action time by leading a short feedback discussion about what the group has accomplished and learned by doing their Faith in Action project(s). Help the youth understand a clear end point to their project(s). If possible, provide meaningful follow up about the impact the youth have had, or be ready to announce when and how you will communicate such follow-up to the group.
- Have enough adults to supervise, focus and assist youth using computers for Internet

research. Invite parents, or adults from the congregation's social action committee.

- Find out if your congregation currently supports any UUSC economic justice projects. If so, find how the youth can help. Invite a member of the congregational social action committee or another adult who knows about the UUSC project(s) to talk with the youth.
- Post a sheet of blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

If this is the last meeting of the Riddle and Mystery group, lead a short discussion of what the group has accomplished and learned. For the remainder of the time, if the group has an ongoing Faith in Action project, continue work on it.

Or, consider this short-term Faith in Action project:

The UUSC and Economic Justice

Affirm that being a Unitarian Universalist means we work for worldwide economic justice. Explain that the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee promotes justice with a variety of projects around the world. Invite the group to find out what the UUSC is doing about economic justice and how they might assist.

If an adult guest is present to discuss the work of the Service Committee, introduce them and ask them to briefly describe your congregation's involvement in UUSC economic justice projects. Distribute print-outs you have prepared about the UUSC and its projects, or invite youth to use the Internet to explore the UUSC website. Have youth use computers in small groups with an adult.

What you discover will depend on UUSC operations at the time of your research. The UUSC website provides a section called Our Focus Areas; click on "Economic Justice" to see choices including Supporting Workers' Rights, Advancing the Fair Wage Movement and Promoting Fair Trade. Note that fair wages is an easy concept for sixth graders to grasp. They may wish to work on the "10 dollars in 2010" campaign, an effort to establish a minimum wage level of 10 dollars an hour in the year 2010 by writing to local legislators, making posters to interest the congregation in supporting the effort or seeking to connect with local interfaith groups which might be promoting the same cause. The action could be as simple as helping conduct the Guest at Your Table program in your congregation.

Give the youth plenty of time to learn about the UUSC—its history of the UUSC and the range of its efforts. Help youth understand and take pride in the fact that their

own UU identity means that they and their families are part of the group that makes the UUSC possible.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Meet with co-leaders after the session to reflect on it. How did it go?

Talk about how the Riddle and Mystery program has gone in general. If time is short, consider meeting again soon to reflect at more length on your use of Riddle and Mystery. Plan how you will document your suggestions regarding its next use in the congregation.

Congratulate yourselves for giving a gift of time and energy to your congregation's sixth graders. Consider meeting sometime to enjoy each other's company without the pressure of making either plans or notes for the future.

TAKING IT HOME

Be ours a religion which, like sunshine, goes everywhere;

Its temple, all space;

Its shrine, the good heart;

Its creed, all truth;

Its ritual, works of love;

Its profession of faith, divine living.

— Theodore Parker

Talk about the quote. Does it seem like a good summary of UU ideas? Use the Internet to find out about Theodore Parker. Here is a little information to get you started: Parker was a Unitarian minister in the 1800s. He lived and preached in Massachusetts. He helped lead the struggle to end slavery in the United States.

WHAT WE DID TODAY

Today's Big Question asks, "What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?" We began by considering Unitarian Universalist ideas about mystery, faith and big questions. We heard a high school girl's story about her experience as a UU. In WIT Time, we created a human chalice. In our WCUU broadcast, we shared some ideas about Unitarian Universalism and what it means to us. We finished the session by celebrating Riddle and Mystery and thinking about what our group will do next.

TALK ABOUT FAMILY RELIGION

Talk about how much Unitarian Universalism means to your family. Are you as involved with your congregation as you wish to be? How is your religion involved with your family's actions to promote justice? To take care of

the Earth? Do members of your family spend time volunteering to help others? Do you show your UU identity with chalice jewelry or a chalice in the home?

SHARED SEARCH

Do something new in your congregation. Find a friend to venture with you into a new area such as singing in a choir, leading younger children's religious education programs, or taking a role in worship services or hosting a coffee hour. Ask a parent, a Riddle and Mystery leader or your minister or music director to assist you with information and help you try something new. You might want to explore UU options outside your congregation. Becoming more involved could be a good thing for both you and Unitarian Universalism.

TAKE A TRIP

Visit a Unitarian Universalist place where you have never been—another Unitarian Universalist congregation, or a UU event such as a District youth event or workshop, the annual UUA General Assembly or a UU retreat center.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Photograph something very special about your own UU congregation. Try for a shot that says something about Unitarian Universalism.

FAMILY FAITH IN ACTION —CONGREGATIONAL FIX-UP

Does your congregation have work days, when people come to fix up your building and grounds? If so, participate in the next one as a family. If not, take on your own physical project at your building. Maybe you can spruce up the entryway to make it more appealing to visitors. Probably, your congregation has a building and grounds committee that has some ideas for you, perhaps a project your family can do together with another family in your congregation.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NOTABLE THOUGHTS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag or box containing participants' Big Questions notebooks
- Pencils or pens
- Masking tape
- A large roll of plain paper and assorted arts and crafts decoration supplies and materials including color markers, scissors (including left-handed scissors), glue sticks and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a large surface where you can roll out a large section of plain paper for the youth to cut into covers for their notebooks.

Description of Activity

Notable Thoughts has been the first Alternate Activity in each session of Riddle and Mystery. In this two-part concluding activity, participants write their final notebook entries and make covers for their notebooks.

Part 1. Remind participants that this is a time for them to record their own ideas about today's Big Question. Distribute participants' notebooks and pencils or pens. Remind the youth that the notebooks are private and that they will take them at the end of this session.

Remind them of today's Big Question: "What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?" Say they will have about five minutes to write about anything they want. Their ideas can be as different as they wish from what you have talked about so far. If youth have nothing to record, they are free to doodle or relax.

Give them a few minutes to work quietly in their notebooks.

Part 2. While participants are writing, roll out the plain paper on a work table or the floor and set out art materials. Call an end to the writing time and invite youth to make a cover for their notebooks. Suggest they cut paper to the size of their notebook, then put a title, their name and an illustration or decorations on the paper. Invite the youths to show their covers to each other and to take their notebooks home for re-readings and possible additions. If their notebooks contain mostly (or all) doodles, they can still keep them and add some thoughts (along with more doodles) whenever they wish. Point out that keeping their notebook can help them explore and revisit, over time, how being a UU is important to their lives.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — BE OURS A RELIGION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy(ies) of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: A recording of the song and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how best to present the song "Be Ours a Religion," Hymn 1058 in *Singing the Journey*—by reading the words aloud, singing together, or

playing a recording for the group. If you wish, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity.

- Obtain copies of *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*.
- Optional: Ask the music director or choir director to make a recording of the song.

Description of Activity

Remind/tell the group that Unitarian Universalists often express our ideas in hymns. Introduce "Be Ours a Religion," Hymn 1058 in *Singing the Journey*.

Ask what the youth think of the hymn. Does it describe the religion they know from their own Unitarian Universalist experience? Does the song describe the way they want their religion to be? If they had written the song, would they have added any words? Left any out? Changed any? If their changes were part of the song, would the song still fit Unitarian Universalism?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGE QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Write the challenge question on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Challenge questions guide a deeper inquiry for especially thoughtful individuals and groups. For this session, ask:

What do you think of this quotation from the Danish poet and scientist Piet Hein:

Knowing what

Thou knowest not

Is in a sense

Omniscience.

Explain that "omniscience" means "knowing everything;" the lines could be restated, "If you know what you do not know, then you know everything."

What do participants think? Can you make the same statement about other verbs (e.g., "Dancing what you do not dance is in a sense dancing everything")?

Point out, if participants do not, that the quote suggests that being aware of a weakness can turn that weakness into a strength. Ask the youth:

- Does knowing your weakness help make that weakness a strength?
- Is not knowing the answers to a big question a weakness, a strength or neither? Why?

Remind the group that most Unitarian Universalists are comfortable living with mystery. Knowing what we do not know helps us continue to explore the unknown and be ready to discover even more that we do not know.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: PARENT TIME (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Recorded WCUU broadcast(s) and video player
- Items made by participants in previous Riddle and Mystery sessions
- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Check with co-leaders and your religious educator to determine when and where you will invite the youth and their parents/families to gather.
- Review previous sessions for concepts and the group's creations you think will interest parents. Gather ideas and items to share.
- Optional: If you have videotaped WCUU broadcasts, consider showing one. Or, find someone with the skills and equipment to edit a sampler—about five minutes of WCUU footage.

Description of Activity

Invite youth to plan a session to share with their parents what they have done in Riddle and Mystery. Share any ideas you have or plans you have made. Lead a brainstorm and record ideas on newsprint.

A gathering with parents can run as long as the group wishes and be held at any time. Parents might join you for half an hour following the religious education time or for half an hour before a worship service. Or, include a sixth grade youth-and-parents time as one activity in a congregational family night.

At the event, youth might perform a favorite WCUU segment, ask parents for their own thoughts about a big question or two, or share other activities from the program.

Including All Participants

Be sure that the plans will involve all the youth. Make sure each youth has an opportunity to present something.

Avoid scheduling the gathering for a time when some youth might not have transportation, or when you think some parents' work schedules prevent them from coming.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: YOUTH VISITS (15 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- With your religious educator, identify a few older youth in the congregation to visit the Riddle and Mystery group to talk about what Unitarian Universalism means to them. Invite the older youth to prepare a two- or three-minute presentation. Encourage them to bring photos or other items to help explain the experiences they will talk about. Ask them to be ready to answer questions from the group.

Description of Activity

Invite older youth from the congregation to visit the group to talk about what Unitarian Universalism means to them. Perhaps some participated in Coming of Age programs and can talk about the process and what it meant to them. Perhaps they might share a credo they have written. Some may have participated in UU youth camps, conferences, volunteer projects or other events, and can report on their experiences and their meaning to them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 6: SCHOOL BUS TALKS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape
- Optional: Paper and pencils/pens
- Optional: Participants' Notable Thoughts notebooks

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how to structure the activity, for the learning styles in the group and the time available.

Description of Activity

Participants practice talking about their faith.

Remind participants:

An elevator speech about being a UU is a short explanation of what being a UU means to you.

Say that youth probably speak more often with others their age on school buses rather than on elevators. Ask them to imagine they are riding a bus home from school on a Friday, thinking about their plans for the weekend. When they mention a church event, someone asks, "What is a UU, anyway?" How would they describe Unitarian Universalism or their UU congregation to a friend who is not a UU? Invite the youth to develop brief "school bus talks" about being a UU. (It does not matter if youth actually ride a bus to school. The talk can be used at any time or place.)

You can do this in three different ways:

- Distribute paper and pens/pencils. Have individuals simply write their own brief school bus talks, then share them with the group.
- Use newsprint to collect ideas from the whole group and develop a school bus talk together.
- Form groups of three and four. Ask each small group to develop a school bus talk to have one volunteer share when the full group regathers.

If the group has been using Notable Thoughts notebooks, they might be helpful in this activity.

STORY: MY UU EXPERIENCE

"My UU Experience" is taken from the website of the First Universalist Society in Franklin, Massachusetts, and used by permission of its author, Margaret Barthel. The UU Congregation of Mendon and Uxbridge, like the Franklin congregation, is in Massachusetts.

Note: *Members of the Franklin congregation who use the "FUSF" abbreviation usually say the four letters in a row.*

Leader: What is it like growing up UU? Think about that for a minute. Then listen to what a high school youth had to say about the subject. The youth is Margaret Barthel. This is how she told her story to her own congregation at the First Universalist Society in Franklin, Massachusetts.

What's it like growing up UU? Well, first of all, the Elevator Speech is great in grade school. Imagine this: You're a fifth grader, and a bunch of your friends are all stating their religion. "I'm Catholic," says one. "I'm Jewish," says another. And then someone asks you the question: "Hey, what religion are you?" You smile slowly (milking it for all it's worth) and then enunciate proudly: "I'm a Unitarian Universalist." Of course, your announcement has the desired result: The kids all look at you in awe; they all clamor to know what those really really long words mean; the earth shakes; lightning cracks the sky in two; and you are queening it over all the fifth-grade cosmos, simply because you are a Unitarian Universalist and no one else knows what in heck that means.

Leader: Have any of you been asked similar questions? How have you replied? When somebody else asks what the long UU words mean, what do you say? [Allow some responses.]

All levity aside, this growing up UU question is a poser because being UU is such a personal experience for me. I'm not really sure where the growing up UU piece of my childhood stops and where the vast rest of it all begins, because Unitarian Universalism has always been inextricably tangled with who I am.

So, I guess the only thing for it is to describe snapshots of my life that have UU things in them. You be the judge of whether my experience is accurate or not.

The first thing I remember about growing up UU was my brother and [me] standing up on the pews so that we could see the hymnal over our parents' shoulders, since we were far too short to see anything otherwise. The pews in question were the pews of the first church I ever attended, the Mendon-Uxbridge UU church. . . .

I remember other things about these years: How excited I always was to get to dress up to go to church. How the

parish hall was big enough to play games in. How I was a shepherd in one Christmas pageant and an angel in the next.

But all good things, even pew-standing, must come to an end. . . . Eventually we moved to this church, First Universalist Society in Franklin, affectionately known as FUSF.

And so, as a transplanted nine-year-old, I put in my first appearance at FUSF's Marvin Chapel. Church still didn't mean a whole lot to me, other than that it was something to do on Sundays, but now it was fearsome because I had to meet a whole other bunch of people. Nevertheless, I got signed up for UU Journey and Sunday school and the whole bit. . . .

Leader: UU Journey is a program in which FUSF's third and fourth graders learn about the UU Principles. [If your congregation has a similar program, draw the analogy for the youth.]

UU Journey was a turning point for me in understanding what it meant to be a UU. I have always liked when things are written down on paper, assignments that I can check off in an orderly way. So, when I got that UU Journey workbook, I got right down to business. Suddenly, church and the Seven Principles weren't just something that I went and did on Sundays—they were things that I was supposed to live by throughout the week.

Leader: Do you agree with Margaret, that Unitarian Universalism and the Principles are things you should live by even when you are not here together? Does anyone have an example? [Allow some responses.]

... [A]ll in all, it has been a great ride here at FUSF so far, full of self-discovery and happiness. Need some examples? Well, there's how I overcame the idea of being the second little violinist in church. There's how awesome Youth Group is—so awesome that we've all gone swimming in Lake Pearl when it was 65 and rainy and stayed up half the night at lock-ins. There's how I did my Coming of Age credo and lost most of my fear about speaking to large groups. There's how I'm on first-name and hugging terms with our minister. There's how I get to sing in the choir and complain about the high notes before 9 in the morning. . . .

Leader: [Explain, as appropriate, what the Coming of Age program is like and when it is offered in your own congregation. Explain that a "credo" is a statement of belief.]

What good memories do your youth have of their experience in your own congregation? [Allow responses.]

Margaret has some more stories, too.

There's how I get to make you all laugh at the Senior Youth Service. There's how I've found wonderful friends of all ages, some with rather unusual fruity names.

I hope I'm making it clear that I think this is a very special community, one that I can count on to be accepting of me no matter what. As a teenager trying to navigate the tricky social maze of being not quite a child and not quite an adult, this place and this religion are havens. Isn't that what Unitarian Universalism comes down to, after all? Unconditional, respectful, and compassionate acceptance of the individual and their beliefs? It doesn't matter how many people I'm friends with at school, or how I dress, or what my aspirations are. I love that. That's the reason I don't quit coming to church, even when all my other obligations crowd in—because Unitarian Universalism is no-holds-barred love.

Leader: Do you agree that this is what Unitarian Universalism comes down to? Unconditional acceptance of the individual and their beliefs? Are there any limits on that? In other words, could somebody believe something or act in ways that other UUs simply would not accept?

[Allow some discussion; affirm that we promote individuals' freedom to find their own beliefs and that Unitarian Universalist Principles guide us to treat others with respect and compassion. Actions that hurt others are not in keeping with our Principles.]

This coming year I'll be a senior, so my days at FUSF as a regular member of the Barthel row are numbered. While I'm not sure if I'll ever be able to find a church community like this when I go to college, you all have made a deep UU impression on me.

I'll leave you with this: at most of the colleges I've been considering, I check around for UU things on campus or in the surrounding area. . . .

Leader: That is the end of Margaret's UU story—for now. Do any of you know older UU youth who have gone off to college or other places? Has finding UU connections in their new locations been important to them?

You are in the middle of your UU youth story right now. I wonder where it will go from here... That is another big question.

HANDOUT 1: TODAY'S BIG QUESTION

For the Kid for the Day:

You have two jobs: The first is getting the group excited about hearing Today's Big Question. The second is announcing the question.

1. Say to the group, "Give me a drum roll!" Then wait for a minute while the drum roll builds. (Here is how to do a drum roll: Everybody slaps their thighs, one side first with the same side's hand, then the other, back and forth, beginning gently and getting louder and louder.)

2. When the drum roll is good and loud, hold up your hands to signal, "Stop!" Then read Today's Big Question:

What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?

HANDOUT 2: UU IDEAS

Here are 12 statements about mystery, faith and big questions. Ten of the statements are ideas shared by most UUs. Read the statements and put check marks next to the ten you think most UUs share.

- 1. Life is "a riddle and a mystery," just as the song by Brian Tate says.
- 2. Life starts with the mystery of where we come from.
- 3. Life ends with the mystery of what happens when we die.
- 4. So life is a journey between mysteries.
- 5. If I study hard enough I can correctly answer every big and little question there ever was.
- 6. My UU religion can help me understand the riddle and the mystery of life.
- 7. My own gut feelings can also help me figure things out.
- 8. My faith includes everything I think and feel about the riddle and the mystery,
- 9. The UU religion is the only religion with the right answers to the big questions.
- 10. My UU faith helps me know how to act.
- 11. I can figure out a lot of stuff, but I cannot completely solve the riddle and the mystery.
- 12. Life is a riddle and a mystery, and I like it that way.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: WCUU SCRIPT — UU YOUTH SPEAK

To the Anchor:

In today's WCUU program, everyone in Riddle and Mystery will be part of the show, forming a human chalice and sharing thoughts about being a Unitarian Universalist. Your job is to follow the script, read your part and otherwise keep things going.

Before the show begins, make sure everyone knows where to be at different times during the broadcast. As the show begins, you are standing alone on camera.

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is WCUU, Wisdom of the Community of Unitarian Universalists, on the air.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

Anchor: Good morning. I am [say your real or stage name], here in our studio for our final broadcast. Joining me now to form an unusual human chalice are many of the sixth graders at [say your congregation's name.]

[Director: Cue the human youth chalice to get into formation. Cue camera operator to focus on the human youth chalice.]

Anchor: Now there is a wonderful youth chalice! Let's hear what these youth each have to say about our faith, Unitarian Universalism, and today's Big Question, "What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?"

[Director: Cue camera operator to focus on the individual—someone not in the human chalice!—who will read the first statement and give their own answer to the Big Question. Cue the other youth to queue up as you decided before the show. Cue the Anchor to hand the basket to the person for them to choose a slip of paper.

Anchor: [Name of the first youth], what do you have to tell us?

First youth: [Reads their slip of paper aloud and then briefly answers "What does Unitarian Universalism mean to me?"]

[Director: Cue youth who are part of the human chalice to quietly separate and join the queue. Continue until all the youth have spoken.]

Anchor: That was wonderful! Thank you all! Um... I did not get a chance to say anything about today's Big Question. [Anchor chooses a slip of paper from the basket and reads it aloud. If they wish to, they may also provide their own, brief personal answer.] Oh good. Well now we know how some UUs respond to the question of what Unitarian Universalism means to them. Let's ask NUUs Analyst to tell us what this means.

[Director: Cue NUUs Analyst to joins Anchor on camera.]

[Director: If you have decided to do so beforehand, cue the youth to remake the human chalice (without the NUUs Analyst this time).]

NUUs Analyst: Good morning [use Anchor's name].

Anchor: Good morning to you, NUUs Analyst. Now, what can you tell us about what Unitarian Universalists have to say?

NUUs Analyst: A whole lot. There are about 165,000 adult members of UU congregations and about 56,000 children and youth. That means at least 221,000 answers to today's Big Question. Unitarian Universalism means lots of different things. It is a wonderful way to explore mystery and all sorts of big questions. It helps all its members and friends on their faith journeys. It gives them a way to participate in great social justice programs. It gives them a faith community, and it gives them much more.

Anchor: Thank you, NUUs Analyst. That is a wonderful summary.

NUUs Analyst: But that was only four answers. I have about two hundred twenty thousand, nine hundred and ninety-six to go!

Anchor: Sorry, NUUs Analyst: We don't have time for that.

NUUs Anchor: So can I come back next week?

Anchor: Sorry about that, NUUs Analyst. WCUU goes off the air today. This is the end of Riddle and Mystery.

NUUs Analyst: It is? I didn't know that. [Begins to sob uncontrollably.]

Anchor: It isn't that bad, NUUs Analyst. We can find something else that is fun to do!

NUUs Analyst: [To the youth who are back in the human chalice formation] Did you hear that, guys? Riddle and Mystery is ending today. You should be crying too!

[Director: Cue the youth in the human chalice to begin sobbing uncontrollably.]

Anchor: Help! I don't know what to do.

[Director: Cue Riddle and Mystery leader to join Anchor and NUUs Analyst.]

Leader: I can help. Stop weeping, guys! I have two surprises for you.

[The crying stops.]

Anchor: Oh yeah? Surprises? What are they?

Leader: The first one is this. Our WCUU broadcasts might be ending, but our UU search is not. It never really ends. So I have a WCUU Press Pass for each and every one of you, with your name on it. Your press pass entitles the bearer to explore the riddles and mysteries of the universe through all of life, and maybe beyond. Keep asking those Big Questions!

Anchor: Wow! Cool!

[Director: Cue youth to come forward to get press passes.]

Anchor: So what is the second surprise?

Leader: Because this is our final meeting of Riddle and Mystery, we have a special, celebratory snack.

[Director: Cue youth to start eating snack.]

Anchor: Let me at it!

Leader: We will get the snack out, Anchor. You go ahead and close the show so all our viewers don't have to sit around watching us eat.

Anchor: Okay. Let's go with the music.

[Director: Cue the theme music.]

[Director: Cue the station break.]

[Director: Cue the Anchor.]

Anchor: This is [your real or stage name] signing off for WCUU.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: ABOUT UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

Some people ask if Unitarian Universalism is really a religion. The answer is "yes." Unitarian Universalism is a community of people engaged in search for answers to big questions — religious questions. That is what a religion does. And a religion helps people decide what is right and wrong; helps people make meaning of life; helps people find purpose. Unitarian Universalism does all of these.

Unitarian Universalism is a community of more than 220,000 people — children, youth and adults — gathered in congregations in the United States. [[Many more adults in the U.S. who are not members of congregations also say they are UUs. And more Unitarians, Universalists, or Unitarian Universalists live in other countries.]

Unitarian Universalism is a creedless religion. There is no written creed that all members must accept as truth. But UUs share a great many beliefs and values.

UUs have seven great Principles and six wonderful Sources (seven counting our own Unitarian and Universalist history and heritage as a Source!).

UUs respect the interdependent web of all existence and believe in the stewardship of all living things and Earth itself. And UUs believe our faith communities make a very special, interconnected web of members and friends.

Unitarian Universalism is a humanistic religion. Some UUs believe in God. All UUs believe humans have great responsibility for our own actions, for all other people and all life, and for what happens to the world and universe.

UUs celebrate mystery.

UUs trust science and reason and observation. UUs trust themselves.

UU congregations are wonderful places for adults, youth and children to make friends with people of all ages.

UUs proudly embrace all kinds of diversity.

In different UU congregations, you may see very different worship services and find different beliefs.

Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religion. This means it offers freedom of belief, accepts people with very different beliefs, is open to new ideas, and welcomes change in response to new understandings.

Unitarian Universalism supports equal marriage. We think any couples who love each other should be able to get married. We have a hymn that says, "We are gay and straight together."

Ministers are very important in many UU congregations. But ministers do not run the congregations where they work. The members do.

Unitarian Universalism has great religious education programs. One of them is called Our Whole Lives. That is a program about human sexuality.

Unitarian Universalism does not tell kids what to think. However, it does try to help us think.

UUs talk a lot about faith in action. More importantly, UUs try to put their faith into action by living our values and trying to make the world more just.

The Unitarian Universalist Association has its national offices in Boston. (Every UU district also has offices.) The UUA is the national organization of Unitarian Universalist congregations.

More than 1,000 congregations support the UUA. Most try to send members to an annual national meeting called General Assembly. The GA meets in a different city every June.

You need to believe in God — and in a certain concept of God — to belong to some religions. That is not true of Unitarian Universalism. You can be an atheist, an agnostic or a theist and also be a UU.

When you ask UUs a purpose of faith, some say it is to seek truth.

Many people in many religions say they have answers to all the big questions. Many people in the UU religion say they have found friends to join in the search through life's great mysteries.

Christians say the night Jesus was born was a holy night. A UU religious educator named Sophia Lyon Fahs said, "Each night a child is born is a holy night."

Many UU congregations have middle school and high school youth groups. These groups meet together to build community, have fun, do social action, develop leadership, and find out more about Unitarian Universalism. The youth have a lot of say about what their groups do.

Many religions have special symbols. A symbol of Unitarian Universalism is the flaming chalice.

Some UU congregations meet in old-fashioned church buildings. Some meet in very modern buildings of their own design. Some meet in other people's buildings that were made for other purposes.

Not all UU activities take place in congregational buildings. There are many fun UU retreat centers. Some are at the ocean, some are in the mountains and at least one is on an island. Some UU families go to such places every year, often in the summer.

Hebrew and Christian scriptures (the Bible) are important to Unitarian Universalism, just as it is to other religions. But most UUs who read the bible read it for its stories and wisdom. They do not believe it is a literal history of the human race or the only source of answers to our big questions.

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FIND OUT MORE

A Sense of Belonging in Unitarian Universalism

The quarterly UU World magazine provides a lively section, Families, drawn from religious education materials produced by the UUA Resource Development Office of the Ministries and Faith Development staff group. Find informative, inspiring stories, reflections and activities to support your personal understanding, belonging, and lifelong inquiry in Unitarian Universalism.

In a 1990 pamphlet, Unitarian Universalist Views of Church edited by Rev. Lawrence X. Peers, several Unitarian Universalist ministers and members discuss their views on what it means to belong to a UU congregation. [Read the pamphlet online](#); order from inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop.

Theodore Parker

Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt's [UU World review](#) (at www.uuworld.org/2003/03/bookshelf.html) of American Heretic: Theodore Parker and Transcendentalism by Dean Grodzin provides background on the minister's life, ideas and influence.

Piet Hein

Find more [Piet Hein short poems](#) (at <http://www.archimedes-lab.org/grooks.html>), which he called grooks, online.