

SPRING  
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# Families

WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

STORY FOR ALL AGES

## Clara Barton Resourceful Faith in Action



**People call me a nurse—I scarcely know why. There were no nurses then... My work...chiefly has been to get timely supplies to those needing. It has taught me the value of things.**

—Clara Barton (1821-1912), interview in the *New York Sun*

**CLARA BARTON**, the Universalist who founded the American Red Cross in 1881, earned the name “Angel of the Battlefield” for her determined first aid to soldiers wounded in the U.S. Civil War. To a bleeding soldier, perhaps half-conscious or delirious with pain and fear, Barton’s female face and healing hands may have seemed angelic. Yet the genius and the long-term impact of Barton’s Civil War work lay as much in her resourcefulness as in her kind touch.

In her girlhood in rural Massachusetts, Barton devoted a stretch of many months to the care of her brother, David, recovering from a serious fall. As a young woman, the theme of practical service carried her into work as a teacher, and then as a clerk in the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C. When a group of Massachusetts soldiers arrived in the nation’s capital after an ambush in Baltimore, Barton met the men at the train station and

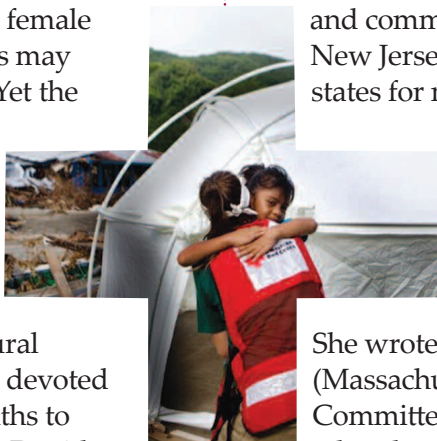
brought the seriously hurt home to nurse. From local merchants, she solicited the supplies and food the men needed.

As more troops arrived in the capital, Barton’s role expanded. She reached out to soldiers’ families and communities in New York, New Jersey, and other Northern states for more supplies. With the first Battle of Manassas, wounded men streamed into the city. Barton stepped up her solicitations.

She wrote to the Worcester (Massachusetts) Ladies’ Relief Committee, advising exactly what the women could send.

On the battlefields, the need for food and medical supplies was intensely desperate. The U.S. Sanitary Commission, charged with the logistics of supply to the Civil War front, had neither the supplies nor the capacity to meet the need. Barton petitioned the War Department to

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**ABOVE:** Red Cross volunteer comforts a child near her destroyed home in Pago Pago, American Samoa. ©Talia Frenkel / American Red Cross.

**Recycle  
and  
regenerate.**

The Families pages are adapted from Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development programs.

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bring six wagons full of supplies into the aftermath of battle at Culpeper, Virginia. Working for two days and nights without food or sleep, Barton tended to wounded Confederate prisoners. To Manassas, Antietam, and Fredericksburg, Barton brought supplies and the skills to put them to use.

Barton acted on her Universalist belief in every person's equal value. She left a teaching job in New Jersey after the school she had made a success hired a male principal at almost twice her salary. Later, when she worked at the U.S. Patent Office, she lauded the fairness of her pay, equal to that of male colleagues. After the Civil War, she supported both woman suffrage and Negro suffrage, and gave lectures at the urging of Susan B. Anthony. To an audience of veterans, she would say, "Soldiers! I have worked for you and I ask you, now, one and all, that you consider the wants of my people ... God only knows women were your friends in time of peril and you should be [ours] now."

From 1870 on, Barton focused on the Red Cross movement. Inspired by a European effort, she envisioned an agency to do on a larger scale what she, herself, had done during the Civil War: mobilize first aid care and supplies to the front lines, be they battlefields, epidemics, or human-made disasters. Her persistence ultimately drove the U.S. Congress to charter the American Red Cross. Through the Red Cross, Barton's zealous resourcefulness and gift for logistics helped victims of the Johnstown flood, the Sea Island and Galveston hurricanes, a typhoid outbreak in Butte, Pennsylvania, and yellow fever in Jacksonville, Florida.

Based on a Tapestry of Faith story and the article, "Clara Barton," by Joan Goodwin in the online Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography.

**Fill a need with something you already have.**

On the battlefield, Clara Barton tore up discarded clothing into rags for bandages. At home, tear a clean, worn-out shirt into strips. Holding a strip of cloth in your hands, reflect on the hurts or needs in your life, your family, your community, or beyond that need a metaphoric bandage. Now think about inner or material resources you already have, which you could use to help or heal. Commit to offering your "bandages" where they can help.

## EXPLORING TOGETHER



Have you ever despaired that you, or someone else, lacked the spiritual, emotional, or physical resources to go on? Here are a variety of ways to remember and recycle the world's abundance.



**R**ecycle your energies with a simple body prayer. If possible, have one person read aloud and lead the movements. Then, switch leaders so everyone gets a chance to listen and move.

- > Stand or sit comfortably.
- > Take a deep breath and let it out. Feel your connection with all, through the breath. (Hands at sides.)
- > Begin in an attitude of prayer, for we are all seekers. (Hands in prayer position.)
- > Lift up and out with your hands, reaching up to that which is beyond you: the universe, the mystery, the Spirit of Life, God. Ask for what you need, praise the universal good, set an intention for yourself. (Lift hands up and out over head.)
- > Then gather in all the gifts that you have been given: wisdom, nurture, comfort, talents. Hug them to yourself and be thankful. (Bring hands back to body and hold or hug across heart.)
- > As with all gifts, these gifts need to be shared. Send your gifts back into the world. (Let hands go forward in front of body, then downward to let go.)



Adapted from "Spirituality and the Arts in Children's Programming," by Nita Penfold, a Tapestry of Faith resource.





## Resourceful Family Cooking

Cook a simple meal together, with a focus on “local” food:

- > Foods people might have pulled from their harvest stores at this time of year, centuries ago
- > Foods available fresh, from a local farmer, produce stand, or farmer’s market
- > Leftover meals, or ingredients found in your pantry



## Redistribution

Getting more, or new, use out of old items can begin with tossing used bottles and last week’s newspapers into the proper bins. Yet recycling can be, and do, much more.

*What do I have extra,  
that I could share?  
Think out of the (recycle) box!*

> **Collect extra books** for urban schools, Head Start programs, or an international service agency such as Ethiopia Reads.

> **Donate clothes and furnishings** in good condition to a thrift shop or place them at a consignment shop. Then, see if you can find replacement items in the same shop.

> **Recycle your money!**

Maybe the cash in your pocket is more valuable to a sustainable charity than it is, right now, to you. Kiva and other microfinance lenders accept donations. Even a small donation can be pooled with others to fuel a micro-entrepreneur out of poverty.

> **Bring unused or gently used clothing, toys, or household items** to a local shelter for homeless families.

> **“Repurpose” everyday objects:** A lobster trap becomes a coffee table; old potatoes are carved into print-making implements; a large cardboard box invites children to build a playhouse or a kitten to curl up and nap.



# Worms and Religious Education

One Sunday, the children at North Parish took plastic bins and filled them with shredded newspaper, dirt from home compost piles, dirt from our church yard, and vegetable scraps. They mixed all the ingredients together to make a good environment for the worms. They poked holes into the bins so the worms could breathe. They added water—one pitcher full—to moisten things. Then they added the worms.

Each week that spring, the children donned rubber gloves and picked up their worms. They fed them vegetable scraps from home, watching the scraps disappear from one week to the next. They examined the worms with magnifiers and microscopes. They observed that the worms do not like the light and could often be found, in wiggly clumps, in the darkest corner of a bin.

The children watched the worms crawl. They learned about how the

worms eat, and poop, and lay eggs ... and multiply like crazy when the conditions are right.

Why in the world did the children do these things?

What did a worm adventure have to do with religious education?

There is religious wisdom to be found in observing worms: All life is connected.

Every living thing in the world comes from something else.

New life can come of decay and rot. As a matter of fact, sometimes death, decay, and rot make new life possible.

Every single bit of every single creature—human or worm—was present at the beginning of the universe, in the great explosion that gave birth to us all. We and the worms were there at the beginning. We—and they—are of the same substance.

Adapted from a reflection by Gail Forsyth-Vail.



**How can I match the resources I have with my own needs or someone else's?**

## FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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## FIND OUT MORE

- Read how to start a worm compost at home in the *uu&me!* Summer 2007 edition. [www.uua.org/uume](http://www.uua.org/uume)
- Learn how, through Project Harvest Hope, UU congregations support sustainable rural life in the Unitarian homelands of Transylvania. [harvesthope.uua.org](http://harvesthope.uua.org)
- Near a Kenyan marine reserve, hundreds of flip-flops wash up on beaches and interfere with animal life; a local biologist started a company to turn flip-flops into colorful baskets. In El Salvador, truck tires detoured from landfill make durable wallets and luggage. In Nepal, mountain villagers craft bowls from non-biodegradable litter, using proceeds to fund local health care and education. Support artisan/entrepreneur recycling projects at websites of One World Projects, Seven Hopes United, Ten Thousand Villages, and others.