

SPRING
2017

Families

WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

Sing a
Prayerful
Song!

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The Cellist of Sarajevo

In 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina had a civil war. Different groups fought for control of the country. War affects not just soldiers but everyday people, too, and this war was no different. One day, at 4 p.m., a bomb exploded in the city of Sarajevo and killed 22 everyday people who were waiting in line to buy bread.

Near the bakery lived Vedran Smailovic. Sometimes, he himself bought bread there. He was terribly distraught at the violent acts being committed in his hometown. The day after the bombing, at 4 p.m., he

entered the square where the bomb had exploded, sat down, and began to play the cello. You see, Vedran was a cellist with the opera orchestra in Sarajevo. Music was special to him. Through his music, he spoke to anyone who would listen about what had happened in the bakery line.

For the next 22 days—one day for each person who had died—at exactly 4 p.m., Mr. Smailovic played his cello in the square. He said it was his “daily musical prayer for peace.”

One person who heard was Beliz Brother, a performance artist in Seattle,

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

www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith

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Washington, in the United States. She arranged for 22 more cellists to play at 22 different public places for 22 days. This performance echoed Mr. Smailovic's musical prayer, and amplified it.

In Indiana, a young boy named Jason Crowe started a campaign to tell more people about Mr. Smailovic's performance. He thought it was important for people to know they were not alone in their call for peace. Perhaps he also wanted Mr. Smailovic and Ms. Brother and others to know they had been heard.

Jason started a project called The Cello Cries On to raise money for the city of Sarajevo to have a statue on the site of the bakery. When enough money was raised, the Children's International Peace and Harmony Statue was built. It honors those who had died and reminds everyone of the high price too many people pay in war.

Perhaps if everyone thought of how war harms everyday people, they would strive for peace. Children like you can visit the statue where the bakery used to be. Perhaps your generation will listen to the music of those who speak up for peace, and war will become a tragedy of the past.

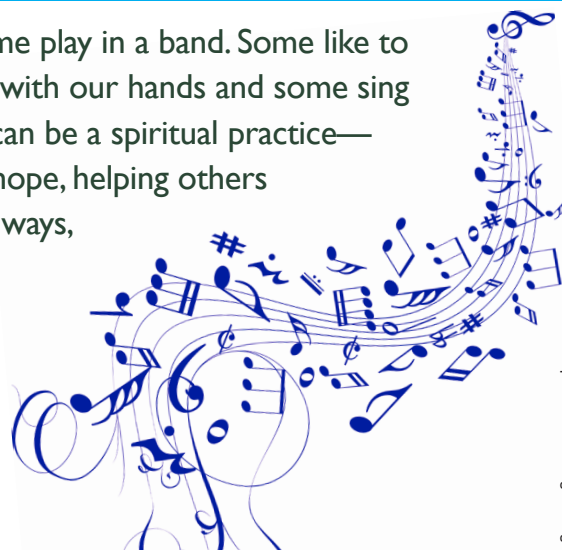
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EXPLORING TOGETHER

Many of us like to make music. Some play in a band. Some like to sing with our families. Some drum with our hands and some sing in the shower. Our music-making can be a spiritual practice—a way of giving thanks, expressing hope, helping others feel better, or celebrating. In these ways, music can be a kind of prayer.

*What prayerful songs
do you sing?*



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Music is the language of the spirit. —Kahlil Gibran

Gospel Music, Niggunim, and Om

Many religions have traditions for making music. The traditions reflect people's culture and their circumstances as well as their ideas about God and life's big questions.



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■ Many Jews sing "niggunim" (tunes without words) at the Friday night dinner table. Melodies of wordless syllables like "yai-di-di-dai" create a reverent and happy mood to welcome the Sabbath.



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■ Meditation, yoga, and rituals in India's religions and cultures may include chanting of the Hindu "om," a sacred sound that represents the entire universe. People who chant as a spiritual practice say it can help us feel at peace and activate our best selves.

■ In the South, during slavery, black Christians developed the tradition of spirituals. Their songs blended singing styles remembered from Africa with English lyrics about Jesus's love and the promise of heaven after death. The genre of Christian music known as "gospel" has its roots in these spirituals.



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Care, Compassion, and Companionship

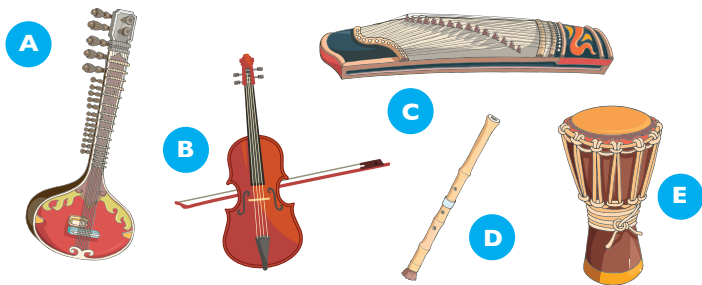
When someone has a serious illness, we hope that the person gets better. Even if there is no cure for their illness, their life is still important, and hope still matters. We can hope that they experience peace and no pain, that they feel the warmth of our caring, that they know their life has meaning.

Hopes like these can be carried in prayers, and some Unitarian Universalists gather to sing these kinds of prayers in groups called “compassionate choirs.” The SHINE choir of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, VA, is one that sings for people who are in a hospital or ailing at home. The people in the choir also make music to heal themselves. Many are people who may not consider themselves “singers.” SHINE gives them a chance to sing their hopes for themselves and others, in a safe space.

Music makes us want to live. —Mary J. Blige

Instrumental in Prayer

Many cultures invite people to use their vocal “instrument” for a sacred purpose such as singing hymns, chanting, or ululation (a trilling sound made deep in the throat). In addition to our voices, humankind has created a wide array of musical instruments to strum, blow, strike, pick, and more. Here are some that have been used for a sacred purpose. **Can you match their names and pictures?**



Ghuzeng

Flute

Djembe

Sitar

Violin

Answers: A: Sitar; B: Violin; C: Ghuzeng; D: flute; E: Djembe

Sing for Your Supper

Some families “say grace” before sharing a meal. We might thank the universe, or God, or the Earth. We might honor the plant or animal lives that have become our food, or acknowledge the cook. Why can’t our appreciation be sung as well as said? Make up your own tune for this blessing (written by “Anonymous”). What kind of tune has the feeling you want to share? What do love and gratitude sound like?

Earth, we thank you for this food,
for rest and home and all things good,
for wind and rain and sun above,
but most of all for those we love.

Bigger than Me, Bigger than Us

Have you ever been part of a large group singing or playing musical instruments? Making music together can create powerful connectedness with each other and a feeling that we belong to the whole world, everyone and everything in it, and whatever lies beyond. Explore music’s power to connect us to the universe with a few friends willing to sing, clap, and stamp together.

1 Sing a song that everyone knows and pay attention to what you hear when your voices rise and dip together.

Or, try this:

2 Have one person sing a phrase or tap a beat that they can repeat over and over:

**I’m so friend-lee! I’m so friend-lee!
or ba-ba-boom, ba-ba-boom, ba-ba-boom**

Once they find a rhythm, have the second person start with their own contribution.

Each new person must listen to the sounds the others are creating and find their way to join in.

**pah-pa-rah,
pah-pa-rah!**

**cha-cha-cha
cha-cha-cha**

Music in Mind

Research shows that music lessons help children develop cognitive capacities. But what about soul capacities? A capacity to care? Can music lessons make our children more spiritual? More empathetic?

Making music with other people most definitely nurtures our interconnections, whether or not we are musically talented or trained. Even young babies show delight in the communication and teamwork that happen in a singing game like Pattycake. Music therapy helps children with autism develop social abilities by offering them a non-verbal way to connect and share experiences with others.

At any age, the social interaction of singing with others or playing an instrument in a musical ensemble invites us to experience the vibration of the web of life. Most of us seem to know instinctively—or we quickly come to



Experience the vibration of the interconnected web of life.

understand—that we can only make music together with cooperation and collaboration. According to composer and choir director Nick Page, “The real heart of a children’s choir is in the week-to-week community-building and skill development that occur.”

When children sing together (or when we sing together, as a family), it’s not just about hitting the right notes, although that can be nice. The power of singing in a group comes from our feeling of belonging to something larger than our own selves. The beauty of a harmony comes from the depth of listening it contains.



■ Where does music-making fit in your child’s life? How do you, as a family, make music together?

■ Help your child recognize what they are feeling when they make music. Talk about the sensations and emotions they experience.

■ Ask your child: How does singing at school or taking a music lesson differ from exploring a piano, a drum, or their singing voice simply for their own pleasure? Encourage all manner of sounds!

Music can change the world because it can change people.

—Bono



FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

Provided by the Faith
Development Office of the
Unitarian Universalist Association

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Editor, Susan Dana Lawrence
Graphic Design, Ann Casady

FIND OUT MORE

■ Listen to Tomaso Albinoni’s Adagio in G Minor, the piece Vedran Smailovic played on the street in Sarajevo. *The Cellist of Sarajevo*, a book for children by Steven Galloway, tells Smailovic’s story.

■ Nick Page’s “Making Music Live,” is a free, online, UU faith development resource with ideas for leading your children in music-making “to make our lives and our children’s lives more vibrant and connected to each other and to the universe.”

www.uua.org/re/tapestry/resources/music

■ *Singing Meditation: Together in Sound and Silence* (Skinner House) by Ruthie Rosauer and Liz Hill guides a practice of recovering one’s “birthright to sing” with simple, interfaith songs. In Spirit, the UUA Book and Gift Shop, offers the book and links to inspiring videos.

■ The Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*, and its supplement, *Singing the Journey*, draw from multicultural, theologically diverse sources and include many songs easy to sing at home. Former UUA President Rev. William Sinkford’s preface to *Singing the Journey* makes an eloquent case for singing our faith when we are together.