One sunny mid-morning, young Goose and their siblings, cousins, parents, and grandparents came upon a gorgeous meadow full of lush green grass and plump ripe grains. Yummy!

They ate so much that their stomachs swelled right up until they almost touched the ground. They were so full they could barely move.

Meanwhile, Fox was out walking. “It seems like forever since I’ve eaten, and my stomach is rumbling,” Fox thought. Coming around a curve in the path, Fox’s nose twitched. Something smelled very sweet. A little further on, there in the meadow Fox saw more geese than could be counted. ‘Lunch,’ thought Fox, and began to salivate.

Fox snuck quickly in among the tall grass, trying to keep quiet. But Fox couldn’t fool the geese. The sunlight glinted off Fox’s great big teeth and long sharp claws.

Some of the geese began to quiver and quake. Some began to cry. Some hid their heads under their wings.

Goose was just as worried as the rest. The meadow had no escape. Except for the path where Fox waited, the meadow was surrounded by tall cliffs. And the geese were too full to fly.

But Goose took a deep breath. They weren’t going to give in or give up! Goose took another deep breath and then called, “Fox! We know you are there. Before you eat us, please let us say one last blessing of thanks for this life we have lived.”

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Everyone has their own self. That’s “I.” And every “I” can also say “we.” Every single person belongs to groups with others. Make a list of who you might mean when you say “we.”

1. Start with people in your everyday life. Is “we” your family, siblings, or group of friends? You and a best friend? (It might be a dog or cat!)

2. What communities are “we” for you? Your neighborhood? Your school? Your UU congregation? A club, a chorus, or a team?

3. Think of people you identify with even if you don’t personally know them. Your list might have “we, the people who are kids” or “we, the vegetarians.” It might have “we, the people who know American Sign Language” or “we, the people with Asian heritage.”

Adapted from an Aesop’s fable retold by Faye Mogensen in Ancient Stories for Modern Times (Skinner House, 2017).
Levi Draheim, 11, is one of 21 kids suing the federal government for failing to protect them from the effects of climate change. The court case, Juliana v. U.S., demands that the government stop supporting fossil fuels. “I’m representing youth, but, really everybody,” said Levi. “If we win, the government has to put a climate recovery plan into place.”

Charlotte Stuart-Tilley, 13, started School Strike for the Climate in Tallahassee, Florida, joining a global kids’ movement. Every other week, during the school day, kids gather outside the State Capitol to raise public awareness. They miss school to protest damage to the planet. “The original goal was to get the U.S. back into the Paris climate change agreements,” said Charlotte.

She said time is running out to keep our planet livable. Poor communities are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. All of humanity faces danger. Although the message of the school strike might make people a little scared, she said, “Being scared can unite people to fight what they’re afraid of.” We can give each other support and friendship to feel less afraid.
In Antarctica, Emperor penguin dads, with their young tucked snugly under them, waddle into tightly packed huddles to keep warm during the coldest months. While the female penguins are on a long voyage for food, the male penguins must endure a climate so harsh, Ted Scambos of the National Snow and Ice Data Center of the University of Colorado, Boulder, told National Geographic, “It’s a place where Earth is so close to its limit [of coldness], it’s almost like another planet.”

Like all of us, these penguins must make the best of their circumstances and find ways to thrive. Also similar to people, the only way Emperor penguins thrive is in community. They shuffle while they huddle, in spectacular group movements that look like dances, to ensure that none remain on the toasty inside of the huddle nor on the cold outskirts for too long. Believe it or not, the penguins are in danger, both individually and collectively, if any get too warm or too cold.

Similarly, our human family suffers, individually and collectively, when forces of power and privilege shuffle the same folks to the margins or disconnect them from community, time and time again.

Think about your community. Who gets support and resources? Is it the same people all the time? Might you have spent too much time in the warm center? Could this be harming your family or someone else?

Why don’t human communities instinctively choreograph ourselves for equity and common good? We know what happens when some choose not to move, or when some are “frozen” by fear or circumstance. Truthfully, we endure harsh conditions in this world. A well-choreographed huddle is crucial. Shuffle on, human family! Shuffle on.

If you come together with a mission, and it’s grounded with love and a sense of community, you can make the impossible possible.

— Congressman John Lewis

FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

Provided by the Faith Development Office of the Unitarian Universalist Association
Director, Gail Forsyth-Vail
Editor, Susan Lawrence
Graphic Design, Ann Casady

FIND OUT MORE

As a family, watch three marvelous minutes of Antarctica’s Emperor penguins. This PBS clip shows how male penguins huddle to protect their chicks and take turns keeping the group warm. youtube.com/watch?v=OL7O5O7U4Gs

In traditional board games like Monopoly the players compete. Today, many games are cooperative. In Spirit Island, recommended for ages 13+, players take the roles of “spirits” helping indigenous inhabitants protect an island from invading colonizers. Forbidden Island, from GameWright, includes younger gamers in shared strategy. Download a no- or low-cost board game for family play; Preschooler in the Kitchen is $2.99 at cooperativegames.com.

A great thing to do when playing as a family is for parents to ask the younger kids for advice... It’s a great way to build their confidence and bond at the same time.

— The Board Game Family, www.theboardgamefamily.com