

WISDOM FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES
A Multigenerational Tapestry of Faith Program



BY REV. THOMAS R. SCHADE GAIL FORSYTH-VAIL

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Rev. Meg Riley It Gets Better video.

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THE PROGRAM

Even if the Bible remains for us only great literature, and not sacred scripture, we should try to approach it on its own terms: as literature trying to tell us of human experience from a transcendent, God's-eye perspective, trying to remind human beings who had experienced both undeserved goodness and unmerited evil how to remain true to the transcendent source of creation, liberation, and ultimate justice. — Rev. John A. Buehrens

This program offers multigenerational workshops based on eight stories from the Hebrew scriptures. Some of these stories are well-known and others less so. Some have been told to children in Sunday school classes and Hebrew school for generations; others will be unknown even to some adults. Some of those narratives fit well with contemporary Unitarian Universalist values and others are more challenging in both the theology and the values expressed. All of these stories offer wisdom that can help people of all ages growth in spiritual depth and understanding.

This program draws on our Unitarian and Universalist heritage of critical and contextual examination of biblical text, which dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. It approaches biblical texts from four different points of view, asking:

- Where does this text fit into Jewish history, both legendary and real? Who are the major voices in the passage? Who are the dissenting voices or minor characters?
- What did this story mean to those who told it and to those who later recorded or preserved it?
- What are the questions the story raises for contemporary Unitarian Universalists?
- How does this story connect to the lives and experiences of program participants of all ages? What wisdom does it offer?

The program asks not only "what happened?" but also "when and why was this recorded and what did it mean for the people of the time?" It asks not only, "What does this story mean in our contemporary lives?" but also, "How does it challenge each of us spiritually and what wisdom does it offer?"

"God" who appears in the Hebrew scriptures has many different faces. The stories, which were composed by many different authors over a long period of time, tell many competing and conflicting stories about both God and God's people. The understanding of God shifts, changes, and evolves over the course of centuries as the stories are told, edited, adapted, and recorded. Above all, the Hebrew scriptures are a text of extraordinary courage, astonishing in that they contain

not only the history and tradition of a people and a culture, but also an ongoing critique of that culture. Indeed, it is because of the conflicted and contradictory nature of this text that the narrative story of a small, obscure middle Eastern kingdom still holds wisdom and meaning in today's world. This program does not shy away from those contradictions, but rather embraces them as a reflection of a people's struggle to understand themselves and their world. It asks some of the questions they asked—about violence and war, about pain and tragedy, about gifts of life, about the nature of freedom, about group identity. This program invites Unitarian Universalists of all ages to view their own lives and personal experiences through the lens of those very same questions.

GOALS

- Offer resources and activities for Unitarian Universalists to access beauty, wisdom and meaning from the Hebrew scriptures
- Acquaint participants with the cultural and religious importance of stories and texts from Hebrew scripture
- Give participants a lifelong approach to exploring the historical and socio-political context of scriptural narratives
- Offer an opportunity for re-examination of literal interpretations of Hebrew scriptures, including those texts which are cited to support particular social and religious points of view
- Provide welcoming and challenging multigenerational experiences using a variety of different approaches
- Build community among participants across the lifespan.

LEADERS

A team of two or more adults, either lay leaders or religious professionals, should facilitate these workshops. Although consistency of leadership offers many advantages, every workshop need not be led by the same facilitators. Seek a team of leaders who are:

- Comfortable leading a multigenerational program and knowledgeable about children's, youth, and adult faith development
- Committed to the Unitarian Universalist Principles, to the congregation, and to the faith development components of this program
- Willing and able to thoroughly prepare for each workshop
- Effective at speaking, teaching, and facilitating group process

- Flexible, and willing to modify workshop plans to support the full inclusion of all participants
- Able to listen deeply and to encourage participation of all individuals
- Able to demonstrate respect for individuals, regardless of age, race, social class, gender identity, and sexual orientation
- Able to honor the life experiences each participant will bring to the program, regardless of age or life stage.

While knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures is helpful, it is not a requirement for effectively leading this program. Willingness and ability to adequately prepare for each workshop, and comfort with a multigenerational group is far more valuable.

PARTICIPANTS

This program is intended for people of all ages and life stages over the age of six. If you are using the program for children younger than ten or eleven, you will want to use the Alternate Activity in each workshop, which is designed with younger children in mind. The workshops are equally suitable for first-time visitors and long-time congregational members. Facilitators should be attentive to the differences in developmental stage, knowledge, and life experience that participants bring to the group.

Workshops can accommodate any number of participants, although the program will be most effective if there are at least four people in each breakout group. You will want to adjust the number of breakout options offered according to the size of your group. You will also want recruit from among the participants a leader for each breakout group. It is best to recruit group leaders in advance so that they can familiarize themselves with the instructions for the activity. When recruiting group leaders, be sure to consider junior and senior youth as group leaders.

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

People with obvious and not-so-obvious disabilities may need accommodation in order to participate fully. As a facilitator, you may not be aware of a participant's needs. In addition to accommodating the accessibility needs of participants who request them, you are urged to follow these basic Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters for every activity:

- Prepare a few large print copies of all handouts.
- Write clearly and use large letters on newsprint. Use black or brown markers for maximum visibility. (Red and green are difficult for some to see.)
- Make a printed copy of information you plan to post on newsprint, to give to any who request it.

- Face the group when you are speaking and urge others to do the same. Be aware of facial hair or hand gestures that may prevent or interfere with lip reading.
- In a large space or with a large group of people, use a microphone for presentations and for questions and answers. If an activity will make it difficult for speakers to face listeners (e.g., a fishbowl, forced choice or role play activity), obtain a portable microphone to pass from speaker to speaker.
- In a brainstorm activity, repeat clearly any word or phrase generated by the group in addition to writing it on newsprint.
- During small group work, position each group far enough from other groups to minimize noise interference.
- Keep aisles and doorways clear at all times so that people with mobility impairments or immediate needs may exit the room easily.
- Offer a variety of seating options, e.g. straight chairs, soft chairs, chairs with arms, and chairs without arms so that participants may find seating that best accommodates their needs.
- When re-arranging furniture for small groups or other purposes, ensure clear pathways between groups.
- Enlist workshop participants in being vigilant about removing bags, books, coffee cups and other obstacles from pathways.
- Use the phrase, "Rise in body or spirit," rather than "Please stand."
- Use language that puts the person first, rather than the disability (e.g., "a person who uses a wheelchair," rather than "a wheelchair-user"; "a child with dyslexia," rather than "a dyslexic child; "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled.")
- Do not ask individuals to read aloud. Avoid read-alouds that require everyone in the group to automatically take a turn. Request volunteers or read the material yourself.
- Ask participants in advance about any food allergies. Add to your group covenant an agreement to avoid bringing problem foods for snacks or to always offer an alternate snack food.
- Ask participants in advance about allergies to scents or perfumes. If participants have allergies or sensitivities, invite members of the group to refrain from wearing perfumes and add this agreement to your covenant.

The Unitarian Universalist Association website and staff can offer guidance for including people with specific disabilities; consult the [Disability and Accessibility](http://www.uua.org/accessibility/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/accessibility/index.shtml) section of the UUA website. In addition, some workshop activities suggest specific adaptation under the heading, "Including All Participants."

Participants bring a wide range of learning styles and information processing preferences. With this in mind, the workshops offer a variety of activities. Review each workshop's Alternate Activities. Plan each workshop to best suit your group.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The program comprises eight workshops of ninety minutes each. Because each ends with worship, the workshops are well-suited to Sunday morning multigenerational gatherings. They will also work well for multigenerational programs on a weeknight or a weekend day. If you use them in this fashion, consider incorporating a meal and social time into the experience.

Workshop Structure

Each workshop begins with the entire multigenerational group meeting together, where the leader shares the story as it is written in the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*. Participants then retell the story by acting it out, considering the points of view and emotions of the characters in the story.

After retelling the story, participants separate into interest-based groups for further processing of the story. While some groups may be more attractive to adults and youth and other more attractive to younger children, participants will divide based on activity interest and not age. Generally, the options include:

- Discussion (generally intended for youth and adults)
- Drama (intended for people of all ages)
- Art activities (intended for people of all ages)
- Alternate activities such as cooking, music-making, or experiences in the out-of-doors (intended for people of all ages and friendly to younger children)

After meeting in the interest groups, participants gather for multigenerational conversation and worship, which includes contributions from each activity group.

Sequence of stories

There are two timelines that are important to understanding the Hebrew scriptures.

The first timeline is the history of the ancient Hebrew people and their kingdoms: Israel and Judea. These two kingdoms emerged no sooner than the ninth century BCE, under the leadership of their founding kings, King

David and his son Solomon. David and Solomon were powerful figures, uniting disparate tribes into wealthy and sophisticated kingdoms whose capital was Jerusalem. Israel and Judah flourished for a while, but were too small to resist their more powerful neighbors, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greco-Romans, and the Romans. This small pair of kingdoms, politically insignificant at that time, are still known today not for their military or political power, but for their history and religious thoughts preserved in what we now know as the Hebrew scriptures.

The stories and books of the Hebrew scriptures were composed at different times in the history of the kingdoms. The writing of the Hebrew scriptures was started within the court of kings David and Solomon. Some of the resulting material is a history of events of the time. Some is a highly flattering story of King David, including events from his childhood. Some of the writings from that era are retellings of the stories and legends about Israel's founding and the beginnings of the Jewish people.

In the 6th century BCE, when Israel and Judea were under threat from the neighboring Assyrians or Babylonians, more writings were added to the scriptures. Writers known as the Prophets wrote religious and theological reflections on the current events of their times. In 598 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar invaded and took away several thousand Israelites to live in Babylon. Further deportations occurred in 586 and 582 BCE. Many of those deported were the political, economic, and religious leaders of Jerusalem. Those difficult times were known as the Babylonian captivity. After the defeat of Babylon by Persia in 539 BCE, the leaders of the Hebrews were returned to Jerusalem. Some of the writings of the Hebrew scriptures date from this period, when the Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt and the Israelite religion was reconstituted and reformulated.

The first timeline about the Hebrew scriptures shows the order in which it was written. The second timeline necessary to understand the Hebrew scriptures is the story of the Jewish people that it tells. Some portions of that story are fanciful and legendary, while some are recorded memories of past historical events. Still others describe events contemporary to the writers. The first timeline is the History of the Bible, and the second is the Biblical History of the Hebrew People.

The table below lists the eight stories from this program. The workshops consider stories in the order in which they were written or collected (the History of the Bible) and not in the order of the events they describe (the Biblical History of the Hebrew People, as sequenced in the Hebrew Bible). Exploring the stories in the order in which they were written allows participants to better understand the evolution of how God was understood as a response to the events of Hebrew history.

Workshop Story	Time it Depicts	Time Written or Collected/ Nature of Subject
1 David and Goliath	David's Childhood 900 BCE	David's Rule/ Biography of King
2 David and Nathan — You are That Man!	Later part of David's Rule	David's Rule/ Current Events
3 Manna in the Wilderness	Desert Period after leaving Egypt 1200 BCE (?)	David's Rule/ Legend
4 The Battle of Jericho	Conquering the Promised Land — after Egypt and before David 1100 BCE (?)	David's Rule/ Legend
5 Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham	Stories of the first Hebrews before slavery in Egypt Mythical time	David's Rule/ Legend
6 The Binding of Isaac	Stories of the first Hebrews before slavery in Egypt Mythical time	David's Rule/ Legend
7 Isaiah — Exile and Hope	During the Babylonian Exile, which began in 586 BCE	During Exile/ Current events
8 Creation	The beginning of the universe	Post Exile/ Mythical material edited by priestly redactor

LEADER GUIDELINES

Successful implementation of this multigenerational program requires careful attention to both logistics and group process. Approach the program with the attitude that each person, no matter what their age or life stage, makes an important contribution to the spiritual growth of everyone in the group. The background material for each story is offered to aid understanding of the meaning it might have held for those who first recorded it, but knowledge of this background is not the primary purpose of the program. These texts offer many layers of meaning and wisdom for our own time, and with your guidance, participants of all ages will enter into the story through acting it out and find connections between the stories in the Hebrew scriptures and their own life experiences. Depending on your group or on the story in question, you may wish to ask adults or those with more biblical knowledge to hold their responses to a particular question or activity until others have had a chance to speak.

Encourage participants to select small group options according to interest, avoiding the temptation to suggest grouping by age. In reality, children will likely be interested in more hands-on activities and will not choose the discussion group. Before each workshop, identify a leader for each of the small group activities

and provide the leader with the activity description so they can guide the activity. You may want to rotate the leadership responsibility workshop to workshop, being sure to include youth in the leadership rotation. If you choose to offer the alternate activity (recommended with children younger than ten years old), be sure that there are at least two adults or youth in that group to assist young children.

The closing worship for each workshop is an opportunity for participants to create worship together, bringing their perspectives and deeper understanding to the whole group. Each workshop offers detailed suggestions for creating the closing worship, but workshop leaders will need to adapt to their own circumstances. As much as possible, include your congregation's music director and/or musicians who are part of your group (including children and youth) in worship. You may also wish to invite the parish minister, religious educator, worship associates, or committee to help you with the planning.

IMPLEMENTATION

These workshops are independent of one another, but are best offered as a series, although you may schedule the series over a long period of time (e.g. monthly). They may be offered as a weeknight or weekend multigenerational program, perhaps with a meal and social time component added. They may be offered as a

Sunday morning multigenerational worship and learning experience. They may be the basis of a weeklong camp or conference program, particularly for multigenerational groups.

BEFORE YOU START

Determine the schedule of workshops.

Determine dates and times of all workshops. Schedule on the church calendar.

Invite participants.

Submit newsletter and worship announcements, prepare flyers and/or posters, and other publicity appropriate to your congregation. If the workshops are to be offered at a time other than Sunday morning, request pre-registration so you can determine special needs, including childcare.

Reserve meeting space.

Select an inviting room of adequate size to comfortably seat all participants in a circle and to allow for acting out the stories. Determine space needs for the small groups and reserve those as well.

Arrange childcare.

Arrange for childcare as requested for children younger than six years.

Collect simple costumes.

Find pieces of fabric and rummage sale and thrift shop items that can be adapted for costumes. Prospective participants can be invited to help assemble the collection.

Arrange for special materials and equipment.

Check the materials lists for each workshop well in advance and assemble necessary materials or equipment. One of the small group options in Workshop 7 requires a computer with Internet connection and a projector. If this is not available to you, consider using the alternate activity.

PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

Unitarian Universalist Principles

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 Universalist Sources

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.

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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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?

WORKSHOP 1: DAVID AND GOLIATH

INTRODUCTION

I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eyes reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice. — Theodore Parker, nineteenth century Unitarian minister and abolitionist

This workshop introduces the Hebrew scriptures with an exploration of the well-known story, David and Goliath, from I Samuel. Participants hear the story as it is written in the Bible (*New Revised Standard Version*), and then explore the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the story's characters by taking part in a re-enactment. The workshop asks key questions to relate the story to participants' lives: Who or what am I afraid of? What is courage? What helps me to be brave? A choice of small group activities express the themes further before the group comes back together for a closing worship.

This workshop establishes a pattern of activities for all workshops in this program. Congregations may wish to establish their own patterns for the series, perhaps arranging for refreshments or a meal to precede or follow each workshop.

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction and make any accommodations necessary for your group.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present the story the story of David and Goliath and invite participants to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the story
- Invite participants to reflect on their own experiences with fear and courage
- Establish the activity pattern for all workshops in the program.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain knowledge and understanding of the actions, thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters in the David and Goliath story

- Recall their own personal experiences of fear and courage
- Identify and reflect on what helps them be brave
- Experience connection with people of all ages and be enriched by the variety of perspectives offered.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: David and Goliath	15
Activity 2: Retelling the Story	15
Activity 3: What Gives Us Courage?	10
Activity 4: Explaining Small Group Options	5
Activity 5: Discussion — Option 1	20
Activity 6: Confronting Bullies Dramatization — Option 2	20
Activity 7: Five Smooth Stones Art — Option 3	20
Faith in Action	
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: Pretending to be David	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

As you prepare to facilitate this workshop, ask yourself the key questions:

- Who or what am I afraid of?
- What is courage?
- What helps me be brave?

Reflect on how you might have answered these questions as an eight-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old youth, or a young adult making your way in the world. Envision the way you would like to respond to the third question when you are an elder, looking back on your life. Think about people of different ages and life stages in your congregation, and celebrate the gifts each brings to your faith community.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags, durable or single use
- Bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen/pencil
- Small table
- Optional: Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-in sheet with columns for name, address, phone, and e-mail information and place it on the table.
- Place name tags and markers on the table.

Description of Activity

As people arrive, introduce yourself and invite them to make a name tag and sign in.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.

Description of Activity

Bring participants together and welcome them. Invite a volunteer to light the chalice as you share a favorite children's chalice lighting used by your congregation.

Introduce the program using these or similar words:

Welcome to this group. We are going to be sharing some stories from the Hebrew scriptures. These stories are from a long ago time and a faraway place, but the people in them face some of the same problems that we do in our own day. We are going to learn about the people and stories of the Hebrew scriptures by acting them out, by playing music, by doing art, by thinking and talking about some important topics—like courage and fear—the themes of today's story. Before we go any further, though, let's meet one another.

Invite participants to go around the circle and say their names and one thing they know about the Bible, or one question they have about the Bible. Record their questions and ideas on newsprint. Point out any responses that are relevant to this workshop, such as fear, courage, violence, God.

ACTIVITY 1: DAVID AND GOLIATH (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[David and Goliath](#)" (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [David and Goliath Background Information](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.
- Print Leader Resource 1, David and Goliath Background Information and prepare to briefly present the information. Make copies so that interested participants can take one home.

Description of Activity

Ask the key questions: What makes you afraid? What gives you courage or makes you brave? Invite each participant to answer.

Using the information in Leader Resource 1, David and Goliath Background Information, briefly set the stage for the story. Be sure to keep the background information brief, and offer copies of the leader resource to those who wish to take one home. Say, "In this story, God is on the side of the boy David, giving him strength and courage as he confronts a bully."

Read the story aloud.

ACTIVITY 2: RETELLING THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[David and Goliath](#)" (included in this document)
- Five small stones
- Bandana or scarf to serve as slingshot
- Optional: Simple costumes

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the story so that you can guide a dramatized retelling.

Description of Activity

Tell participants they will have the opportunity to re-enact the story. To set the scene before choosing any volunteer actors, ask:

- Who were the two armies? Where should we place them?
- What kind of equipment did the Philistine army have? How were they feeling?
- What kind of equipment did Saul's army have? How were they feeling?

Then, ask: "Who would like to play Goliath?" Choose a volunteer and invite that person to practice taunting Saul's army.

Ask: "Who would like to play David?" Choose a volunteer. Ask the group what David is doing at the beginning of the story. Say, "And now we need armies, Saul's army and the Philistine army. Who is going to be in the armies?" Invite the armies to take their places. Ask: "What happens first? and next?" Guide participants through a re-enactment of the story, asking at appropriate intervals, "What is Goliath thinking and feeling? What does he do? What is David thinking and feeling? What does he do? What are the armies thinking and feeling and what do they do?" Encourage those who are not actors to make suggestions and offer encouragement to the performers.

After the re-enactment, invite participants to offer comments, observations, and insights about the story.

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT GIVES US COURAGE? (10 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Ask: "What gave David courage? Why was he able to be brave, meeting Goliath with no armor and only a slingshot with five smooth stones?"

Lead a whole group discussion. Begin by pointing out that David was courageous because he believed he was on the side of right and that right (or God) would prevail. Then ask:

- What makes you brave even when there is danger?
- Where do you go for courage?

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLAINING SMALL GROUP OPTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- List the small group activities and their locations on newsprint and post.

- For this first session only, arrange in advance for at least one adult or youth participant to take part in each small group, and ask those volunteers to set a tone that welcomes multigenerational participation.

Description of Activity

Explain the activity options for small group processing and point out the breakout spaces. Explain that participants may choose any option that appeals to them, regardless of age. All groups will have a mix of ages.

ACTIVITY 5: DISCUSSION — OPTION 1 (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - Why is this story preserved?
 - What were they trying to teach with this story?
 - What is it that we can learn?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the questions posted on newsprint. Use some of these questions to provoke, guide or further the discussion, as needed:

- What are God's moral principles in this story?
- What is the relationship between David's courage and God?
- Who is God in this story? What kind of being? Who is he for and who is he against?
- Why would God be on the side of the Israelites and not the Philistines?
- Why, in this story, does God not just kill Goliath?
- What function did this story serve in David's court?
- If David is chosen by God, why did God choose him?
- In this story, where does security come from? Where does it *not* come from?
- What wisdom does this story offer about courage?

ACTIVITY 6: CONFRONTING BULLIES DRAMATIZATION — OPTION 2 (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Simple costumes

Preparation for Activity

- Set out simple costumes.

Description of Activity

Invite the small group to create a modern version of David and Goliath. Invite them to begin by sharing some of their own experiences with bullies like Goliath. Then ask for volunteers to act out the story a participant has shared. You may want to invite that participant to choose the volunteers for the story.

ACTIVITY 7: FIVE SMOOTH STONES ART — OPTION 3 (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Small flat stones, such as those found in a craft store, at least five for each participant
- Acrylic paints, brushes, and cups of water for rinsing or fine-point permanent markers in a variety of colors
- Smocks to protect clothing

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange a space with a table appropriate for painting. Cover the table and floor to prevent stains.
- Set out materials.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to consider what they would want to take with them if they had to confront something or someone they are afraid of. Invite them to paint or draw on the stones symbols or pictures of five things they would want to take with them to give them courage.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Creating the Closing Worship](#) (included in this document)
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout
- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook, or words to your chosen song
- Optional: Keyboard or drums for musical accompaniment
- Optional: Recorded music and player

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.
- Decide on the order of worship for the closing and plan how you will include a contribution from all small groups. Use Leader Resource 2, *Creating the Closing Worship*, to help you plan.
- Write an order of service on newsprint. Here is a sample to adapt:
 - Opening words — Theodore Parker
 - Chalice lighting
 - What was it like to be David? *Slingshots and King's Armor*
 - What are we afraid of today? *Confronting Bullies Drama*
 - What gave David courage?
 - What gives us courage? *Five Smooth Stones*
 - Meditation/prayer
 - Music
 - Closing words
- Make copies of *Taking It Home*.
- Optional: Recruit a musician to teach and/or accompany the song.

Description of Activity

Create a worship service, weaving together contributions from all of the breakout groups. Do not over-script the worship service, but rather create a worshipful "container" to hold all of the insights, thoughts, feelings, creations, and contributions of participants. At the end of the worship, extinguish the chalice and read the words of Elizabeth Selle Jones, Reading 456 in the hymnbook, or choose a benediction or closing words familiar to participants. Distribute *Taking It Home*.

FAITH IN ACTION

Preparation for Activity

- Invite someone from your congregation who has taken a courageous stance on behalf of justice to come and tell their story. When you consider whom to ask, do not overlook the youth and children of your congregation as potential guests.

Description of Activity

Invite your guest(s) to share their personal story of courage. Invite participants to ask questions and to share some of their own stories of courage. If it is

appropriate, decide how workshop participants will support your guest's stance and social justice work.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to talk with your co-facilitator about how the workshop went, using these questions as a guide:

- What went well?
- What surprised us as facilitators? Amazed us? Challenged us?
- How did this workshop strengthen multigenerational community? How did it meet the faith development needs of individuals within that community?
- What needs adjustment in future workshops?

TAKING IT HOME

I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eyes reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice. — Theodore Parker, nineteenth century Unitarian minister and abolitionist

Find a way to recognize and celebrate acts of courage in your own life or in the life of the broader community. You might look for David and Goliath-type stories in the news or in fiction. You might also name those acts of courage in your life by writing of them in your journal, noting them at the family dinner table, or lifting them up in small groups or religious education groups. You might also consider presenting a modern day "David and Goliath" drama as part of a talent show or other congregational event.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: PRETENDING TO BE DAVID (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Slingshot-making supplies for each participant:
 - Y-shaped sticks, about six inches long. Collect them outdoors or ask a woodworker to create them
 - Two large, thick elastic bands, cut to create a straight piece or two 8-inch pieces of 1/4-inch-wide elastic, the type used for home sewing projects
 - Four-inch by two-inch rectangle of artificial leather fabric, such as Naugahyde
 - Single hole punch

- Scissors
- Small foam beads
- Adult-sized winter vest (fleece, down, etc.) or PFD boating vest
- Adult sized wide belt
- Optional: Trash can lid with handle
- Optional: Picture of a slingshot

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that there are at least two adults or youth to meet with this breakout group.
- Hold the leather rectangles so that the four-inch dimension is horizontal and punch a hole in each end about one inch from the edge.
- Set out supplies.

Description of Activity

Invite children to use their imaginations and pretend to be David the shepherd. An adult or youth in the group might ask:

- What does a shepherd do?
- What dangers might a shepherd face? (Wolves that try to eat the sheep, bad weather, sheep who wander into dangerous places.)
- What can a child shepherd do that might be harder for an adult? (Run faster, have an easier time getting into tight places.)

Explain that a shepherd in David's time had a simple tool to keep the wolves and other dangers away. It was called a slingshot. Show a picture of a slingshot if you have one or describe what it is and how it works. Say: "We are going to make our own pretend slingshots." Invite adults, youth, and older children to help the younger children with the assembly process, taping one end of each piece of elastic to one prong of the Y-shaped stick and looping the other end through one of the holes in the piece of artificial leather before knotting.

Remind participants that this is a pretend slingshot, not an actual one, and use a foam bead to demonstrate how a slingshot works.

Take the vest and the belt and say that you will pretend this is the King's armor that David tried on. Invite a small child to try on the much-too-big clothing, and give them a trash can lid as a shield if you have one. Ask: "What is the problem with this grown-up armor? Why does it not work for a child?"

Invite each child in turn to try being David the shepherd, keeping away a wolf with the slingshot (a youth or adult might play the wolf). After they try being David the shepherd, invite them to try on, and then reject, the armor, as David did.

End the activity by reminding participants that David was a child in this story, and that he stood up to the bully by being himself and doing what he did best.

STORY: DAVID AND GOLIATH

1 Samuel 17 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle... The Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." And the Philistine said, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together." When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. The three eldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle; the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest; the three eldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

Jesse said to his son David, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers; also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See how your brothers fare, and bring some token from them."

...David rose early in the morning, left someone in charge of the sheep, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment as the army was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage, ran to the ranks, and went and greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines, and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

All the Israelites, when they saw the man, fled from him and were very much afraid. The Israelites said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. The king will greatly enrich the man who kills him, and will give him his daughter and make his family free in Israel." David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

His eldest brother Eliab heard him talking to the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David. He said, "Why have you come down? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart; for you have come down just to see the battle." David said, "What have I done now? It was only a question." He turned away from him toward another and spoke in the same way; and the people answered him again as before.

When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him. David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God." David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you!"

Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them." So David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I

will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field." But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand."

When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet the Philistine.

David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand. Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. The troops of Israel and Judah rose up with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: DAVID AND GOLIATH BACKGROUND INFORMATION

David and the Goliath is one of the most well-known and beloved stories of the Hebrew scripture. It is an adventure story which seems to be aimed at every child who can hardly wait to grow up and do something so brave, and skillful and important that they become heroic.

When the story begins, it emphasizes how small and insignificant David is. His brothers are soldiers in the army, but he, the youngest, is still just a shepherd at home. He is sent to bring cheese sandwiches to his older brothers in the army as it faces off against the Philistines. And when he gets to the camp, he discovers that the whole army is paralyzed with fear of one Philistine fighter, a giant named Goliath.

David volunteers to fight Goliath, which is crazy. But David figures he has fought lions and bears as a shepherd, so he can fight Goliath. So the army suits him up with armor, but it is too big for him to even walk in. David goes to fight Goliath with a sling and five smooth stones, the weapons of a shepherd boy.

He wins, and Goliath is slain, and little David is a hero.

The story is an exciting adventure story, but it also had, for the people who first heard, three important messages. Even today, the messages ring true to us.

The first was that the small can defeat the large. The ancient Hebrews, who first told this story, were a small people in a small kingdom, surrounded by more powerful empires, Goliaths. So, it was good news that the small can win a battle against the large. It is still good news, for every underdog.

The second lesson of the story was about their first King, David. The shepherd boy David would grow up to be their first and greatest king. He would be the king against which all other kings would be compared.

Every quality that made David a great King could be seen when he was just a shepherd boy. He was brave, resourceful, and clever. The adults in David's world gave him a chance to take on a task that seemed too big for him, yet he succeeded. The lesson is that great leaders can come from anywhere. There are great leaders among the people we think are least likely to have that potential. But they need a chance to show what they can do.

And the third lesson was that David's bravery came from his confidence that he was fighting for God's honor, and that God was on his side. To our ears, this may sound misguided and even arrogant. But, don't we, as Unitarian Universalists, believe something similar? We believe that when people stand up and fight for what is right, the justice of their cause should make them braver. The 19th century Unitarian minister, Theodore Parker, said, "The arc of the Universe is long, but it bends toward justice." He, too, believed that there was some deep and powerful force in the Universe that stands behind the weak and the small when they fight against the more powerful. The story of David and Goliath, the little shepherd boy who defeated the most powerful warrior in the world, asks us, "Where would we find such courage?"

WISDOM FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES: WORKSHOP 1: LEADER RESOURCE 2: CREATING THE CLOSING WORSHIP

The closing worship circle brings the group back together to enrich each other's understanding of the story and of their own life experience. This is not a show-and-tell experience, but rather a participatory, co-created worship experience. Do just enough planning to provide a container for participants to share with one another and grow in spirit. You cannot script a co-created worship service, but you can guide it so that all participants feel heard and valued, and all hear and value the voices and experiences of others, regardless of age or life stage. With practice, you and the participants will become adept at co-creating worship to end each workshop.

Here are suggested elements for the closing worship for Workshop 1, David and Goliath. Add, subtract, and adapt to fit your situation:

Opening words

Use the Theodore Parker quote that begins this workshop.

Chalice lighting

Use chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation or use Reading 452 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

What was it like to be David? Slingshots and King's Armor

If you had a group using Alternate Activity 1, Pretending to be David, invite participants to demonstrate their re-enactment with the group. Invite them to tell the large group what it feels like to be David.

What are we afraid of today? Confronting Bullies Drama

Invite the group that created a modern version of David and Goliath (Activity 6) to share their thoughts about bullies today and why they make us afraid. Invite them to re-enact a piece of their dramatic rendering of the story.

What gave David courage? What gives us courage?

Invite members of the discussion group (Activity 5) to explain what they think gave David courage. Invite them to share what gives them courage today to fight against injustice or to stand up for themselves.

What gives us courage? Five Smooth Stones

Invite the group that meditated on what they would want to bring into the valley to meet a Goliath today to share some of their thoughts and show their stones. Since some of the painted stones might still be somewhat wet, invite participants to place them on the worship table.

Meditation/prayer

Begin a meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation. Then say, "Here are some fears we want to acknowledge" and invite participants to speak their fears aloud. Then say, "Here are some ways in which we pray for/need courage," and invite participants to speak if they choose. Then say, "Here are the things we are bringing into the valley with us when we face our fears like David faced Goliath," and invite people to speak. End your prayer by saying, "Help us to/may we remember that we are not alone when we, like David, face injustice, or face a bully. End the meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation.

Music

Choose some music about courage. You might choose a recorded piece to play, such as "You'll never walk alone" from the musical *Carousel* or explain and teach a song such as Hymn 172 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Siph Amandla." If you do use Hymn 172, explain that it came from people who were facing a terribly unjust government in South Africa and used the music to give them courage.

Closing words

Use words familiar to your congregation.

FIND OUT MORE

Twentieth Century Unitarian theologian James Luther Adams describes the five smooth stones of liberalism, a metaphor drawn from the David and Goliath story, in his essay "Guiding Principles for a Free Faith" found in *On Being Human, Religiously* (1976, Beacon Press). It can be found online at [GoogleBooks](https://books.google.com/books?id=ECHDFQsnNlgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=On+Being+Human+Religiously&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=_r89TarnOlrcgQeP-fDgCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCgQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false) (at books.google.com/books?id=ECHDFQsnNlgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=On+Being+Human+Religiously&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=_r89TarnOlrcgQeP-fDgCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCgQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false). To view an extensive selection of books and other resources for children, youth, adults and families on the topic of courage, visit the [Teaching Tolerance](http://www.tolerance.org/search/apachesolr_search/courage) (at www.tolerance.org/search/apachesolr_search/courage) website.

WORKSHOP 2: DAVID AND NATHAN - YOU ARE THAT MAN

INTRODUCTION

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. — Archbishop Desmond Tutu

This workshop introduces what is a remarkable characteristic of the Hebrew scripture—it contains within it not only the stories of times when the Jewish people and their leaders were exceptional, or courageous or righteous, but also stories of times when the people and their leaders were immoral, or corrupt, or wicked, and needed prophets to call them back to right relationship with each other and with the divine. This workshop introduces the story of King David, Bathsheba, and the prophet Nathan. Although the story of David and Bathsheba is often viewed as a cautionary tale about adultery, it is rather a story about greed, and entitlement, and injustice. Rather than focus on the sensational details of the David and Bathsheba story, this workshop for all ages moves that story to the background, and focuses on the parable told by the prophet Nathan as he accused King David of immoral behavior. Participants of all ages will hear the prophet Nathan's parable as it is written in the Bible, and then explore the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the parable's characters by taking part in a re-enactment. They will also consider how "God" in this story (represented by Nathan) is different from "God" in the David and Goliath story. The workshop asks key questions to tie the story to participants' lives: When have I taken more than my share? When have I had something taken from me? When am I a prophet, calling out injustice and wrongdoing and speaking for what is fair and right? Participants are offered a choice of activities and approaches for delving more deeply into the story and key questions before coming back together for a closing worship.

This workshop continues a pattern of activities that frame all of the workshops in this program. Congregations may wish to establish their own patterns, perhaps arranging for refreshments or a meal to precede or follow each workshop.

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction and make any accommodations necessary for your group.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present the parable told to David by the prophet Nathan and invite participants to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the story and its context
- Invite participants to reflect on their personal experiences with injustice and greed
- Invite participants to consider times when they are called to act as prophet.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain knowledge and understanding of the actions, thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters in the Nathan's parable
- Recall their personal experiences with injustice and greed using a variety of approaches
- Reflect on the experience of being a prophet and taking a stance in support of what is just and fair
- Consider the role of God in this story and compare it with the role of God in the previous workshop
- Experience connection with people of all ages and be enriched by variety of different perspectives offered.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Nathan Confronts David	15
Activity 2: Retelling the Story	10
Activity 3: Being a Prophet	10
Activity 4: Explaining Small Group Options	5
Activity 5: Discussion — Option 1	25
Activity 6: Wearing the Prophet's Mantle — Option 2	25
Activity 7: This is Wrong! Collage — Option 3	25
Faith in Action	
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: Making Sheep to Retell	25

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

As you prepare to facilitate this workshop, ask yourself the key questions:

- When have I taken more than my share?
- When have I had something taken from me?

- When have I been a prophet, calling out injustice and wrong-doing and speaking for what is fair and right?

Reflect on how you might have answered these questions as an eight-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old youth, or a young adult making your way in the world. Envision the way you would like to respond to the third question when you are an elder, looking back on your life.

Bring each person in your group into your mind and hold them in appreciative thought and/or prayer.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags, durable or single use
- Bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen/pencil
- Small table
- Optional: Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- If you have not already done so, create a sign-in sheet with columns for name, address, phone, and e-mail information and place it on the table.
- Place name badges and markers on the table.

Description of Activity

As people arrive, introduce yourself and invite them to make a name tag and sign in and provide contact information.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.

Description of Activity

Bring participants together and welcome them. Invite a volunteer to light the chalice as you share a favorite children's chalice lighting used in your congregation.

Invite participants to go around the circle and say their names and briefly tell of a time when they were brave. As the stories are shared, point out that bravery can mean confronting a bully, like David did Goliath, but it can also mean taking a stance for what is right and fair, which is what today's story is about.

ACTIVITY 1: NATHAN CONFRONTS DAVID (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

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

- Leader Resource 1, [David and Nathan Background Information](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.
- Print Leader Resource 1 and prepare to briefly present the information. Make copies so that interested participants can take one home.

Description of Activity

Ask key questions: When have I taken more than my share? When have I had something taken from me? Invite each person to answer.

Using the information in Leader Resource 1, David and Nathan Background Information, briefly set the stage for the story. Keep the background information brief, and offer copies of Leader Resource 1 to those who wish to take it home. Say, "In this story, God speaks through the prophet Nathan to call out King David's wrong-doing."

Read the story aloud.

ACTIVITY 2: RETELLING THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Nathan Confronts David](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Stuffed animal sheep
- Optional: Simple costumes

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the story so that you can guide a dramatized retelling.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to take on the various roles, asking questions to set the scene before choosing any volunteers. Ask:

- Who will be the prophet Nathan? Who will be King David? Where should David be while Nathan tells his story, or parable?
- Where should the rich person be? How can we tell the person is rich? Who would like to play the rich person? Choose a volunteer and invite them to practice looking and acting "rich."
- Who will be the poor person with the one ewe? Choose a volunteer and invite that person to protect the single ewe.

After the actors are in place, ask: "What happens first? and next? Guide participants through a re-enactment of the story, asking at appropriate intervals, "What is the rich person thinking and feeling? What does the rich

person do? What is the poor person feeling and what do they do? What is David thinking and feeling as the story proceeds? How does he feel when Nathan points and says, "YOU are that man!"? How does Nathan feel? What does it mean that Nathan speaks for God in this story? Encourage those who are not playing a role to make suggestions and to offer encouragement to those who are acting out the story.

After the re-enactment, invite participants to offer comments, observations, and insights about the story.

ACTIVITY 3: BEING A PROPHET (10 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Ask: Why did Nathan tell David the story?

Lead a whole group discussion. Point out that Nathan was a prophet and had a special calling to speak for what is right and against what is wrong. The people in Nathan's time believed that prophets spoke for God. Then ask:

- Have you ever had a time when you had to be a prophet?
- What made you brave enough to speak for what is fair and right?

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLAINING SMALL GROUP OPTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- List the small group options and their locations on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

- Explain options for small processing groups and point out breakout spaces. Explain to participants that they may choose any of the options that appeal to them. There is not one group for children, another for youth, and another for adults. All groups will have a mix of ages. Invite at least one adult or youth participant to take part in each breakout group, and ask those volunteers to set a tone that welcomes multigenerational participation.

ACTIVITY 5: DISCUSSION – OPTION 1 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - Why is this story preserved?

- What were they trying to teach with this story?
- What can we learn from this story?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the questions posted on newsprint. Use some of these questions to provoke, guide or further the discussion, as needed:

- What are God's moral principles in this story?
- How has the relationship between David and God changed since the story of David and Goliath?
- Who is God in relationship with?
- What does God want done?
- What method does God use to change David's behavior? What moral sensibility do we share with David when confronted by our own hypocrisy?
- How is this story like an incident in your life? When have you been David, Bathsheba, Uriah, and Nathan?

ACTIVITY 6: WEARING THE PROPHET'S MANTLE — OPTION 2 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Scarves, capes, or pieces of fabric that can be draped over the shoulders
- Items to decorate the scarves, capes, or pieces of fabric, such as pieces of felt, foam pieces, stickers, sequins, buttons, feathers, pompoms, fake fur
- Low-temperature glue guns and glue sticks

Preparation for Activity

- Collect scarves, capes, and pieces of fabric that can be decorated for this activity. Try the local thrift shop or visit a fabric remnants store.
- Set out scarves, capes, and fabrics as well as items for decoration.
- Make sure there is working space near electric outlets so that the glue gun can be used easily.

Description of Activity

As the groups divide, make sure there is an adult or a youth who will handle each glue gun. Invite the small group to create a prophet's mantle. Invite them to try on a variety of scarves, capes, and/or fabric pieces and then choose decorations. Ask adults or youth to use the glue gun to affix decorations to the prophet's mantles. When the mantles are done, invite each participant to put on their mantle and to take turns enacting Nathan calling David out on his wrong behavior. After each

practices being Nathan, invite them to be a modern-day prophet, calling out a wrong behavior that goes on in our own world (such as littering, hitting, taking more than your share, etc.).

ACTIVITY 7: THIS IS WRONG COLLAGE — OPTION 3 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A piece of mural or craft paper, large enough for a small group to work on it together
- Markers and/or poster paints, brushes and cups of water
- Old magazines
- Scissors
- Glue
- Smocks to protect clothing

Preparation for Activity

- Spread the mural paper on a table. Protect the table with covering.
- Set out materials.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to consider what Nathan the prophet (or God in this story) would find troubling in today's world (i.e. injustices to people and to creatures with whom we share the planet). Invite them to make a group mural or collage with the title "This is Wrong!" using pictures from magazines as well as drawings or paintings they create themselves.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Creating the Closing Worship](#) (included in this document)
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout
- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook, or words to your chosen song
- Optional: Keyboard or drums for musical accompaniment
- Optional: Recorded music and player

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.
- Decide on the order of worship for the closing and plan how you will include a contribution from all small groups. Use Leader Resource 2, *Creating the Closing Worship*, to help you with planning.
- Write an order of service on newsprint. Here is a sample to adapt:
 - Opening words
 - Chalice lighting
 - Telling Nathan's Story
 - What would Nathan speak out about today?
 - When are we called to be prophets in our own time?
 - Wearing the prophet's mantle
 - Meditation/prayer
 - Music
 - Closing words
- Make copies of *Taking It Home*.
- Optional: Recruit a musician to teach and/or accompany the song.

Description of Activity

Create a worship service, weaving together contributions from all of the breakout groups. Do not over-script the worship service, but rather create a worshipful "container" to hold all of the insights, thoughts, feelings, creations, and contributions of participants. At the end of the worship, extinguish the chalice and read the words of Elizabeth Selle Jones, Reading 456 in the hymnbook, or choose a benediction or closing words familiar to participants. Distribute *Taking It Home*.

FAITH IN ACTION

Preparation for Activity

- Talk with your social justice committee, your minister or religious educator, or another appropriate person to find a recent example of your congregation's taking a prophetic stance. Invite guest(s) to come and tell the story with any props that will make the story more compelling (i.e. pictures). Do not overlook the youth and children of your congregation as potential guests.

Description of Activity

Invite your guest(s) to share their story of the congregation's prophetic stance. With your guest,

determine a way for your group to add their own prophetic voices. Some possible projects are a group letter to the editor, multigenerational presence at an event, or hosting a table at social hour where people register to vote or write to their representatives.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to talk with your co-facilitator about how the workshop went, using these questions as a guide:

- What went well?
- What surprised us as facilitators? Amazed us? Challenged us?
- How did this workshop strengthen multigenerational community? How did it meet the faith development needs of individuals within that community?
- What needs adjustment in future workshops?

TAKING IT HOME

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. — Archbishop Desmond Tutu

It is easier to name situations where we were treated unfairly than it is to be aware of situations when we acted unfairly. Engage family members or trusted friends in a conversation about how we determine what is fair and unfair in our families, communities, and the world. Can you identify times when you were given or when you took more than a fair share of goods or privileges? Who or what has acted as prophet in your life to help you perceive unfairness? Have you changed your behavior as a result?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: MAKING SHEEP TO RETELL NATHAN'S STORY (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Sheep-making supplies for each participant:
 - A sheet of white or black craft foam
 - Two clip clothespins

- Black poster paint, brushes and cups of water or black markers
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Smock to protect clothing

- Leader Resource 3, [Template for Sheep](#) (included in this document)
- Shirt-box weight cardboard
- Old newspaper
- Optional: Googly eyes and craft glue
- Optional: Cotton balls or pieces of fiberfill and craft glue

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that there are at least two adults or youth to meet with this breakout group.
- Using Leader Resource 3, Template for Sheep, create a few cardboard sheep templates.
- Set out supplies.
- Create a sample sheep.

Description of Activity

Invite children to create sheep to reenact the story. An adult or youth in the group might ask the children to retell the story. Invite a volunteer to begin, and then invite others to add to the retelling.

Explain that you are going to make sheep so that you can act out Nathan's story. Invite each participant to paint both sides of two clip clothespins black to form the legs. Lay the clothespins on their sides on newspaper to dry. Trace the cardboard template onto black or white foam and cut out the sheep. (Note: Very young children will need help with this step.) If desired, affix googly eyes and/or cotton balls to the sheep with craft glue. When the clothespins are dry, clip them to the craft foam sheep to form legs.

Once you have made the sheep, invite the group to act out the story, letting children take turns being the poor person and the rich person. Invite participants to share their sheep with the person playing the role of the rich person, assuring them that they will be able to take their own sheep home afterward. Ask: Why is it wrong for the rich person to take the poor person's sheep?

STORY: NATHAN CONFRONTS DAVID

2 Samuel 12: 1-10 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He [Nathan] came to him [David], and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He [The poor man] brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler [a guest who came] to the rich man, and he [the rich man] was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer [guest] who had come to him, but he [the rich man] took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him. Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man [rich man in Nathan's story]. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the [rich] man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, ... and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife."

LEADER RESOURCE 1: DAVID AND NATHAN BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In this story, the young boy, David, who had killed Goliath has grown up and after many twists and turns has become the King of Israel and Judea. He has established the city of Jerusalem as his Capital city. He has become very rich and powerful, and like rich and powerful men of that time, he had many wives. He believed, and the people of his country believed, that David was God's favorite. Because David had always showed great faith in YHWH (Yahweh), YHWH (Yahweh) had always blessed him with military victory, wealth and power.

But David had taken the wife of one of his soldiers, a man named Uriah. David had arranged for Uriah to be killed in a battle, so that he could marry his wife Bathsheba.

Nathan was "the oracle or prophet" in David's court. (An oracle or prophet was a person who was supposed to interpret signs and tell the King what God wanted.) God tells Nathan to tell David that what he did to Uriah and Bathsheba was unjust. Nathan confronts David by telling him the parable that we read today. The story is about a rich man who has many sheep and lambs but who takes the single lamb of a poor man. Nathan asks David, "What should happen in a case like this?" Even David can see injustice of the rich man's action. David says that this rich man should have to give the poor man four sheep to pay the poor man back for what he has done. David even states that the rich man who taken the sheep from the poor man deserves to die.

Nathan replies: "You are that man!" and confronts David about his wrong-doing, accusing him of arranging for Uriah to die in battle and marrying Uriah's wife.

The story of David, of course, continues for many years after this incident. But from this point on, things do not go as well as they have for David. The child that David had fathered with Bathsheba dies at an early age. The way that the Hebrew scripture tells the story of David, this is the turning point in his life. King David has lost the favor of God and he grows old and troubled.

But notice that God used Nathan, the prophet, to speak to David.

A prophet is not a king who rules the government or state. A prophet is not a priest who is the leader of a religious institution. The prophets of the Hebrew scripture hold an unusual place in the social order.

In the Hebrew scripture, Moses is the last person who talks face to face with God; after that, God speaks to people in dreams or visions. The people to whom God directs these visions are the prophets.

Today, we are skeptical about anyone who claims to hear directly from God through dreams or visions. But that is not what was remarkable about this story of Nathan and David. In a world in which the power of kings was absolute; this story argues that God, through the prophets, judges even the mightiest king and calls him to account. The story teaches that the critic of the king, or the demonstrator in the street, might be speaking for God and for justice. God is not on the side of the powerful, but through the prophets, God holds them accountable.

The stories of King David and his son, Solomon, are among the first written stories of the Jewish scriptures. Scholars believe that what we now call the Bible was a project started in the court of King David, in which some writers and historians were assigned the task of writing down the biography of King David and the history of the Hebrew people.

The scriptures tell the story of where their people came from: how they were slaves in Egypt before Moses led them out to the Promised Land. And they tell how the people came to be enslaved in Egypt in the first place: the story of Joseph and his father, Jacob, and his father, Isaac, and even his father, Abraham. And woven through all these stories was YHWH, their God, who was still their God and whose strength had put king David in power.

So it is remarkable that they also tell this story about David committing a sin, and how God turned against David and rebuked him through the prophet Nathan. And by doing so, they made the Bible a radical book, one that tells of a God who is not on the side of kings, but is on the side of justice.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: CREATING THE CLOSING WORSHIP

In this program, the closing worship circle offers a time for the group to come back together to enrich each other's understanding of the story and of their own life experiences. This is not a show-and-tell, but a participatory, co-created worship. You will need to do just enough planning to provide a container for participants to share with one another and grow in spirit. You cannot script a co-created worship service, but you can guide it so that all participants feel heard and valued, and all hear and value the voices and experiences of others, regardless of age or life stage.

Here are suggested elements for the closing worship for Workshop 2, David and Nathan — You are That Man! Add, subtract, and adapt to fit your situation.

Opening words

Use the Desmond Tutu quote that begins this workshop.

Chalice lighting

Use chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation or use Reading 452 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Telling Nathan's Story

If you had a group using Alternate Activity 1, Making Sheep to Retell Nathan's Story, invite participants to use their sheep and retell the story. Invite them to tell the large group why what the rich person did was wrong and how the poor person felt.

What would Nathan speak out about today? Collage

Invite the group that created a "This is Wrong!" collage (Activity 7) to share their collage and name some of the things in today's world that call for us to be prophets and speak out for justice and fairness.

When are we called to be prophets in our time?

Invite members of the discussion group (Activity 5) to share part of their conversation about Nathan's accusation and when/how Nathan would want to speak against the same kind of injustice today. Invite them to share any examples from their own lives of when they have filled any of these roles (the rich person taking more than their share, the poor person having things taken from them, or the prophet speaking against wrong behavior and calling for justice).

Wearing the Prophet's Mantle

Invite the group that created mantles of the prophet to share some of the ways in which they practiced speaking out against injustice. Invite members of the other small groups to suggest other "prophetic" statements that members of this group can make.

Meditation/prayer

Begin a meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation. Then say, "There are times when we have had things unfairly taken from us like the poor man in the story." Invite participants to remember those times, and say "We remember how that felt." Then say, "There are times when we have taken more than our share" and invite participants to hold those moments in their hearts. Invite all to feel sorry in their own hearts. Then say, "There are times when we need to be like the prophet Nathan and speak with the prophet's voice about what is good and right. We pray for/need courage to do that," and invite participants to speak aloud if they choose about some of those times. End by saying, "Help us to/may we remember that we are not alone when we, like Nathan, speak and act with our prophet's voice and mantle. We have family, friends, this congregation, and God/Spirit of Life/Spirit of Justice with us when we do that. End the meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation.

Music

Choose some music about being a prophet. You might choose a recorded piece to play, such as "If I had a Hammer" by Peter, Paul, and Mary or explain and teach a song such as Hymn 170 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "We are a Gentle Angry People" or Hymn 1014 in *Singing the Journey*, "Standing on the Side of Love."

Closing words

Use words familiar to your congregation.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: TEMPLATE FOR SHEEP



FIND OUT MORE

To hear contemporary UU prophetic voices on our faith foundations for justice, read [*A People So Bold: Theology and Ministry for Unitarian Universalists*](#) by John Gibb Millspaugh (Boston: Skinner House, 2009).

To learn about Unitarian and Universalist prophetic voices from history, read [*Stirring the Nation's Heart: Eighteen Stories of Prophetic Unitarians and Universalists of the Nineteenth Century*](#) by Polly Peterson (Boston: UUA, 2010).

For more information about economic inequality, see the website of [United for a Fair Economy](http://www.faireconomy.org/) (at www.faireconomy.org/), a non-profit organization that raises awareness, supports and helps build social movements for greater equality.

WORKSHOP 3: MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS

INTRODUCTION

There are genuinely sufficient resources in the world to ensure that no one, nowhere, at no time, should go hungry. — Ed Asner, contemporary actor and activist

This workshop focuses on a story of the Hebrews after their Exodus from slavery in Egypt, during the forty-year period when the people wandered in the desert wilderness before entering the Promised Land. The text reports that when the people became anxious because there was no food to eat, God delivered manna from heaven for them to make into bread for their daily use. We can imagine that the story was repeated and grew as generations retold the story of the wilderness journey, and how God delivered the food necessary for the Hebrew people to survive in a barren place. The story dwells on the idea that each person was provided with what food was needed to live, and nothing more.

Workshop participants consider how they might feel under those circumstances and ponder why this story continued to be told for centuries, until it was finally written down. Participants live into the story by remembering their own times of hunger (and complaining about being hungry!) They will touch and work with the basic ingredients of pita bread, which is similar to the bread the Hebrews lamented leaving behind in Egypt and examine coriander seed, which the Bible says is similar in appearance to manna.

This workshop continues a pattern of activities that frame all of the workshops in this program. Congregations may wish to establish their own patterns for this series of workshops, perhaps arranging for refreshments or a meal to precede or follow each workshop. Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction and make any accommodations necessary for your group.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present the story of God providing the Hebrews with manna to eat while they were in the wilderness
- Engage participants with the experience of the Hebrews by remembering their own experiences of hunger and complaint and by exploring the process of making bread from grain

- Invite participants to reflect on the reason for inclusion of the story in the Hebrew scriptures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain knowledge and understanding of the story of God providing manna to the Hebrews in the wilderness
- Experience the process of making bread from grain
- Consider what wisdom this story held for the wilderness Hebrews and for the scribes of David's court who wrote it down 500 years later, and what wisdom it holds for contemporary Unitarian Universalists
- Experience connection with people of all ages and be enriched by variety of different perspectives offered.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Manna in the Wilderness	15
Activity 2: Retelling the Story	10
Activity 3: Our Daily Bread	10
Activity 4: Explaining Small Group Options	5
Activity 5: Discussion — Option 1	25
Activity 6: A Share for All — Option 2	25
Activity 7: Making Bread — Option 3	25
Faith in Action: Bread for Everyone	
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: Where Does Bread Come From?	25

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

As you prepare to facilitate this workshop, ask these key questions:

- When have I experienced hunger, either physical or spiritual?

- When have I experienced the feeling that what I have is sufficient?
- When have I tried to accumulate more than I needed? What happened? What did I learn?

Reflect on how you might have answered these questions as an eight-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old youth, or a young adult making your way in the world.

Envision the way you would like to respond to the third question when you are an elder, looking back on your life.

Bring each person in your group into your mind and hold them in appreciative thought and/or prayer.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags, durable or single use
- Bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen/pencil
- Small table
- Optional: Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-up sheet with columns for name, address, phone, and e-mail information and place it on the table.
- Place name tags and markers on the table.

Description of Activity

As people arrive, introduce yourself and invite them to make a name tag and sign in.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around the chalice.

Description of Activity

Bring participants together and welcome them. Invite a volunteer to light the chalice as you share a favorite children's chalice lighting used by your congregation.

Invite participants to create a list of the different kinds of bread they can think of (wheat bread, rye bread, tortillas, rice cakes, and so on). Ask each person to share their name before naming a kind of bread. If anyone is having difficulty thinking of a kind of bread to add to the list, invite others to make suggestions.

ACTIVITY 1: MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Manna in the Wilderness](#) (included in this document)"
- Leader Resource 1, [Exodus Background Information](#) (included in this document)

- Coriander seeds

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.
- Prepare to briefly present the information in Leader Resource 1. Make copies for interested participants to take home.

Description of Activity

Ask:

- What do people need to survive?
- Where does our food come from?
- How might you feel if you were in a strange place and did not know what you were going to eat?

Using the information in Leader Resource 1, Exodus Background Information, briefly set the stage for the story. Keep the background information brief, and offer copies of the leader resource to those who wish to take one home. Say, "In this story, God provides enough food for people to survive, and makes sure that no one takes or keeps more than they need for each day."

Read the story aloud. Pass around a small bowl of coriander seeds when you reach the passage describing manna.

ACTIVITY 2: RETELLING THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Manna in the Wilderness](#) (included in this document) "
- Coriander seeds
- Towel
- Several baskets

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the story so that you can guide a dramatized retelling.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to take on the various roles, asking questions to set the scene before choosing any volunteer actors. Ask:

- Who will be a Hebrew person? We'll need four or five, and you'll have to look and act *very* hungry.
- Who will be Moses? Who will be Aaron?
- Who will be God?

- Who will help God by scattering the coriander seeds (our pretend manna)? Scatter them on a towel so that they will be easy to clean up.
- Where should the complainers stand? Where should Moses be? Where should God be?
- Where should we put the baskets for the people to collect manna?

After the actors are in place, ask: "What happens first? And next? Guide participants through a re-enactment of the story, asking at appropriate intervals, "What are the Hebrew people thinking and feeling? What is Moses thinking and feeling? And Aaron? What does God think about? Why is God providing this unfamiliar substance called manna instead of something the people recognize? Encourage those who are not playing roles to make suggestions and to offer encouragement to those who are acting out the story.

After the re-enactment, invite participants to offer comments, observations, and insights about the story.

ACTIVITY 3: OUR DAILY BREAD (10 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss some of these questions:

- What do we learn about God in the story? What were the writers trying to tell us about God?
- Why did God only give them enough manna to make bread for one day at a time most days?
- Why did the shares end up equal even if one person took more than another? What point was the writer trying to make?
- Why did he give them enough for two days on the day before the Sabbath? Why was a day of rest so important?

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLAINING SMALL GROUP OPTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- List the small group options and their locations on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Explain options for small processing groups and point out breakout spaces. Explain that participants may choose any of the options that appeal to them. There is not one group for children, another for youth, and another for adults. All groups can have a mix of ages. Invite at least one adult or youth participant to take part in each breakout group, and ask those volunteers to set a tone that welcomes multigenerational participation.

ACTIVITY 5: DISCUSSION — OPTION 1 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - Why is this story preserved?
 - What were they trying to teach with this story?
 - What is it that we can learn?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the questions posted on newsprint. Use some of these questions to provoke, guide or further the discussion, as needed:

- What are God's moral principles in this story?
- How does God take care of the Israelites and preserve their equality?
- Looking at this story and the Nathan story (Workshop 2), what is God's attitude toward the rich and powerful?
- Is it difficult for you to trust that there will be enough?
- In what ways can you identify with the Israelites and their fears when wandering in the desert?

ACTIVITY 6: A SHARE FOR ALL — OPTION 2 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Simple costumes for "writers" — robes, hats, or other items to spark imagination
- Poster board

Preparation for Activity

- Write on poster board and display:
 - There will be enough food for everyone
 - Do not take more than your share

Description of Activity

Invite participants to imagine themselves to be the historians in King David's and King Solomon's court, deciding which legends and stories to put into the official history of the Hebrew people. When they chose the story of manna from heaven to include, they wanted to teach some important lessons. Two of those lessons are on the poster board.

Invite participants to imagine that they are scribes in today's world and they want to record a story that will help people learn those important things. Ask participants to work as one group or divide into smaller

groups and create such a story to act out. Make costumes available to add to the fun and creativity.

ACTIVITY 7: MAKING BREAD — OPTION 3 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Pita Bread Recipe](#) (included in this document)
- Recipe ingredients for pre-made dough:
 - 1 1/4 cup warm water
 - 1 tbsp yeast
 - 1 tbsp sugar
 - 3 cups flour
 - 2 tbsp olive oil or vegetable oil
- Identical recipe ingredients for participants to mix
- Small mixing bowl
- Large mixing bowl
- Spoon
- Rolling pin
- Rolling surface
- Extra flour for rolling surface
- Knife
- Two baking sheets
- Cooling rack
- Oven
- Several loaves of commercial pita bread
- Basket

Preparation for Activity

- Follow the instructions for making pita bread dough and set it to rising 2 1/2 to 3 hours ahead of the workshop. Alternatively, ask a participant to prepare the dough and bring it to the workshop.
- Set out ingredients and prepare a suitable space for cooking.
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Description of Activity

Ask participants to wash hands before cooking. Look at a loaf of commercial pita bread and tear it apart to see the pocket inside. Explain that pita bread looks similar to what the Hebrews would have eaten in Egypt, before they went into the wilderness. Show them the risen dough and explain that they are going to make more dough, but that it takes two or three hours to rise, so some dough has already been rising.

Ask one participant to measure the warm water into the small bowl and another to add the sugar. Invite a third to put in the yeast and stir. Then leave the mixture alone for five minutes. Measure the flour into the large mixing bowl and put a depression into the center of the flour. Call attention to the look of the yeast, noting that it is foamy because it is a live plant and is growing in the presence of water and sugar. Slowly pour the yeast and water mixture, as well as the olive oil, into the depression in the flour. Mix until it makes a doughy mixture, and then set it aside. This mixture will not be eaten in the course of the workshop; it is for demonstration purposes.

Shape the prepared dough into a thick rope and cut the rope into six sections. Invite participants to shape each section into a ball. Place each ball onto a floured surface and roll it into a four or five-inch circle. Place the circles on the baking sheets and place in the oven. Bake for five or six minutes and do not open the oven during this time. Take the bread out of the oven when it is light brown, putting it on a rack to cool.

While the bread is baking and cooling, tear the commercial bread into bite-sized pieces and place in a basket to be shared during the closing worship.

Including All Participants

If you have one or more participants who are sensitive to gluten, consult with them in advance and provide a bread that they can eat. Cut or tear it into bite-sized pieces and put it in a different basket from the one containing pita bread.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, [Creating the Closing Worship](#) (included in this document)
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook or words to your chosen song
- Optional: Keyboard or drums for musical accompaniment
- Optional: Recorded music and player

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.
- Decide on the order of worship for the closing and plan how you will include a contribution from all small groups. Use Leader Resource 3, *Creating the Closing Worship*, to help you plan.
- Write an order of service on newsprint. Here is a sample to adapt:
 - Opening words
 - Chalice lighting
 - Where does bread come from?
 - Retelling the story
 - Taking only our share
 - Mindful eating of homemade bread
 - Meditation/prayer
 - Telling a Modern Story
 - Music
 - Closing words
- Make copies of *Taking It Home*.
- Optional: Recruit a musician to teach and/or accompany the song.

Description of Activity

Create a worship service, weaving together contributions from all of the breakout groups. Do not over-script the worship service, but rather create a worshipful "container" to hold all of the insights, thoughts, feelings, creations, and contributions of participants. At the end of the worship, extinguish the chalice and read the words of Elizabeth Selle Jones, Reading 456 in the hymnbook, or choose a benediction or closing words familiar to participants. Distribute *Taking It Home*.

FAITH IN ACTION: BREAD FOR EVERYONE

Preparation for Activity

- Investigate your congregation's involvement with programs that provide food for those in need and talk with appropriate people within your congregation about how a multigenerational group might offer help.
- Invite a guest from your congregation who is actively involved in the work of providing food for those in need. Choose a guest who can speak easily with people of all ages. Do not overlook your congregation's youth, elders, or young adults when deciding whom to invite.

Description of Activity

Invite your guest(s) to share the story of the congregation's work to provide food for those in need. Ask the person to explain how this work is connected to their Unitarian Universalist faith.

With your group, plan a way to help with the project. You might arrange a day for sorting canned goods, or cook a needed meal together, or perform another service to contribute to the congregation's efforts.

Arrange for your group to publish reflections about the experience through your congregation's newsletter, website, or other venue.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to talk with your co-facilitator about how the workshop went, using these questions as a guide:

- What went well?
- What surprised us as facilitators? Amazed us? Challenged us?
- How did this workshop strengthen multigenerational community? How did it meet the faith development needs of individuals within that community?
- What needs adjustment in future workshops?

TAKING IT HOME

There are genuinely sufficient resources in the world to ensure that no one, nowhere, at no time, should go hungry. — Ed Asner, contemporary actor and activist

With family members and friends, share stories of breads or other food that have significant meaning, because of their association with beloved cultural practices or with significant personal stories. Invite each person to consider why that particular food holds a place in their lives. What kind of hungers does it fill—physical, emotional, spiritual? Organize a family party, a dinner party, or a neighborhood or congregational gathering to share both stories and food.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WHERE DOES BREAD COME FROM? (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Wheat berries or wheat germ
- Whole wheat flour
- Wheat stalk or picture of wheat growing
- Yeast

- Mortar and pestle (or round stone of a size appropriate for a child's hand and wooden or ceramic bowl)
- Several loaves commercial pita bread, and an alternative for those with gluten sensitivity
- Disposable food service gloves
- Coriander
- Optional: Pictures of various types of grains in the field

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that there are at least two adults or youth to meet with this breakout group.
- Either on the Internet or at the public library, find pictures of wheat and other grains as seen in the field.
- Either on the Internet or at the public library, find information about the science of yeast. Both [Red Star Yeast](#) and [Fleischmann's Yeast](#) offer such information online.
- If you are using a stone and bowl instead of a mortar and pestle, wash the stone thoroughly and disinfect with boiling water.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to learn about the process of making bread at the time of the Hebrews' journey in the wilderness. Invite each person to put on food service gloves and to closely examine a piece of pita bread. Tear it open and note the pocket inside. Say, "Let's explore how such bread might have been made in Egypt, before the Hebrews went into the wilderness. And then, we'll think about how bread might have been made from manna."

Show pictures of wheat stalks and/or actual stalks. Look at the part of the wheat that holds the wheat berries and wheat germ. Examine wheat berries and wheat germ closely, and ask participants to guess how those things are converted into flour.

Let participants try grinding wheat berries or wheat germ with a mortar and pestle or with a stone and bowl. Show whole wheat flour and ask how that flour might come to be made into pita bread. Ask, "What needs to be added to the flour?" Affirm "water" and "yeast" as necessary to making bread from flour. Explain the use of yeast, noting that it is a tiny fungus that grows naturally in the wild. While it grows it breathes out air, which puffs up bread, or makes it rise. After it rises, the dough is shaped and cooked in the sun. Traditionally, people would save a bit of the uncooked dough in order to have yeast to make bread the next day. Point out how much work it was to make bread from wheat.

Taste a piece of pita bread.

Say, "Now imagine that you are in the wilderness, away from the wheat fields of Egypt and without the yeast needed to rise bread. You have been told that God will rain down something called manna for you to eat." Show the coriander, explaining that the Bible reports that manna looked something like coriander. Invite each participant to try grinding coriander with the mortar and pestle. Explain that the ground manna was mixed with water and then made into a sort of wafer or large cracker and put into the sun to dry. It did not rise like wheat bread. Ask, "Does anyone remember what the Bible said manna tasted like?"

Tear the pita bread loaves into bite-sized pieces and place in a basket to share at the closing worship. Practice explaining how ancient Hebrews would have ground flour or manna to make bread, so that you can share the explanation during the closing worship.

STORY: MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS

Exodus 16: 1-31; 35 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness... The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?"...

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.' And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites and say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then shall you know that I am the Lord your God.'"

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer [a unit of measure—about 3.7 quarts] to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.'" The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered more had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over until morning." But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, "This is what the Lord has commanded: Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning. So they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a sabbath, there will be none."

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none. The Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? See! The Lord has given you the sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day." So the people rested on the seventh day.

The house of Israel called it manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey...The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: EXODUS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The book of Exodus describes how the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt. It begins with the birth of Moses and the amazing story of how this Hebrew child became part of the inner circle of the Pharaoh. Exodus tells of how the Hebrews were mistreated as slaves and how Moses negotiated the release of his people from Egypt, a familiar story for all who are familiar with the Jewish Passover Seder. Exodus then tells of the Hebrews wandering in the desert for forty years until they came to the land of Canaan, the land promised to them by YHWH (Yahweh), their God. It is during the wandering of the Hebrews in the wilderness that the covenant between YHWH and the whole Hebrew people is established in the climatic events at Mt. Sinai, where Moses receives the Ten Commandments from YHWH and delivers them to the people.

Scholars generally agree that the stories in Exodus were collected and written down by the historians who were part of King David's and King Solomon's court, as a way of documenting the story of the origins of their people.

The time of King David and his son King Solomon was about 1000 BCE. The historians were writing about events that had happened about 500 years earlier, or 1500 BCE. Because the story is told so long after the events purportedly occurred, it cannot be read as journalism or objective history, but rather as a weaving together of stories and legends that told how YHWH rescued the Hebrews from historical obscurity. There is virtually no confirmation of the stories from Exodus included in Egyptian written records, including such events as the parting of the Red Sea and the death of every first-born son in Egypt in a single night.

This workshop focuses on the story of how the Hebrews fed themselves during the Exodus, when they wandered in the desert for forty years. The text reports that God delivered manna from heaven, which they made into bread for their daily use. We can imagine that the story was repeated and grew as generations retold the story of the wilderness journey, and how God delivered the food necessary for the Hebrew to survive in a barren place.

What about this story makes it repeatable? Why did it continue to be told for centuries, until it was finally written down? Three important themes hint at some of the wisdom we might draw from this story:

- God gave them bread to eat when they were hungry
- God only gave each family enough for a one day at a time
- On the day before the Sabbath, God gave them enough for two days.

Evidence suggests that the original story made no mention of the Sabbath. Later storytellers added the narrative about the collection of two days' supply of food in order to bring the story in line with Sabbath observances and practices of their own time.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: PITA BREAD RECIPE

1 1/4 cup warm water (mix 1/2 cup boiling water with 3/4 cup cold water)

1 tbsp yeast

1 tbsp sugar

3 cups flour

2 tbsp olive oil or vegetable oil

Pour warm water into a small bowl and stir in sugar. Add yeast and stir. Then set the mixture aside for five minutes. Measure the flour into a large mixing bowl and make a depression into the center of the flour. Slowly pour the yeast and water mixture, which will be foamy into the depression in the flour. Add the oil. Mix ingredients to form a stiff dough, and knead for ten minutes. Cover and let rise until double in bulk (approximately 2 1/2 hours).

[For the purposes of Activity 7, this concludes the preparation work. The recipe continues below.]

Knead the dough for three or four more minutes and shape it into a thick rope. Cut the rope into six sections and shape each section into a ball. Place each ball onto a floured surface and roll it into a half-inch thick circle about four or five inches in diameter. Place the circles on baking sheets and place in the oven. Bake for five or six minutes until it is light brown, and do not open the oven door while it is cooking. Each loaf should puff up, leaving a pocket in the middle. Take the pita loaves out of the oven, putting them on a rack to cool.

LEADER RESOURCE 3: CREATING THE CLOSING WORSHIP

In this program, the closing worship circle offers a time for the group to come back together to enrich each other's understanding of the story and of their own life experience. This is not a show-and-tell experience, but rather a participatory, co-created worship experience. You will need to do enough planning to provide a container for participants to share with one another and grow in spirit. You cannot script a co-created worship service, but you can guide it so that all participants feel heard and valued, and all hear and value the voices and experiences of others, regardless of age or life stage. With practice, you and the participants will become adept at co-creating worship to end each workshop.

Here are suggested elements for the closing worship for Workshop 3, Manna in the Wilderness. Add, subtract, and adapt to fit your situation:

Opening words

Use the Ed Asner quote that begins this workshop:

There are genuinely sufficient resources in the world to ensure that no one, nowhere, at no time, should go hungry.

Chalice lighting

Use chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation or use Reading 452 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Where does bread come from?

If you had a group using Alternate Activity 1, Where Does Bread Come From?, invite participants to use their pictures and containers of grain to explain to the larger group how bread is made from grain.

Retelling the story

Invite the group that used Activity 6, A Share for All — Option 2, to explain that they are scribes writing 500 years after the manna in the wilderness story happened. Invite them to retell the story- and explain why they wrote it down.

Taking only our share

Invite members of the discussion group (Activity 5) to share part of their conversation about what it means to take only enough and not more. Why do they think the excess turned to rot in the story?

Mindful eating of homemade bread

Invite the group that used Activity 7, Making Bread — Option 3, to explain what they did and to pass around small pieces of the bread they made. Alternatively, invite the participants in Activity 7 or Alternate Activity 1 to pass baskets of commercial pita bread. Invite people to quietly savor a small piece and not to reach for more.

Meditation/prayer

Begin a meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation. Then say, "As we savor this small piece of bread, let us imagine all that went into it." Invite participants to name aloud all of the things that contributed to the making of the bread and respond to each one, "We are grateful for the sun that shone on the wheat. We are grateful for the stone that ground it into grain, and so on."

Say, "We remember those who are hungry in this world. We especially remember those who come to [name a food project in which your congregation is involved] and promise to support the work of our congregation is providing food and bread for all." End your prayer by saying, "Help us to/may we remember all that makes it possible for us to be blessed with enough food to grow and to thrive and to remember to be thankful for that every day." End the meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation.

Telling a Modern Story

Invite the scribes from Activity 6 to share the story they created to help people today understand the same lesson that the manna story teaches.

Music

Choose music related to bread. You might teach a traditional Gospel song such as "Honey in the Rock" or a traditional Jewish song such as "Dayenu." You might also teach a song such as Hymn 21 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "For the Beauty of the Earth" or Hymn 1010 in *Singing the Journey*, "We Give Thanks."

Closing words

Use words familiar to your congregation.

FIND OUT MORE

For extensive information about food in cultures throughout history, visit [The Food Timeline](http://www.foodtimeline.org/) (at www.foodtimeline.org/) a website compiled by reference librarian Lynne Oliver and recognized by the American Library Association as a "Great Website for Kids."

WORKSHOP 4: THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

INTRODUCTION

But for the natives in these parts, God hath so pursued them, as for 300 miles space the greatest part of them are swept away by smallpox which still continues among them. So as God hath thereby cleared our title to this place, those who remain in these parts, being in all not 50, have put themselves under our protection. — Governor John Winthrop of Massachusetts, 1634

After the Israelites passed over the River Jordan, at the end of their long journey in the desert, they proceeded to conquer Canaan. This workshop tells the story of how the Israelites conquered the walled city of Jericho, a story celebrated in song and story to this day. In this familiar story, they marched around the city walls, the priests sounding the ram's horns, and walls came tumbling down when the Hebrew people shouted in unison.

It is a mixed story, morally, and retelling it offers opportunities for all ages to engage with some of the moral dilemmas presented by the text. The story is inspirational: Modern protest movements are inspired by the story of a mighty city being defeated by marching people and thunderous chants. On the other hand, the story is very troubling: Joshua is told that the city of Jericho and everything in it belongs to God, and through God, to them. Although the city is taken by apparently non-violent means, Joshua's troops put almost all the people and all the livestock in the city to death following the conquest.

The workshop asks participants to consider why a story like this is included in the Bible. Key questions include: What was the purpose of this narrative in the minds of those who first recorded it? What would it mean if this story were true? What would it mean if this story were false? What do we learn about God—or about people's perceptions of God—from this story? What insight and wisdom does it offer us today? What are examples in modern times of God depicted as a mighty battle God, bringing victory to those he favors and justifying war?

This workshop continues a pattern of activities that frame all of the workshops in this program. Congregations may wish to establish their own patterns for this series of workshops, perhaps arranging for refreshments or a meal to precede or follow each workshop. Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction and make any accommodations necessary for your group.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present the story of the battle of Jericho and invite participants to deepen their understanding of the story
- Consider the moral dilemmas presented by the story and how those dilemmas are present in today's world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Better understand the battle of Jericho story by exploring it from the perspectives of characters in the narrative
- Consider the motivation and goals of those who retold and recorded this story
- Identify the moral dilemmas and questions in the story and explore the implications for today's world
- Experience connection with people of all ages and be enriched by the variety of different perspectives offered.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: The Battle of Jericho	15
Activity 2: Retelling the Story	10
Activity 3: Right or Wrong? True or False?	10
Activity 4: Explaining Small Group Options	5
Activity 5: Discussion — Option 1	25
Activity 6: Newscasts from Jericho — Option 2	25
Activity 7: Questioning Joshua and the Storyteller — Option 3	25
Faith in Action	
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: The Spies and the Red Chord	25

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Can you recall a time in your life when you obtained something important for your well-being for which you had planned and waited a long time (such as a home, citizenship, a sought-after job, a needed medical procedure)? If you cannot think of such a story in your own life, is there a family story of this type? Consider these questions:

- How did you or your family member obtain or receive whatever it was?

- What actions and circumstances led to this event?
- What story do you tell about this event?

Reflect on how you might have answered these questions as an eight-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old youth, or a young adult making your way in the world. Envision the way you would like to respond when you are an elder, looking back on your life.

Bring each person in your group into your mind and hold them in appreciative thought and/or prayer.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags, durable or single use
- Bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen/pencil
- Small table
- Optional: Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-up sheet with columns for name, address, phone, and e-mail information and place it on the table.
- Place name tags and markers on table.

Description of Activity

As people arrive, introduce yourself and invite them to make a name tag and sign in.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.

Description of Activity

Bring participants together and welcome them. Invite a volunteer to light the chalice as you share a favorite children's chalice lighting used by your congregation.

Ask participants: is there a story told in your family about how you came to live where you live today? Invite each person or family group to briefly share their story. Tell participants that this workshop includes a Bible story told by King David's writers about how the Hebrew people came to live where they did.

ACTIVITY 1: THE BATTLE OF JERICHO (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

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

- Leader Resource 1, [Joshua, Rahab, and the Battle of Jericho Background Information](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 2, [Ark of the Covenant Picture](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.
- Print Leader Resource 1, Joshua, Rahab, and the Battle of Jericho Background Information, and prepare to briefly present the information. Make copies for interested participants to take home.
- Print a copy of Leader Resource 2, Ark of the Covenant Picture.

Description of Activity

Using the information in Leader Resource 1, Joshua, Rahab, and the Battle of Jericho Background Information, briefly set the stage for the story. Keep the background information brief, and offer copies of Leader Resource 1 to those who wish to take it home.

Explain that this story talks about the Ark of the Covenant, a large decorated box that carried stone tablets inscribed with Hebrew laws said to have been written by God. Show Leader Resource 2, Ark of the Covenant Picture, and explain that according to the Bible, this is what the Ark of the Covenant looked like. Say, "In this story, God is a mighty battle God who makes sure that the Hebrews defeat the people of Jericho and take over the city."

Read the story aloud.

ACTIVITY 2: RETELLING THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[The Battle of Jericho](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Simple costumes

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the story so that you can guide a dramatized retelling.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to take on the various roles, asking questions to set the scene before choosing any volunteer actors. Ask:

- Where will Joshua and the troops be? Where is the wall around the city of Jericho? How shall we represent the wall?

- Who will be Joshua? Who will be Joshua's troops?
- Who will be the two spies? Let's put them with Joshua getting their instructions.
- Who will be Rahab? Who will be members of her family? Where should they be?
- Who will be the King of Jericho? Where should the King be?
- What about the people of Jericho? Who will be the people of Jericho?

After the actors are in place, ask: "What happens first? And next?" Guide participants through a re-enactment of the story, asking at appropriate intervals, "What is Joshua thinking and feeling? How about his troops? How do the people inside the walls of Jericho feel? What do the spies do? Why do you think Rahab decides to help them? How does she do that? Encourage those who are not actors to make suggestions and offer encouragement to those who are acting out the story.

After the re-enactment, invite participants to offer comments, observations, and insights about the story.

ACTIVITY 3: RIGHT OR WRONG? TRUE OR FALSE? (10 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the story:

- Did the Hebrews think the battle ended the way it was supposed to? What made them think that? Was the result fair and right?
- What do we learn about the way the story teller understood God?
- Why did the story teller want us to understand that God was in favor of what happened in this battle?
- What would it mean if this story were true? What would it mean if the story were false?

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLAINING SMALL GROUP OPTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- List the small group options and their locations on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Explain options for small processing groups and point out breakout spaces. Explain that participants may choose any of the options that appeal to them. There is not one group for children, another for youth, and another for adults. All groups can have a mix of ages.

Invite at least one adult or youth participant to take part in each breakout group, and ask those volunteers to set a tone that welcomes multigenerational participation.

ACTIVITY 5: DISCUSSION — OPTION 1 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - Why is this story preserved?
 - What were they trying to teach with this story?
 - What is it that we can learn?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the questions posted on newsprint. Use some of these questions to provoke, guide or further the discussion, as needed:

- At the time they wrote this story down, what kind of story was it? What moral meaning did people make of this story?
- What was God's morality in this story?
- How is this story like the manna story (Workshop 3)? How is it different?
- What meaning do we draw from it now? How has the moral meaning of this story changed over time?
- Read the opening quote. How are that quote and the story it tells related to this scriptural story?
- Do we also dehumanize people in historical or cultural legends?
- How is this story our own story?

ACTIVITY 6: NEWSCASTS FROM JERICHO — OPTION 2 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper and pens/pencils
- Microphone or similar object to be used as a prop for news casting
- Optional: Video camera for capturing the newscasts

Description of Activity

Invite participants to pretend that there was television news coverage in Joshua and Rahab's day. Explain that different members of your group are going to plan to report on the events in the story from both inside and outside the walls of Jericho. Invite some participants to

create the "outside the walls" scenario, including a reporter interviewing Joshua and his troops. Invite some participants to create the "inside the walls" scenario, including a reporter interviewing the spies, Rahab, and other residents of Jericho. Ask both the "inside the walls" group and the "outside the walls" group to gather in their groups for ten minutes to compose some good reporter questions and rehearse their interviews. After ten minutes, stage your newscast, alternating "inside the walls" interviews with "outside the walls" interviews, using a microphone or similar prop. You may wish to videotape the entire newscast.

At the conclusion of the newscasts, compare the thoughts and feelings of the different groups. How did their descriptions of the same events differ from one another? If you have videotaped the newscast, decide how you will share it with the congregation.

ACTIVITY 7: QUESTIONING THE STORYTELLER – OPTION 3 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- 9 X 12-inch ecru or white construction paper
- Assorted fancy papers (origami, tissue, craft, construction, old magazines)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Pens, pencils, color pencils, fine point markers

Preparation for Activity

- Set out materials.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to think about the storyteller who wrote down the story of the Battle of Jericho and included it in the Bible. What did that person think about God? What did that person think about the Hebrews? What did that person think about the Canaanites who lived in Jericho?

Invite participants to imagine that they can send their questions and thoughts about the story across time to the unnamed storyteller. Distribute white or ecru construction paper and invite participants to ask questions, agree or disagree with the storyteller, make comments, draw pictures, or make a collage or other creation for the teller of this story. Participants may wish to work as a group to figure out some of the ideas they wish to convey, before working on individual creations.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, [Creating the Closing Worship](#) (included in this document)

- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout
- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook or words to your chosen song
- Optional: Keyboard or drums for musical accompaniment
- Optional: Recorded music and player

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.
- Decide on the order of worship for the closing and plan how you will include a contribution from all small groups. Use Leader Resource 3, *Creating the Closing Worship*, to help you plan.
- Write an order of service on newsprint. Here is a sample to adapt:
 - Opening words
 - Chalice lighting
 - Telling the story of Rahab and the Spies
 - Newscasts from Jericho
 - Questioning the Storyteller
 - What Does this Story Tell Us About Ourselves?
 - Meditation/prayer
 - Music
 - Closing words
- Make copies of *Taking It Home*.
- Optional: Recruit a musician to teach and/or accompany the song.

Description of Activity

Create a worship service, weaving together contributions from all of the breakout groups. Do not over-script the worship service, but rather create a worshipful "container" to hold all of the insights, thoughts, feelings, creations, and contributions of participants. At the end of the worship, extinguish the chalice and read the words of Elizabeth Selle Jones, Reading 456 in the hymnbook, or choose a benediction or closing words familiar to participants. Distribute *Taking It Home*.

FAITH IN ACTION

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 4, [Statement of Conscience on Creating Peace](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Review and make copies of Leader Resource 4, Statement of Conscience on Creating Peace.

Description of Activity

The story of the battle of Jericho is a morally ambiguous story, which challenges us to reaffirm our Unitarian Universalist commitment to peace. Distribute Leader Resource 4, Statement of Conscience on Creating Peace, and invite participants to read it. While adults read, explain what is in the statement in simple terms so that all participants can understand, saying: "Unitarian Universalists promise to work for peace in the family, in the community, and in the world in three ways. We will work to make sure people are treated fairly (peacebuilding); provide ways for people to talk to one another and reach agreements (peacemaking); and take action to help stop conflicts, wars, and violence if it starts (peacekeeping)."

As a group, take on a project to raise awareness of the Statement of Conscience in your congregation and local community. One possible project is the installation of a peace pole near your congregation's meeting house. The website of [The Peace Pole Project](#) (at www.peacepoleproject.org/) has this to say:

A Peace Pole is an internationally-recognized symbol of the hopes and dreams of the entire human family, standing vigil in silent prayer for peace on earth. Each Peace Pole bears the message May Peace Prevail on Earth in different languages on each of its four or six sides. There are tens of thousands of Peace Poles in nearly every country in the world dedicated as monuments to peace.

Your organization is invited to plant a Peace Pole at each of your centers to highlight the important work you do in many countries to bring about world peace through inner peace. Your Peace Poles would symbolize your mission and simultaneously link your work with that of people of all faiths and nationalities worldwide who are striving for a better world. Won't you join this great network of peace?

Join with people of all ages to move a proposal for such a pole through the congregation's decision-making and fundraising processes, inviting children, youth, and adults to explain what peace means to them and why the installation of the pole will serve as a visible reminder of the Unitarian Universalist Statement of Conscience on Creating Peace. Engage people of all ages in designing an appropriate dedication ceremony for the pole, and invite local media to the event.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to talk with your co-facilitator about how the workshop went, using these questions as a guide:

- What went well?
- What surprised us as facilitators? Amazed us? Challenged us?
- How did this workshop strengthen multigenerational community? How did it meet the faith development needs of individuals within that community?
- What needs adjustment in future workshops?

TAKING IT HOME

But for the natives in these parts, God hath so pursued them, as for 300 miles space the greatest part of them are swept away by smallpox which still continues among them. So as God hath thereby cleared our title to this place, those who remain in these parts, being in all not 50, have put themselves under our protection. — Governor John Winthrop of Massachusetts, 1634

The story of Joshua and the battle of Jericho is one that has echoes in our national history. With people of all ages in your family, retell the stories that you have learned about the founding of your own town, county, state, or nation. Do you all know and understand the story the same way or are there different perspectives? Are there voices in your local history that are not usually heard (e.g. indigenous people, immigrant groups, child laborers, and women). Visit local history exhibits or talk with community elders to fill in some of the gaps. Share a more complete story of your community's founding with others.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: THE SPIES AND THE RED CHORD (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bulky red yarn, three yards per person
- Hay, cornstalks, torn fabric, or torn paper to represent flax stalks
- Pictures of flax growth and processing
- Length of rope or jump rope
- Optional: Flax seed
- Optional: Piece of linen fabric or clothing made from linen

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that there are at least two adults or youth to meet with this breakout group.
- Cut the yarn into one yard lengths.
- Find a resource with good pictures of flax growing in the field and being processed for linen. One good source is the website of the [Irish Linen Mills](http://www.irishlinenmills.com/Flax/fibre.htm). (at www.irishlinenmills.com/Flax/fibre.htm)
- Optional: Purchase some flax seed (a health food store is a good source).

Description of Activity

Invite participants to retell the story of Rahab and the spies, a story within the larger narrative. Explain that the

spies were hidden under a pile of flax. Show pictures of flax growing and explain that the seeds of the plant can be eaten, while the stalks are used to make roofs or to weave into clothing. Indicate which materials you will use as pretend flax.

Give each participant three pieces of red yarn and invite them to tie the three together and braid them to make a chord. Teach those who do not know how to braid.

Once the chords are made, take turns acting out Rahab hiding the spies, letting them out her window and over the wall using rope, and placing the red chord in her window so that Joshua's troops would spare her family.

STORY: THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

Joshua 1: 1-3, Joshua 2:1-7,15-18, 21, Joshua 6: 1-25
(*New Revised Standard Version*)

... The Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun... saying, "... Now proceed to cross the Jordan [River], you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, the Israelites. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you...

Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and entered the house of a woman [Note: the biblical text uses the word prostitute here] whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there. The king of Jericho was told, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land." Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land." But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, "True, the men did come to me, but I did not know where they came from. And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them." She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax she had lain out on the roof. So the men pursued them on the way to Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut...

Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself. She said to them, "Go toward the hill country, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way." The men said to her, "... tie this crimson cord in the window through which you let us down ... and gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your family..." She said, "According to your words, so be it." She sent them away and they departed. Then she tied a crimson cord in the window.

Now Jericho was shut up inside and out because of the Israelites; no one came out and no one went in. The Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus you shall do for six days, with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. When they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you shall hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all the people shall charge straight ahead." So Joshua son of Nun summoned the

priests and said to them, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and have seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark of the Lord." To the people he said, "Go forward and march around the city; have the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord."

As Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Lord went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the Lord following them. And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets; the rear guard came after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. To the people Joshua gave this command: "You shall not shout or let your voice be heard, nor shall you utter a word, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout." So the ark of the Lord went around the city, circling it once; and they came into the camp, and spent the night in the camp.

Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord passed on, blowing the trumpets continually. The armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the Lord, while the trumpets blew continually. On the second day they marched around the city once and then returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city. The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute [woman] and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent. As for you, keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord." So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.

Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's [woman's] house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." So the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her- they

brought all her kindred out- and set them outside the camp of Israel. They burned down the city, and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the

house of the Lord. But Rahab..., with all her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. Her family has lived in Jericho ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Israel.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: JOSHUA, RAHAB, AND THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The book of Joshua continues the history of the Hebrew people that was written by historians in King David's court. The central story of the Hebrews, as presented in the biblical history, is their escape from slavery in Egypt. The Book of Exodus ends with the people of Israel camped at the shores of the Jordan River. Forty years previously, they had crossed the Red Sea, where Pharaoh's army was drowned. They have wandered in the Sinai desert for forty years before coming to this place. Moses, their leader, has died, and the new leader of the Hebrews is Joshua, son of Nun, who had been Moses' assistant.

According to the story, the land beyond the Jordan River was the Promised Land, land that had been given to the Hebrews by God. But even as the Hebrews prepared to cross the River and lay claim to the land, called Canaan, they knew it was not empty. People of other tribes and nations lived there.

The stories in the book of Joshua tell how the Hebrews conquered the people of Canaan and took their land for their kingdom. It was centuries between the time of the Exodus and the reign of David. Some of the stories are historically factual and others are legends and folktales. And they are nationalistic mythology, putting forth a narrative that says God ordained and supported the Hebrews' coming to power over all the cities and people of Canaan. Therefore, these self-aggrandizing legends depend, to some extent, on the dehumanization of the defeated Canaanites.

The story of the battle of Jericho is the tale of one of the first great battles of Israel's conquest of Canaan. Jericho was a large and important city in the Jordan River valley just west of the river. It was a walled city and no one could enter or leave, so the walls had to come down in order for the city to be conquered.

The story is dramatic, but morally ambiguous. The storyteller explains that Joshua and his troops are told that everything in the city belongs to God, and through God, to them. Joshua sends spies into the city to check it out, and when the King of Jericho becomes suspicious of the strangers, they are hidden by Rahab, a Canaanite woman. She is called a prostitute in the story, although scholars disagree about the translation. Regardless of her occupation, she helps the Hebrew spies, and in so doing, extracts a promise that she and her family will be spared in the coming battle.

Joshua's troops follow God's complicated orders and the walls of the city come tumbling down by non-violent means. It is an inspiring story of how a weaker force can defeat a stronger force through commitment and discipline.

But after the walls come down, the story becomes much more troubling. God requires every person, cattle, sheep, and donkey in the city to be put to death by Joshua's conquering army, with the exception of Rahab and her family, who are spared. All of the wealth of the city is taken by Joshua's army for God; they are not allowed to keep any for themselves. The care and specificity of the writers in including these details may indicate an additional purpose to the narrative. By saying that all the Canaanite residents of Jericho were killed, the story indicates that the Israelites were the ethnically pure descendants of the Hebrews in Egypt. They did not intermarry and have children with the Canaanite people. Through this story, they defend themselves against the charge that they were a plundering conquering people grown wealthy by taking the possessions of others.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: ARK OF THE COVENANT PICTURE



LEADER RESOURCE 3: CREATING THE CLOSING WORSHIP

In this program, the closing worship circle offers a time for the group to come back together to enrich each other's understanding of the story and of their own life experience. This is not a show-and-tell experience, but rather a participatory, co-created worship experience. You will need to do just enough planning to provide a container for participants to share with one another and grow in spirit. You cannot script a co-created worship service, but you can guide it so that all participants feel heard and valued, and all hear and value the voices and experiences of others, regardless of age or life stage. With practice, you and the participants will become adept at co-creating worship to end each workshop.

Here are suggested elements for the closing worship for Workshop 4, The Battle of Jericho. Add, subtract, and adapt to fit your situation:

Opening words

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there. — Rumi

Chalice lighting

Use chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation or use Reading 452 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Telling the Story of Rahab and the Spies

If you had a group using Alternate Activity 1, The Spies and the Red Chord, invite them to act out that part of the story.

Newscasts from Jericho

Continue the story of the fall of Jericho; invite the group that created the newscasts (Activity 6) to share some of their interviews.

Questioning the storyteller

Invite members of the Questioning the Storyteller group (Activity 7) to share their comments, disagreements, and responses to the unknown teller of this story. Place the creations on the worship table or tape them to the edge of the table.

What does this story tell us about ourselves?

Invite the discussion group to share some of their comments and insights about what this story meant when it was written down and how we look at it today. How has the moral meaning of this story changed over time? What bearing does it have on our lives today?

Meditation/prayer

Begin a meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation. Then say, "This story is a difficult story, because the people in it did not behave in a way that was fair and just." Invite participants to remember times when they have not been treated fairly or justly, and say, "We remember how we felt to have that happen." Then say, "There are times when we have not treated people fairly or when we have hit or hurt someone" and invite participants to hold those moments in their hearts. Invite participants to promise that they will try their hardest to be fair and just and peaceful in the way they treat others and invite participants to speak aloud if they choose, naming one of the ways they will work to keep that promise. End your meditation or prayer by saying, "Help us to/may we remember that we are not alone when we make a mistake and act unfairly or with violence. We can admit when we are wrong and try again, and our family, friends, this congregation, and God/Spirit of Life/Spirit of Justice will be with us when we do that. End the meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation.

Music

Choose some music about peace. Sing Hymn 101, "I've Got Peace Like a River," Hymn 159, "This is My Song," Hymn 162, "Gonna Lay Down My Sword and Shield," Hymn 167, "Nothing But Peace is Enough," Hymn 168, "One More Step," or another familiar peace hymn or song.

Closing words

Use words familiar to your congregation.

LEADER RESOURCE 4: STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE ON CREATING PEACE

This statement was passed on June 25, 2010 by the delegates of the 2010 General Assembly in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

We believe all people share a moral responsibility to create peace. Mindful of both our rich heritage and our past failures to prevent war, and enriched by our present diversity of experience and perspective, we commit ourselves to a radically inclusive and transformative approach to peace.

1. Our commitment to creating peace calls us to the work of peacebuilding, peacemaking, and peacekeeping.

Peacebuilding is the creation and support of institutions and structures that address the roots of conflict, including economic exploitation, political marginalization, the violation of human rights, and a lack of accountability to law.

Peacemaking is the negotiation of equitable and sustainable peace agreements, mediation between hostile parties, and post-conflict rebuilding and reconciliation.

Peacekeeping is early intervention to prevent war, stop genocide, and monitor ceasefires. Peacekeeping creates the space for diplomatic efforts, humanitarian aid, and nonviolent conflict prevention through the protection of civilians and the disarmament and separation of those involved in violent conflict.

2. We advocate a culture of peace through a transformation of public policies, religious consciousness, and individual lifestyles. At the heart of this transformation is the readiness to honor the truths of multiple voices from a theology of covenant grounded in love.

3. We all agree that our initial response to conflict should be the use of nonviolent methods. Yet, we bear witness to the right of individuals and nations to defend themselves, and acknowledge our responsibility to be in solidarity with others in countering aggression. Many of us believe force is sometimes necessary as a last resort, while others of us believe in the consistent practice of nonviolence.

4. We repudiate aggressive and preventive wars, the disproportionate use of force, covert wars, and targeting that includes a high risk to civilians. We support international efforts to curtail the vast world trade in armaments and call for nuclear disarmament and abolition of other weapons of mass destruction. We repudiate unilateral interventions and extended military

occupations as dangerous new forms of imperialism. In an interdependent world, true peace requires the cooperation of all nations and peoples.

5. For Unitarian Universalists, the exercise of individual conscience is holy work. Conscientious discernment leads us to engage in the creation of peace in different ways. We affirm a range of individual choices, including military service and conscientious objection (whether to all wars or particular wars), as fully compatible with Unitarian Universalism. For those among us who make a formal commitment to military service, we will honor their commitment, welcome them home, and offer pastoral support. For those among us who make a formal commitment as conscientious objectors, we will offer documented certification, honor their commitment, and offer pastoral support.

6. Our faith calls us to create peace, yet we confess that we have not done all we could to prevent the spread of armed conflict throughout the world. At times we have lacked the courage to speak and act against violence and injustice; at times we have lacked the creativity to speak and act in constructive ways; at times we have condemned the violence of others without acknowledging our own complicity in violence. We affirm a responsibility to speak truth to power, especially when unjust power is exercised by our own nation. Too often we have allowed our disagreements to distract us from all that we can do together. This Statement of Conscience challenges individual Unitarian Universalists, as well as our congregations and Association, to engage with more depth, persistence, and creativity in the complex task of creating peace.

II. Historical and Theological Context

Our Universalist faith in the oneness of the whole human family teaches us that peace is necessary; our Unitarian faith in the sacred potential of each person teaches us that peace is possible.

A. Historical Practices

For two hundred years, Unitarians and Universalists have worked to build peace by removing the underlying causes of war. As early as 1790, Universalists gathered in Philadelphia declared, "Although a defensive war may be considered lawful, yet we believe there is a time coming, when the light and universal love of the gospel shall put an end to all wars." The Massachusetts Peace Society, founded by Unitarians Noah Worcester and William Ellery Channing during the War of 1812, helped launch the first peace movement to include both those repudiating all violence and those supporting defensive wars, to welcome members of all religious persuasions, and to affirm that nonviolence is humanly possible as well as divinely commanded. Since that time, Unitarian and Universalist peace efforts have continued to be informed by those principles. Though we have always

held diverse views on the justification of defensive and humanitarian wars, at our best we have worked together to end the violence of slavery, to promote international law, to liberate Jews and others from Nazi tyranny, and to build the United Nations and other institutions of international cooperation. This Statement of Conscience builds on this tradition by challenging individual Unitarian Universalists, as well as our congregations and Association, to engage in a variety of nonviolent and peace building practices.

B. Theological Principles

This Statement of Conscience is grounded in the following Unitarian Universalist theological principles:

The fundamental unity and interdependence of all existence. The interdependence we have long affirmed has become the daily reality of our globalized world. Our interdependence makes it both possible and necessary that we see the peoples of the world as one community in which the security of each nation is entwined with the security of all others.

The transforming power of love. We affirm the reality of love as a dynamic power within and among us. This power moves us to create relationships of compassion, respect, mutuality, and forgiveness; to love our neighbor; and to recognize everyone as our neighbor. We stand on the side of love when we work for peace.

The inherent worth and dignity of all persons. All human beings have the right to a meaningful and fulfilling life, including physical safety and economic and social well-being. All have the responsibility to work on behalf of the dignity of others.

Human freedom. Most human beings are free moral agents with the capacity to make choices and are accountable for these choices. Human freedom may be used creatively or destructively. These possibilities are expressed not only in our individual choices and actions, but also in the institutions and social structures we create. Peace is the product of human choices that empower human agency and extend the possibilities for human freedom.

Rejection of moral dualism. We reject as false the sharp separation of good and evil, refusing to assign individuals and nations into one category or the other. Moral dualism can blind us to our own and our nation's capacity for evil and to the inherent worth and dignity of those whom our nation labels as enemies. In the midst of ambiguity we can build peace by cultivating the goodness in ourselves and others.

Cooperative power. Power is created and expressed in complex networks of human relationships. Power can be used to create or destroy, to liberate or oppress. Preventing war and creating nonviolent alternatives require the use of cooperative power—power with, not power over. Cooperative power is grounded in a commitment to mutual persuasion rather than coercion.

Justice and peace. Justice concerns the fair ordering of human relationships, including social and political relationships. War signals the breakdown of fairly ordered human relations. Peace is an attribute of relationship; it is a process, not a stagnant state. Peace emerges as our social and political institutions become more cooperative and more just. Lasting peace rests on just relationships.

Humility and open-mindedness. We affirm an open-mindedness that makes us suspicious of all claims of finality, including our own. Humility allows us to take strong stands while remaining open to the possibility that we are wrong or that future circumstances may call for a different position.

III. Calls to Action

Creating peace calls for action at all levels of human interaction. To be effective, our actions must be incorporated into existing structures and institutions, and new systems must be created. We support the Unitarian Universalist Peace Ministry Network in its work of identifying resources, disseminating information, and evaluating methods to create a culture of peace on all levels.

Creating Peace in Our World

We covenant to advocate vigorously for policies and participate in practices that move our nation toward collaborative leadership in building a peaceful, just, and sustainable world, including:

- supporting the Unitarian Universalist-United Nations Office in advancing the United Nations' efforts in promoting peace, and its implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- supporting the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee in ending the use of torture and addressing institutional violence in all its forms;
- supporting the Unitarian Universalist Association and our congregations in influencing public policy decisions made by the U.S. Congress and Administration; and
- participating in international civilian peace building, peacemaking, and unarmed peacekeeping teams.

Creating Peace in Our Society

We covenant to act in the wider community in reducing the causes of institutional and structural violence by:

- supporting Association and congregational initiatives aimed at eradicating all forms of cultural, political, and economic oppression;
- supporting the socially responsible investment of our Association and congregational assets; and

- supporting Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth in advocating lifestyles and policies that promote harmony with our natural environment.

- supporting nonviolent resisters and their families, and providing them with opportunities to share what they have learned.

Creating Peace in Our Congregations

We covenant to create peace through worship, religious education, and social action by:

- developing Peace Teams to provide training in compassionate communication and conflict resolution, and to engage each congregation in multi-level action toward a culture of peace;
- working through congregational governing bodies to develop and honor behavioral covenants in all aspects of congregational life;
- working through our lifespan religious education structures to provide workshops on conflict resolution and compassionate communication, to encourage understanding and participation in social justice ventures, and to utilize Unitarian Universalist resources such as "Peacemaking in Congregations: A Guide to Learning Opportunities for All Ages";
- becoming a resource for creating peace within our communities in cooperation with other faith traditions and community organizations;
- working toward the reduction of violence in our communities by supporting community policing, economic development, and conflict resolution;
- supporting veterans, military service members, conscientious objectors, and their families, and providing them with opportunities to share what they have learned; and

Creating Peace in Our Relationships

As individuals we covenant to:

- learn and practice the skills of compassionate communication;
- honor the behavioral covenants of our congregations; and
- adopt lifestyle changes that reflect reverence for the interdependent web of all existence.

Creating Peace within Ourselves

We recognize that peace begins with each person and covenant to:

- develop for ourselves and our congregations spiritual practices that cultivate inner peace;
- sustain these practices as foundational to wholeness, forgiveness, and reconciliation; and
- practice loving-kindness and compassion toward ourselves, and pay attention to the ethical insights that follow.

In reverence for all life, we covenant to practice peace at all levels of human interaction.

FIND OUT MORE

For photos of Jericho's antiquities and pilgrimage sites today, see [Travel Palestine: The Official Site for Tourism in Palestine](#).

To explore some of the resources available to create learning experiences about peacemaking for people of all ages, review [Peacemaking in Congregations: A Guide to Learning Opportunities for All Ages](#) written by the Peacemaking Curriculum Working Group of the UUA Commission on Social Witness.

WORKSHOP 5: SARAH, HAGAR, AND ABRAHAM

INTRODUCTION

Stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. — Chimamanda Adichie, contemporary Nigerian writer

The story of Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham—and of their two sons—presents far more questions than answers. Although it precedes the stories of David, Moses, and Joshua in the text and in a chronological telling, it was actually added after those stories. It was meant to address broad identity questions for the Hebrew people: Who were we before we became slaves in Egypt? Where did we come from in the beginning? Who was the first Hebrew?

This workshop introduces Abraham, then called Abram, and his wife Sarah, then called Sarai, who are promised by God that they will become the ancestors of a great nation. As the tale unfolds, Sarah, who is past child-bearing years, sends her slave Hagar to Abram so that she might conceive what will by custom be Sarah's son. After this son, Ishmael, is born, God's intervention makes it possible for Sarah herself to conceive, and she gives birth to Isaac, whose descendants, we are told, are the Hebrew people. Sarah's jealousy leads her to demand that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael into the desert, where they presumably will die. With God's approval, Abraham does what Sarah demands and expels Hagar and Ishmael. In the desert, an angel of God appears to Hagar when her child is near death and shows her a well, promising that Ishmael, too, will be the ancestor of a great nation.

This workshop invites participants of all ages to explore these key questions: From whose point of view is this story told? Why are the ancestors—and God—depicted in this way? Why would a people not tell a more triumphant and uplifting tale of their founding?

In the ambiguity and complexity is the wonder of this tale. The text invites us to examine a story from multiple perspectives and to pay attention to the moral critique carried in this ancient founding story of the Hebrew people. The story also tells us that God chooses people who are on the social margins to carry his story—nomads Abraham and Sarah and Hagar, who is a slave.

This workshop continues a pattern of activities that frame all workshops in this program. Congregations may establish their own patterns for this series, perhaps arranging for refreshments or a meal to precede or follow each workshop.

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction and make any accommodations necessary for your group.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present the story of Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham and invite participants to deepen understanding and knowledge of the story
- Explore voices and experiences on the margins of the text—women, a slave, and two children
- Invite participants to compare the Hebrew ancestor story with other origin stories they know.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand the Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham text by acting it out and exploring it from the perspectives of characters in the narrative
- Understand the circumstances under which the story was written
- Consider how this story is different from other origin stories
- Discuss what this story reveals about the storyteller's understanding of God
- Experience connection with people of all ages and be enriched by variety of different perspectives offered.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham	15
Activity 2: Retelling the Story	15
Activity 3: Different People, Different Stories	5
Activity 4: Explaining Small Group Options	5
Activity 5: Discussion — Option 1	25
Activity 6: Responses to God's Actions — Option 2	25
Activity 7: It Happened in the Desert — Option 3	25

Faith in Action: National Day of Listening	
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: A Skin of Water	25

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Consider national, regional, or local founding stories that are familiar to you. Focus on the way you first learned the story, perhaps as a child or as a newcomer or visitor to an area. What happens in the story? What is its tone? Does the story contain elements, themes, or traits that are said to continue in contemporary times?

Many people find the story of Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham difficult or morally ambiguous. You may have heard this story before. Who told or read you the story? Which, if any, lessons were you told the story illustrated?

Reflect on how you might have answered these questions as an eight-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old youth, or a young adult making your way in the world. Envision the way you would like to respond when you are an elder, looking back on your life.

Bring each person in your group into your mind and hold them in appreciative thought and/or prayer.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags, durable or single use
- Bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen/pencil
- Small table
- Optional: Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-up sheet with columns for name, address, phone, and e-mail information and place it on the table.
- Place name tags and markers on the table.

Description of Activity

As people arrive, introduce yourself and invite them to make a name tag and sign in.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.

Description of Activity

Bring participants together and welcome them. Invite a volunteer to light the chalice as you share a favorite children's chalice lighting used by your congregation.

Ask participants: what is the story of how your state (or town) began? Say, "We are each going to name one thing about how our state began. We know that we will not tell the whole story, and we do not need to, so beginning with younger children (helped by a parent if necessary), I invite you each to say one thing about how our state began. Encourage people of all ages to use their "one thing" to add texture to the story or bring in culturally marginalized voices and experiences. When each person has spoken, note that although you have not told a complete story, you have told a part of a story that is familiar to you all. Tell participants that this workshop includes a Bible story told by King David's writers about the first Hebrew people and the beginning of the Hebrew nation.

ACTIVITY 1: SARAH, HAGAR, AND ABRAHAM (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham](#)" (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham Background Information](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 2, [Judean Desert Well Photograph](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.
- Print Leader Resource 1, Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham Background Information, and prepare to briefly present the information. Make copies for interested participants to take home.
- Print a copy of Leader Resource 2, Judean Desert Well Photograph.

Description of Activity

Using the information in Leader Resource 1, Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham Background Information, briefly set the stage for the story. Keep the background information brief, and offer copies of Leader Resource 1 to those who wish to take it home.

Explain that the people in the story live in the desert, where they herd sheep and goats. Invite participants to tell you what desert conditions are like, being sure that they understand that there are plenty of rocks and rough terrain in the desert. Ask, "Where do people find water to drink in a dry wilderness area such as this?" Show Leader Resource 2, Judean Desert Well Photograph.

Read the story aloud.

ACTIVITY 2: RETELLING THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Simple costumes

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the story so you can guide a dramatized retelling.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to take on the various roles, asking questions to set the scene before choosing any volunteer actors. Ask:

- What will tell us that we are in the desert? Where will Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar's tents be? Where will the goats and sheep be?
- Who will be Sarah? What might she be doing as the story begins? Is she happy, sad, angry?
- Who will be Hagar? What will she be doing as the story begins? How is she feeling?
- Who will be Abraham? Where will he stand to look at the night sky and count the stars?
- Where will Hagar run to when she runs away? Will she go to the same place later on when she is put out with her son?
- Where will we put the well, and the tree near it?
- Who will be God's voice, speaking to Abraham, and also to Hagar? Where will you be so that we only hear your voice?
- Who will be the angel of God?

After the actors are in place, ask: "What happens first? And next?" Guide participants through a re-enactment of the story, asking at appropriate intervals, "What is Sarah thinking and feeling? What about Hagar? And Abraham? How does God sound when he talks to Abraham? To Hagar? Encourage those who are not actors to make suggestions and offer encouragement to those who are acting out the story.

After the re-enactment, invite participants to offer comments, observations, and insights about the story.

ACTIVITY 3: DIFFERENT PEOPLE, DIFFERENT STORIES (5 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the story:

- What is the hardest or saddest part of this story?
- What is the best part of the story?
- What did each of the people in the story think about God?
- Is God the same to each person? Is God the same each time God comes into the story?

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLAINING SMALL GROUP OPTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- List the small group options and their locations on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Explain options for small processing groups and point out breakout spaces. Explain that participants may choose any of the options that appeal to them. There is not one group for children, another for youth, and another for adults. All groups can have a mix of ages. Invite at least one adult or youth participant to take part in each breakout group, and ask those volunteers to set a tone that welcomes multigenerational participation.

ACTIVITY 5: DISCUSSION — OPTION 1 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - Why is this story preserved?
 - What were they trying to teach with this story?
 - What is it that we can learn?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the questions posted on newsprint. Use some of these questions to provoke, guide or further the discussion, as needed:

- What is God's morality in this story? Why is it inconsistent? What do we learn from God's inconsistency about the people who told the story and about ourselves?
- With whom is God aligned in this story? Who is God looking out for?
- What is God's attitude toward the rich and powerful? What is God's attitude toward those on the margins?
- Why doesn't God tell Sarah and Abraham to accept Ishmael as Abraham's son?
- Does God provide justice to Hagar and Ishmael? What do we make of the salvation scene in the wilderness?
- How does this story offer hope? How is the God in the other desert story, the manna story (Workshop 3) the same or different from this version of God?

ACTIVITY 6: RESPONSES TO GOD'S ACTIONS— OPTION 2 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Simple costumes
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Three pieces of 11 X 14-inch drawing paper

- Assorted color pencils or markers
- Several sheets of self-adhesive alphabet letters, such as those used for scrapbooking. Ideally, there will be several colors and typefaces

Preparation for Activity

- Set out costumes and materials.

Description of Activity

Invite volunteer actors, one at a time, to wear a simple costume and tell the story from Sarah's point of view, from Abraham's point of view, and from Hagar's point of view. After each performance, invite other participants to name all the feelings that Sarah, Hagar, or Abraham expressed or felt, keeping a list on newsprint for each one. After all three performances, invite participants to decide together what each character would say to God if given the chance. After you have decided together and recorded it on newsprint, divide into three groups. Invite each group to use self-adhesive letters to write Sarah, Hagar, or Abraham's responses to God on a sheet of drawing paper. If there is time, the group may decorate the written responses or amplify them with color pencils or markers.

ACTIVITY 7: IT HAPPENED IN THE DESERT – OPTION 3 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- 2-foot X 3-foot piece of plywood
- Sand
- Collection of small rocks and stones
- Small pieces of plants to represent desert vegetation, either artificial or natural
- Glue gun
- Craft glue
- Small dish of water
- Several inexpensive 1-inch paint brushes
- 11 X 14-inch piece of card stock or other heavy paper for moving sand
- Small bits of fabric
- Assorted pipe cleaners
- Leader Resource 2, [Judean Desert Well Photograph](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Computer and Internet connection

Preparation for Activity

- Set out materials.
- Thin the craft glue with a little water so that it will spread easily with a paintbrush.
- Print Leader Resource 2, Judean Desert Well Photograph, in color if possible.

- Optional: Prepare to show the photographs found at the [Bible Walks](#) website or print several of the photographs in advance.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to create a representation of the desert where Hagar twice encounters first God, then an angel of God. Look at Leader Resource 2 and, if possible, other photos of the Judean Desert. Invite participants to consider how to create a desert. Some in the group can start by painting the areas of the plywood where sand will be placed with the diluted glue mixture, and then use the cardstock to help sprinkle sand on the wet glue. Use a cold temperature glue gun and/or craft glue to add stones, rocks, and vegetation to the desert. Decide together where Hagar's well will be located and build it from stones, placing a tree nearby. While some work on the landscape, invite others to use pipe cleaners to create Hagar, Ishmael, and the angel of God, using bits of fabric to dress them. Add the figures to the completed landscape.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, [Creating the Closing Worship](#) (included in this document)
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout
- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook or words to your chosen song
- Optional: Keyboard or drums for musical accompaniment
- Optional: Recorded music and player

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.
- Decide on the order of worship for the closing and plan how you will include a contribution from all small groups. Use Leader Resource 3, *Creating the Closing Worship*, to help you plan.
- Write an order of service on newsprint. Here is a sample to adapt:
 - Opening words
 - Chalice lighting

- Retelling the story
- It Happened in the Desert
- Telling Ishmael's Story
- Responses to God's Actions
- What Does this Story Tell Us About Ourselves?
- Meditation/prayer
- Music
- Closing words
- Make copies of Taking It Home.
- Optional: Recruit a musician to teach and/or accompany the song.

Description of Activity

Create a worship service, weaving together contributions from all of the breakout groups. Do not over-script the worship service, but rather create a worshipful "container" to hold all of the insights, thoughts, feelings, creations, and contributions of participants. At the end of the worship, extinguish the chalice and read the words of Elizabeth Selle Jones, Reading 456 in the hymnbook, or choose a benediction or closing words familiar to participants. Distribute Taking It Home.

FAITH IN ACTION: NATIONAL DAY OF LISTENING

Preparation for Activity

- Review information about the [National Day of Listening](#) and view the [user guides](#).
- Talk with your parish minister, religious educator, membership committee, religious education committee, youth group, and other relevant congregational groups to seek support for a congregational interviewing project.

Description of Activity

Participate in the National Day of Listening by recording interviews with people of all ages in your congregation and community. Plan and publicize your event and gather recording equipment, using the suggestions found in the user guides.

Work in multigenerational groups to plan questions, using or adapting the suggested questions. On the appointed day, interview your subjects in multigenerational pairs. After you have made your recording, burn a disc and presented it to the interviewee to be kept as a family heirloom.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to talk with your co-facilitator about how the workshop went, using these questions as a guide:

- What went well?
- What surprised us as facilitators? Amazed us? Challenged us?
- How did this workshop strengthen multigenerational community? How did it meet the faith development needs of individuals within that community?
- What needs adjustment in future workshops?

TAKING IT HOME

Stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. — Chimamanda Adichie, contemporary Nigerian writer

The story of Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham is a complex and ambiguous founding story of the Hebrew people. With your family or friends, explore your own family's ancestor stories. What events and people impacted or determined the lives your ancestors led? Imagine yourself in the place of some of your ancestors. What strength—physical, psychological, and spiritual—would you have needed to live their lives? If you could go back in time, what kindnesses would you wish to offer them? What would you tell them about your own life?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: A SKIN OF WATER (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham](#)" (included in this document)
- Dishpan or other shallow container of similar shape and size
- Sand, enough to fill the dishpan half full
- Pitcher of water and water source, or three pitchers of water
- Self-sealing plastic sandwich bags
- Large spoons

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that there are at least two adults or youth to meet with this breakout group.
- Print a copy of the story and mark the text that begins: "But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian..." and continues to the end of the story. Practice reading that section aloud.

- Set out materials.
- Put some water into one of the self-sealing plastic sandwich bags.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to retell the story from Ishmael's point of view, one piece within the larger narrative. Say, "In the larger group, we have talked about how it felt to be Sarah, or Abraham, or Hagar, Ishmael's mother. Let's think about how it felt to be Ishmael in this story." After participants have shared what they remember, reread the marked portion of the story, pausing as necessary to explain the meaning.

Say that when Hagar and Ishmael were sent into the desert, they were sent with bread and a skin of water. Ask, "What do you suppose a skin of water is?" Explain that people made an animal skin into a bag to carry water, and show the plastic bag you have prepared with water in it. Say that Hagar and Ishmael had a skin of water and some bread when they entered the desert. After some time they had drunk all the water and eaten

the bread and were near to dying of thirst when they were shown a well in the desert. Explain that a well in the desert is not like a wishing well. Rather it is a place where water bubbles up in the sand or the dirt. Say, that you are going to create such a well.

Gather participants around the dishpan of sand and add enough water so that the sand is soaked and there is some water on the surface. Invite them to imagine that there is an underground spring soaking the sand. How will they collect water from the sand? Distribute a "skin" (plastic sandwich bag) to each participant and invite each in turn to try and capture water with their hands and put it into the "skin." If they are unable to do it with their hands, offer a spoon and help as necessary. After everyone has put some water into the "skin," ask them again how Ishmael must have felt in the desert with his mother. Work with participants to plan how they will share Ishmael's point of view with the larger group. Invite them to bring their "skins" to the closing worship, cautioning them against drinking the water because several people have had their hands in it.

STORY: SARAH, HAGAR, AND ABRAHAM

Genesis 15:1-5; Genesis 16: 1-11, 13-16, Genesis 17: 1- 5, 15-16; Genesis 21: 1-3, 6, 8-19 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

... the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless and the heir of my house is [my servant] Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your own issue shall be your heir." He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And then he said, "So shall your descendants be."

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked down on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" but Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do with her as you please. Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she [Hagar] ran away from her [Sarai]."

The angel of the Lord found her by a spring in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." And the angel of the Lord said to her,

Now you have conceived and shall bear a son;

You shall call him Ishmael [God hears]

for the Lord has given heed to your affliction...

So she named the Lord who spoke to her, "You are Elroi [God of seeing]," for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?" Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi [Well of the Living one who sees me]; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I am God almighty; walk before me and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you; you shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham..."

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her."

The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son whom Sarah bore him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."

The child grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of my child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: SARAH, HAGAR, AND ABRAHAM BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Many of the stories of the Hebrew scriptures were recorded by scribes in the courts of Kings David and Solomon, and their purpose was to unite the various groups who lived in Canaan into a single nation, with a common narrative and set of laws and customs woven from their stories and wisdom. An important piece of that common narrative is an origin story. Where do we come from? Who were our first ancestors?

This workshop introduces Abram, who came from Ur of the Chaldees in ancient Sumer, and his wife Sarai. The text says that in a dream, God tells Abram that he will have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky and that they will be blessed. Nowhere in the story does it say why God chose Abram out of all the people on Earth at that time, or why Abram agreed to enter into a covenant with God.

The text tells us that Abram and Sarai had no children at the time of God's promise, and that Sarai was past the age of child-bearing. As the story unfolds, Sarai sends Hagar, her handmaid or slave, to Abram, that Hagar might bear a child. After Hagar conceives, Sarah becomes jealous and Hagar runs away from harsh treatment. In the desert, God comes to her and tells her to return to her mistress and bear her son, Ishmael, which she does. Later, God renews his covenant with Abram and Sarai, whom he renames Abraham and Sarah, and renews his promise of descendants. Soon after, the previously barren Sarah bears a child, Isaac. She continues to resent Ishmael and Hagar, and demands that Abraham cast mother and child out into the desert. God tells Abraham to do as Sarah tells him, and Abraham casts mother and son out into the desert with only some bread and a skin of water. In the desert, an angel of God appears and saves them from certain death by opening Hagar's eyes to the presence of a well with the water they need to survive. God further promises to make a second great nation of Ishmael's descendants. Jewish oral tradition, as well the Qu-ran, name Ishmael as the ancestor of the Arab peoples.

This is a complex story, and raises more questions than it answers. From whose point of view is this story told? Sarah and Abraham, the patriarch and matriarch of the Hebrew people are not painted in a favorable light. Even God's intervention in the tale is morally ambiguous. Why would a people tell such an ambiguous tale of their founding? Why are the ancestors—and God—depicted in this way?

In the ambiguity is the wonder of this tale. This text invites us to examine a story from multiple perspectives and to pay attention to the moral critique in this ancient founding story of the Hebrew people. It provides a case study of what contemporary Nigerian writer Chimamanda Achidie, calls "the danger of a single story" and compels us to view the narrative from many points of view in order to empower and to humanize its central characters.

The story also tells us that God chooses people on the social margins to carry his blessing. Abraham and Sarah are nomads. Hagar, whose social position is even more marginal, is visited by God not once, but twice, and is chosen as the mother of a second great nation. As biblical scholar Anthony Ceresko notes:

[The book of Genesis] is not the record of individuals who took part in the great power struggles of the day and who were integral members of the dominant social, economic, and political structure. Instead, it records the memories and recollections of various groups who for the most part stood outside of these structures, on the margins. These groups, which eventually came together to create Israel in the hill country of thirteenth-century B.C.E. Canaan. Attempted by combining their individual stories to reinforce and cement their newly-won unity as a people. This single multi-colored tapestry, their "history," is an attempt to represent and express their common, unifying purpose to create a life together and to take control of their own destiny and future. (Ceresko, Anthony R., Introduction to the Old Testament: A Liberation Perspective, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997, p. 38 -39.)

LEADER RESOURCE 2: JUDEAN DESERT WELL PHOTOGRAPH

This photograph is used with permission of BibleWalks.com - Holy Land sites review.



LEADER RESOURCE 3: CREATING THE CLOSING WORSHIP

In this program, the closing worship circle offers a time for the group to come back together to enrich one another's understanding of the story and of their own life experience. This is not a show-and-tell experience, but rather a participatory, co-created worship experience. You will need to do just enough planning to provide a container for participants to share with one another and grow in spirit. You cannot script a co-created worship service, but you can guide it so that all participants feel heard and valued, and all hear and value the voices and experiences of others, regardless of age or life stage. With practice, you and the participants will become adept at co-creating worship to end each workshop.

Here are suggested elements for the closing worship for Workshop 5, Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham. Add, subtract, and adapt to fit your situation:

Opening words

There is a love holding me.
There is a love holding you.
There is a love holding all.
I rest in this love. — Rebecca Parker

Chalice lighting

Use chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation or use Reading 453 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Retelling the story

Invite participants to tell the story from the beginning, with each person who wishes adding a sentence. Stop at the point where Hagar is sent into the desert for the first time.

It Happened in the Desert

Invite those who have created the desert model (Activity 7) to tell the story from that point, explaining their model as they share. Place the model on or near the worship table.

Telling Ishmael's Story

If you had a group using Alternate Activity 1, A Skin of Water, invite them to share their thoughts on Ishmael's experiences and explain how to find water in the desert. Invite them to show their "skins" of water and place them near or on the worship table.

Responses to God's Actions

Invite members of the Responses to God's Actions group (Activity 7) to share their creations and explain what Hagar, Sarah, and Abraham might have each wanted to say to God. Place the creations on the worship table or tape them to the edge of the table.

What does this story tell us about ourselves?

Invite the discussion group to share some of their comments and insights.

Meditation/prayer

Begin a meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation. Then say, "This story is several different stories, because each person in it had a different experience." Invite participants to remember times when they have had a different "story" about something than other people, perhaps thinking that something was unfair or not right even when others did not agree. Say "We remember how we felt when ..." Invite participants to promise that they will try their hardest to remember that sometimes other people may have different experiences than we do. End your meditation or prayer by saying, "Help us to/may we remember to listen to other people's stories and to honor other people's experiences. We can practice listening to other people's stories with our family, friends, and this congregation. God/Spirit of Life/Spirit of Justice and Love will be with us when we do that." End the meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation.

Music

Choose some music about multiple stories. Sing Hymn 346, "Come, Sing a Song with Me," Hymn 159, "This is My Song," Hymn 131, "Love Will Guide Us," Hymn 381, "From all that Dwell Below the Skies," or another familiar hymn or song about welcoming many perspectives and stories.

Closing words

Use words familiar to your congregation.

FIND OUT MORE

For wonderful pictures of the Judean Desert and of wells in the desert (including one that can be viewed with 3-D glasses) visit [Bible Walks](http://www.biblewalks.com/sites/DesertWater.html) (at www.biblewalks.com/sites/DesertWater.html).

View a nineteen-minute video of award-winning Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie's lecture "[The Danger of A Single Story](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html)." (at www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html)

WORKSHOP 6: THE BINDING OF ISAAC

INTRODUCTION

Protest against unworthy images of God is a deeply religious act. — Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker, President, Starr King School for the Ministry

In the story of the binding of Isaac, God instructs Abraham to offer his beloved son as a burnt offering. The meaning and wisdom of this disturbing text has been debated for many centuries. Is this a test of faith for Abraham, in which Abraham demonstrates obedience even to the point of sacrificing his own son? Is this a story that shows that God disapproves of child sacrifice, a practice by many groups in Abraham's time? Is this a story which depicts God as engaging in a monstrous test, a test which renders such a God unworthy of worship? Is this a story that critiques patriarchal culture, where women and children were possessions of their husbands and fathers? Why was such a story preserved in the scriptural tradition? Unlike some other disturbing stories in the Hebrew scriptures, why does this one remain current and well-known in the popular religious culture of three religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?

This story must be explored with sensitivity in a multigenerational group setting. The ground should be carefully laid before telling the story, and an invitation extended to all ages to judge the actions of God and Abraham. Invite participants to engage critically with the text, asking, not so much why this story was told, but why it was preserved. Why do people still tell it today? What wisdom can we draw from the story? What image of God is portrayed? Some of the activity options explore the story as a metaphor, while others are more concrete and encourage "talking back" to Abraham, to God, and to those in positions of power who ask us to do what we know is wrong.

This workshop continues a pattern of activities that frame all of the workshops in this program. Congregations may wish to establish their own patterns for this series of workshops, perhaps arranging for refreshments or a meal to precede or follow each workshop. Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction and make any accommodations necessary for your group.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present the story of the binding of Isaac and invite participants to deepen understanding and knowledge of the story
- Invite participants to engage critically with a disturbing and mysterious text and discover what wisdom it offers today
- Ask why this story remains current in the popular religious culture and imagination of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand of the binding of Isaac story by exploring it from the perspectives of characters in the narrative
- Explore questions and explanations that have been offered for this story
- Respond to the actions of Abraham and of God as told in this story
- Consider wisdom it may offer today
- Connect with people of all ages and be enriched by the different perspectives offered.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: The Binding of Isaac	10
Activity 2: Retelling the Story	10
Activity 3: Why?	15
Activity 4: Explaining Small Group Options	5
Activity 5: Discussion — Option 1	25
Activity 6: Rewriting the Story — Option 2	25
Activity 7: An Artist's View — Option 3	25
Faith in Action: Advocating for Children	
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: No	25

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The story of Abraham and Isaac is powerful and disturbing. If you are familiar with this story, recall the

circumstances under which you first encountered it. What meaning was ascribed to it? How did it make you feel?

Read the story with fresh eyes, paying attention to the emotions and images the story evokes in you.

Reflect on how you responded (or might have responded) to the story as an eight-year-old child, a

fourteen-year-old youth, or a young adult making your way in the world. Envision the way you will think about this story when you are an elder, looking back on your life.

Bring each person in your group into your mind and hold them in appreciative thought and/or prayer.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags, durable or single use
- Bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen/pencil
- Small table
- Optional: Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-up sheet with columns for name, address, phone, and e-mail information and place it on the table.
- Place name tags and markers on the table.

Description of Activity

As people arrive, introduce yourself and invite them to make a name tag and sign in.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.

Description of Activity

Bring participants together and welcome them. Invite a volunteer to light the chalice as you share a favorite children's chalice lighting used by your congregation.

Ask participants what they do when they hear a story that makes them scared. Tell them that they are going to hear a Bible story which people have been puzzling over for a very long time. It is another story of Abraham, this time with his son, Isaac—a story that makes us want to say, "No!" when we hear it.

ACTIVITY 1: THE BINDING OF ISAAC (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

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

- Leader Resource 1, [The Binding of Isaac Background Information](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.
- Print Leader Resource 1, The Binding of Isaac Background Information, and prepare to briefly present the information. Make copies for interested participants to take home.

Description of Activity

Drawing on Leader Resource 1, The Binding of Isaac Background Information, briefly set the stage for the story. Keep the background information brief, and offer copies of Leader Resource 1 to those who wish to take it home. Say, "In this story, Abraham receives a very difficult command from God."

Read the story aloud.

ACTIVITY 2: RETELLING THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[The Binding of Isaac](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Simple costumes

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the story so that you can guide a dramatized retelling.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to take on the various roles, asking questions to set the scene before choosing any volunteer actors. Ask:

- Where will Abraham be when he receives the command from God?
- Where will Isaac be?
- Where will the mountain be? They had to travel to get there.
- Who will be Abraham?
- Who will be Isaac? Who will be the two boys who accompany Abraham and Isaac on their journey?
- Who will be God? And who will be the angel of God?
- Where will the altar be where Isaac is bound to be sacrificed? Where will the ram be caught?

After the actors are in place, ask: "What happens first? And next? Guide participants through a re-enactment of the story, asking at appropriate intervals, "What is

Abraham thinking and feeling? How about Isaac? What do the two boys who accompany Abraham do? What do they think about what is happening? What is God thinking? How does God's voice sound to Abraham? Can Isaac hear it? Does he know what is going to unfold? Encourage those who are not actors to make suggestions and offer encouragement to those who are acting out the story.

After the re-enactment, invite participants to offer comments, observations, and insights about the story.

ACTIVITY 3: WHY? (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Modeling clay or play dough

Description of Activity

Give each participant a lump of modeling clay and invite them to create something about the story from their clay while the group talks about the story. Invite participants to discuss the story:

- What do you think about this story? What do you think about how Abraham acted? God? Isaac?
- What do we learn about the way Abraham understood God?
- What do you want to say to God? To Abraham? To Isaac?
- Why did people write this story down? Why retell it for thousands of years?

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLAINING SMALL GROUP OPTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- List the small group options and their locations on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Explain options for small processing groups and point out breakout spaces. Explain that participants may choose any of the options that appeal to them. There is not one group for children, another for youth, and another for adults. All groups can have a mix of ages. Invite at least one adult or youth participant to take part in each breakout group, and ask those volunteers to set a tone that welcomes multigenerational participation.

ACTIVITY 5: DISCUSSION — OPTION 1 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - Why is this story preserved?
 - What were they trying to teach with this story?
 - What is it that we can learn?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the questions posted on newsprint. Use some of these questions to provoke, guide or further the discussion, as needed:

- What is God like in this story?
- Is there a single picture of God?
- Did God have a change of mind or heart?
- How is this God different from or the same as the God in the story of Hagar and Ishmael?
- If we compare the stories of David and Goliath (Workshop 1), Ishmael, Hagar, and Isaac (Workshop 5), are there any observations we might make about what God thinks of children?
- This story is a remnant of a time when child sacrifice was common in the Middle East. Why do you think it has been preserved in oral tradition and in scripture?
- How do we valorize or honor the sacrifice of young people today?
- In our own time, when do we view human life as less important than loyalty to an abstraction or cause?

ACTIVITY 6: REWRITING THE STORY — OPTION 2 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper and pens or pencils
- Simple costumes

Description of Activity

Invite participants to talk together about how the story should or could be changed. How might Abraham have behaved differently? What if he had thought differently about God? What if he had talked this over with Sarah, Isaac's mother? What if Ishmael was part of the story, and not banished before this story took place? What if Isaac had protested?

After discussion, invite the group to work together to create a dramatic retelling of the story.

ACTIVITY 7: AN ARTIST'S VIEW – OPTION 3 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Illustrated children's or family Bibles (check your public library for an assortment)
- Copies of depictions of the Isaac and Abraham story, such as Rembrandt's
- 12 X18-inch sheets of drawing paper
- Poster paints, water cups and brushes
- Optional: *The Binding of Isaac* by Barbara Cohen (New York: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1978) or another children's book that tells the story

Preparation for Activity

- Print copies of pictures of this story, or locate and mark drawings in the Bibles and books you have found.
- Set out materials.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to look at drawings and paintings of the story and for each one, talk about what the artist thinks about the story. What facial expressions do they see? What does the scenery look like?

Invite participants to paint their own picture of the story. How will their thoughts and ideas show up in their painting?

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Creating the Closing Worship](#) (included in this document)
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout
- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook or words to your chosen song
- Optional: Keyboard or drums for musical accompaniment
- Optional: Recorded music and player

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.
- Decide on the order of worship for the closing and plan how you will include a contribution from all small groups. Use Leader Resource 2, *Creating the Closing Worship*, to help you plan.
- Write an order of service on newsprint. Here is a sample to adapt:
 - Opening music
 - Chalice lighting
 - Isaac and Abraham: An Artist's View
 - No!
 - Rewriting the Story
 - About Sacrifice
 - Meditation/prayer
 - Hymn
 - Closing words
- Make copies of *Taking It Home*.
- Optional: Recruit a musician to teach and/or accompany the song.

Description of Activity

Create a worship service, weaving together contributions from all of the breakout groups. Do not over-script the worship service, but rather create a worshipful "container" to hold all of the insights, thoughts, feelings, creations, and contributions of participants. At the end of the worship, extinguish the chalice and read the words of Elizabeth Selle Jones, Reading 456 in the hymnbook, or choose a benediction or closing words familiar to participants. Distribute *Taking It Home*.

FAITH IN ACTION: ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN

Preparation for Activity

- Explore what advocacy and service projects your congregation already supports that directly benefit the children in your community.
- Review the website of [Promise the Children](#) (at www.promisethechildrenuu.org/) for news and a current list of initiatives that directly benefit children at a national or state level.
- Review the [UNICEF](#) (at www.unicef.org/) website and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee ([UUUC](#) (at www.uusc.org/)) website to find ways to advocate for and support

children in the United States and in other parts of the world.

Description of Activity

Work with your congregation's social justice committee, religious education committee or another appropriate group to plan a multigenerational project that supports or advocates for children in your community, the nation, or the world, rather than sacrificing children to hunger, violence, and instability. Publicize and carry out your project, inviting people of all ages in the congregation to join your efforts.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to talk with your co-facilitator about how the workshop went, using these questions as a guide:

- What went well?
- What surprised us as facilitators? Amazed us? Challenged us?
- How did this workshop strengthen multigenerational community? How did it meet the faith development needs of individuals within that community?
- What needs adjustment in future workshops?

TAKING IT HOME

Protest against unworthy images of God is a deeply religious act. — Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker, President, Starr King School for the Ministry

Explore some of the ways in which this story is told and the many meanings that are assigned to it. Obtain the picture book, *The Binding of Isaac*, by Barbara Cohen (Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard: NY, 1978), in which an aged Isaac recounts to his grandchildren the story of how God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son, or check out children's or family Bibles to see what interpretation is given to the story. Ask family members or friends if they are familiar with the story. When and

under what circumstances did they first hear or read it? What did they think about the story then? What do they think now? Have a conversation with family members and friends about the different ways a single Bible story can be understood or used.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NO (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bulky red yarn, 3 yards per person 12 X 18-inch drawing paper
- Paper and pen/pencil
- Craft foam squares or pieces large enough to write "No"
- Small craft foam shapes
- Assorted fine-point permanent markers
- Craft scissors
- Craft glue

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that there are at least two adults or youth to meet with this breakout group.
- Set out materials.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to tell of times when they have been asked to do something they know is wrong. If any participants cannot think of such a time, invite them to make up an imaginary scenario. As participants tell their stories, an adult or older youth should write down what is said so it is not forgotten. After participants have found their stories or scenarios, invite them to practice saying "No," using all kinds of different voices (loud, soft, whispering, silly, serious, mad, etc.) After practicing saying "No" to things that are wrong, invite participants to write "No" on pieces of craft foam with permanent markers. Invite them to create a "No" artwork, gluing the craft foam onto drawing paper and decorating with shapes and scraps of craft foam.

STORY: THE BINDING OF ISAAC

Genesis 22: 1-13 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to the young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He [Isaac] said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: THE BINDING OF ISAAC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This workshop presents what is for religious liberals one of the most mysterious and disturbing stories in the Hebrew scriptures. In the story, God commands Abraham to take his beloved son, bind him, and make of him a burnt offering on one of the mountains in the land of Moriah. Abraham does as he is told, and is about to kill his own son when an angel of God stops him. A ram caught in a nearby thicket serves as the offering rather than Isaac.

The meaning of this story has been debated for many centuries. It has captured the popular religious imagination, serving as the subject of many musical, literary and visual works of art. Rembrandt painted it in 1634. Nineteenth century philosopher and theologian Soren Kierkegaard used the tale to explore fundamental religious, philosophical, and ethical issues in the 1843 work, *Fear and Trembling*. Classical composers Benjamin Britten and Igor Stravinsky have made it the subject of musical compositions. Contemporary folk singer Joan Baez recorded a haunting piece called "Isaac and Abraham" in 1992.

What is this story of near-sacrifice that so captures our religious imagination? Why was it included in the founding stories of the Hebrew people? Is this a story that describes a test of faith for Abraham, demonstrating Abraham's obedience even to the point of sacrificing his own son? Is this a story that lets us know that God disapproves of child sacrifice, which was practiced by many groups in Abraham's time? Is this a story which depicts God as engaging in a monstrous test, a test which renders such a God unworthy of worship? Is this a story that critiques patriarchal culture, where women and children were possessions of their husbands and fathers? Was the God who demanded such a sacrifice a God of Abraham's imagining?

And there are more questions. Why was such a story preserved in the scriptural tradition? Unlike some other disturbing stories in the Hebrew scriptures, why does this one remain current and well-known in the popular religious culture of three religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam? It is central to the Jewish observation of Rosh Hashana, where it is said to show that God is merciful. The story is told at Eid al-Adha, the Festival of Sacrifice that follows the annual pilgrimage (Hajj) to remind Muslims that God requires obedience. [Note: In the Qu'uran, it is Ishmael who is the son Abraham nearly sacrifices, not Isaac.] Some Christian theologians link faith to sacrifice, viewing Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac as one that foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus.

This story reveals that there is a central ambiguity in the Hebrew scriptures: Does God demand sacrifice, or does God promote mercy? Throughout the texts, and in Christian scripture and the Qu'ran, these two themes are expressed.

We Unitarian Universalists can explore the story, consider its wisdom, and raise our voices to question and protest that which we need to in our own time.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: CREATING THE CLOSING WORSHIP

In this program, the closing worship circle offers a time for the group to come back together to enrich each other's understanding of the story and of their own life experience. This is not a show-and-tell experience, but rather a participatory, co-created worship experience. You will need to do just enough planning to provide a container for participants to share with one another and grow in spirit. You cannot script a co-created worship service, but you can guide it so that all participants feel heard and valued, and all hear and value the voices and experiences of others, regardless of age or life stage. With practice, you and the participants will become adept at co-creating worship to end each workshop.

Here are suggested elements for the closing worship for Workshop 6, The Binding of Isaac. Add, subtract, and adapt to fit your situation:

Opening music

Listen to a recording of *Isaac and Abraham* sung by Joan Baez. Lyrics, written by Baez, Wally Wilson, and Kenny Greenburg, can be found on the [Joan Baez website](http://www.joanbaez.com/Lyrics/isaac.html) (at www.joanbaez.com/Lyrics/isaac.html). The song was recorded on the 1992 Baez album, *Play Me Backwards*.

Chalice lighting

Use chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation or use Reading 452 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Isaac and Abraham: An Artist's View

Invite the group who looked at the story in art and did their own paintings to share some of what they talked about, as well as their paintings. Place the paintings on or near the worship table.

No!

If you had a group doing Alternate Activity 1, invite them to share their "I can say 'No'" creations and to place them on or near the worship table.

Rewriting the Story

Invite members of the Rewriting the story group (Activity 6) to share their alternate ending by acting it out.

About Sacrifice

Invite the discussion group to share some of their comments and insights.

Meditation/prayer

Begin a meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation. Then say, "This story is a hard story, one that makes us want to protest and say no! We think about Isaac in the story and want badly to change it- to have his father behave differently or to have God behave differently." Invite participants to remember in their hearts times when they have been asked to do things they know are wrong." Then say, "Sometimes we go along and do something even when we know it is wrong. In the silence of this community, let us forgive ourselves for doing wrong. Invite participants to promise that they will try their hardest to be strong; doing what is right even if others are doing wrong. End your prayer by saying, "Help us to/may we remember that we are not alone when we make a mistake and act unfairly or with violence. We can admit when we are wrong and try again, and our family, friends, this congregation, and God/Spirit of Life/Spirit of Justice will be with us when we do that. End the meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation.

Hymn

Sing Hymn 95, "There is More Love Somewhere" or Hymn 101, "Abide with Me."

Closing words

Do all the good you can,

In all the ways you can,

To all the people you can,

At all the times you can.

As long as ever you can. — R. Monckton Milnes

FIND OUT MORE

To read the full text of *Fear and Trembling*, by Soren Kierkegaard, visit religion-online.org (at www.religion-online.org/showbook.asp?title=2068). [The Text This Week](http://www.textweek.com/art/abraham_and_isaac.htm) (at www.textweek.com/art/abraham_and_isaac.htm) website has links to many classical and modern paintings and other art depicting The Binding of Isaac.

Listen to a recording of *Isaac and Abraham* sung by Joan Baez. Lyrics, written by Baez, Wally Wilson, and Kenny Greenburg, can be found on the [Joan Baez website](http://www.joanbaez.com/Lyrics/isaac.html) (at www.joanbaez.com/Lyrics/isaac.html). The song was recorded on the 1992 Baez album, *Play Me Backwards*.

WORKSHOP 7: ISAIAH - EXILE AND HOPE

INTRODUCTION

Despair? Did someone say despair was a question in the world? Well, then listen to the sons of those who have known little else if you wish to know the resiliency of this thing you would so quickly resign to mythhood, this thing called the human spirit. — Lorraine Hansberry (1930 — 1965), African American playwright and essayist, author of A Raisin in the Sun, which opened on Broadway in 1973

This workshop presents a different kind of story from the Hebrew scriptures. It is not a story in the strict sense of the word, but poetic writings from the book of Isaiah. Often referred to as the "suffering servant" passage, these words comforted a desolate and despairing people during a terrible time in exile. After 600 years of relative autonomy under King David, King Solomon, and their heirs, political tides in the region had led to the Babylonian conquest of first the northern kingdom of Israel, then the southern kingdom of Judah. In 587 BCE, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed the city of Jerusalem and with it the Temple of Solomon, the seat of Jewish worship life and what they understood to be the home for Yahweh, their God. In three waves, Hebrew political, religious, and cultural leaders were exiled to Babylon, leaving behind a ruined land and a depleted people.

The exile in Babylon (587 — 539 BCE) was a painful time for the Jewish people, but also a watershed time. They needed to reconstitute their faith without a state of their own, without a homeland, without their seat of worship. And they needed to make sense of their humiliation in light of their covenant with Yahweh.

The "suffering servant" passages speak of the hope for eventual redemption, when the despised and humiliated people would be redeemed, and would be restored to their homeland and their nation. In the text, the suffering person represents the nation of Israel itself, and its hope and expectation that despair and humiliation will give way to a triumphant return home.

Although this passage was composed long ago and in circumstances we no longer fully understand, the theme resonates in Western culture. It appears in beloved fairy tales like *The Ugly Duckling* and *Cinderella*, and in acclaimed children's literature, including *Harry Potter*. The despised one, the vilified one, the one in exile comes in the end to triumph.

This workshop asks: Who is the God of Isaiah and of the exiled Jewish people? What did a hoped for redemption look and feel like to them?

This workshop also invites participants to consider their own experiences of exile, hope, and redemption. How do we move beyond suffering and exile?

To explore this story in a multigenerational group setting requires good preparation. Participants of all ages are explicitly invited to recall stories of triumph after rejection, both in popular culture and in their own lives, before engaging with the text. The activity options explore images and feelings of exile and hope, and invite participants to think about hope in their own lives and world.

This workshop continues a pattern of activities that frame all of the workshops in this program. Congregations may wish to establish their own patterns for this series of workshops, perhaps arranging for refreshments or a meal to precede or follow each workshop.

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction and make any accommodations necessary for your group.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present the story, "Isaiah — Exile and Hope" and invite participants to deepen understanding and knowledge of the passage
- Invite participants to apply the themes of this passage to their own lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the story, "Isaiah - Exile and Hope" in the context in which it was written
- Consider familiar narratives on the themes of exile and redemption
- Express their understanding of hope
- Explore contemporary implications of this story
- Connect with people of all ages and be enriched by the variety of perspectives.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0

Opening	5
Activity 1: The Ugly Duckling	15
Activity 2: Isaiah — Exile and Hope	15
Activity 3: Retelling the Story	10
Activity 4: Explaining Small Group Options	5
Activity 5: Discussion — Option 1	25
Activity 6: It Gets Better — Option 2	25
Activity 7: The Prophet's Scrolls — Option 3	25
Faith in Action: Making it Better Now	
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: Creating a Multigenerational Musical Reflection	25

its own context and on its own terms, not from the meaning later assigned to it by Christian theologians. If you are familiar with this passage, recall your first encounter with it. What meaning was ascribed to it? How did it make you feel?

Find the experiences of "exile" and "restoration" in your own life, or in the literature, film, or music of popular culture. After you have explored the emotional territory of exile and restoration, read the passage from Isaiah (the story in this workshop) aloud, paying attention to the emotions and images it evokes in you.

Reflect on how you responded (or might have responded) to this passage as an eight-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old youth, or a young adult making your way in the world. Envision the way you will think about this passage when you are an elder, looking back on your life.

Bring each person in your group into your mind and hold them in appreciative thought and/or prayer.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The "suffering servant" passage is often quoted in a Christian context as passage foretelling the coming of the Messiah. This workshop approaches the passage in

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags, durable or single use
- Bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen/pencil
- Small table
- Optional: Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-up sheet with columns for name, address, phone, and e-mail information and place it on the table.
- Place name tags and markers on table.

Description of Activity

As people arrive, introduce yourself and invite them to make a name tag and sign in.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.

Description of Activity

Bring participants together and welcome them. Invite a volunteer to light the chalice as you share a favorite children's chalice lighting used by your congregation.

ACTIVITY 1: THE UGLY DUCKLING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

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

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story. Ask how it would have felt to be the ugly duckling, and then how it would have felt later to be a swan. Ask children and youth if they have ever had the experience of being an "ugly duckling," but do not ask them to share those stories at this time.

Then ask, "How many adults here have had the experience of being an ugly duckling, and then a swan?" Invite adults to raise hands to indicate they have had such an experience.

If there is time, invite a few people in the group to share a few words about their ugly duckling experience.

ACTIVITY 2: ISAIAH — EXILE AND HOPE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Isaiah — Exile and Hope](#)" (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [Isaiah — Exile and Hope Background Information](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.
- Print Leader Resource 1, [Isaiah — Exile and Hope Background Information](#), and prepare to briefly present the information. Make copies for interested participants to take home.

Description of Activity

Use these or similar words to briefly set the stage for the story:

Our Hebrew scripture story today is not like the other stories we have heard. It offers words of hope to the Hebrew people when they found themselves in a very bad situation. Their nation had been conquered by the Babylonians, and many people had been brought to Babylon to live in exile. Their nation was destroyed; their temple was destroyed, and they had to figure out how to be a people without a nation or a temple. They had to find new ways to think about themselves and about their God. They called their nation in exile "Zion," and they began to call themselves "Jewish." During that time, prophets spoke words of hope to the Hebrew people—a hope that they would one day be lifted up and would return triumphantly to their home. These are some of the most famous words in the Hebrew scriptures, words from the Book of Isaiah. I will explain any words you do not understand as I read.

Offer copies of Leader Resource 1, [Isaiah — Exile and Hope Background Information](#), to those who wish to take it home.

Read the story aloud in three parts. Before reading the first section, say, "This is the prophet Isaiah speaking,

calling the Jewish people God's servant and telling them that things will eventually get better."

Before reading the second section, say, "This is Isaiah naming all the bad things that have happened to the Jewish people."

Before reading the third section, say, "And this is Isaiah, speaking as though he were the voice of God, promising that the Jewish people would return in triumph to the land which had been taken from them."

ACTIVITY 3: RETELLING THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Isaiah — Exile and Hope](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the story so you can guide a dramatized retelling.
- Recruit three readers to read the three voices of Isaiah: the Encouraging Voice, the Despairing Voice, and the Triumphant Voice. Give the volunteers copies of the text in advance so they can prepare for their roles.

Description of Activity

Say, "The process of retelling this story will be different from what we have done with other stories. All the action is in the words of Isaiah, first talking with words of encouragement (like the mother who tried to help the ugly duckling); then telling of all the reasons for despair and sadness (like the duckling, who experiences bullying and rejection); and finally raising a triumphant voice (like those who proclaim that that the ugly duckling is really a magnificent swan). Introduce the three readers you have recruited to read the three parts, and invite everyone else to be part of the crowd of Jewish people listening to these words. Invite the crowd to act out being a people in exile, defeated and despised.

Ask the Encouraging Voice to read the first section aloud.

Ask participants:

What kind of message is here? How does it make you feel? Act out how you feel when you are having a hard time and someone is trying to help you get through it, telling you that things will get better.

Ask the Despairing Voice to read the second section aloud.

Say to participants:

Isaiah is describing the ways in which the Jewish nation, which he calls God's servant, has been mistreated. How does someone act when they are mistreated and can't do anything about it? Act out how that feels.

Ask the Triumphant Voice to read the third section aloud.

Say to participants:

Isaiah is giving the people hope that the bad times will end and they will get their land back for themselves and their children and grandchildren. Act out how it feels to hear such strong words of hope.

After the re-telling, invite participants to offer comments, observations, and insights about the passage.

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLAINING SMALL GROUP OPTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- List the small group options and their locations on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Explain options for small processing groups and point out breakout spaces. Explain that participants may choose any of the options that appeal to them. There is not one group for children, another for youth, and another for adults. All groups can have a mix of ages. Invite at least one adult or youth participant to take part in each breakout group, and ask those volunteers to set a tone that welcomes multigenerational participation.

ACTIVITY 5: DISCUSSION — OPTION 1 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Description of Activity

- Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - Why is this story preserved?
 - What were they trying to teach with this story?
 - What is it that we can learn?
- Write these definitions of "redeem" on newsprint and post:
 - To get or win back
 - To free from what distresses or harms
 - To repair or restore
 - To make worthwhile.

ACTIVITY 6: IT GETS BETTER — OPTION 2 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Meg Riley's "[It Gets Better](http://www.vimeo.com/17293345)" (at www.vimeo.com/17293345) video
- Chris Tuttle's "[Kermit the Frog's It Gets Better](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEoCyLQgdCU&feature=related)" (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEoCyLQgdCU&feature=related) video
- Computer with Internet access
- Optional: Cell phone that records video or other video recording equipment

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the "[It Gets Better Project.](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/)" (at www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/)
- If you have an Internet connection, prepare to show Meg Riley's video and the Kermit the Frog "It Gets Better" video, created by Chris Tuttle.

Description of Activity

Explain the "It Gets Better" project, noting that it was started as a way to support gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth who are being bullied, telling them to hold on because it will get better. Watch the video by Meg Riley and the video by Chris Tuttle.

Invite participants to create their own "It Gets Better" messages telling a personal story of when things got better, or giving good advice and support to someone who is having a difficult time. Practice saying the messages aloud, imagining that someone is taping them for television or the Internet. Optional: Use a cell phone or other videotaping equipment to record and play back the messages so participants can see them.

ACTIVITY 7: THE PROPHET'S SCROLLS — OPTION 3 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- 12 X 18-inch drawing paper, one for each participant
- Packing tape
- Scissors
- One-inch dowels, two 15-inch lengths for each person
- Calligraphy pens or fine point markers

Preparation for Activity

- Set out materials.
- Make a sample scroll.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to make their own scrolls with words describing the experiences of exile and hope. Note that while Isaiah used a scroll of animal skin, we use drawing paper and dowels. Use packing tape to attach the shorter side of a sheet of drawing paper to a dowel, and then attach a dowel to the opposite short side, so the paper can be rolled like a scroll, bringing the dowels together.

After participants create scrolls, invite them to use calligraphy pens or fine-point markers to write and draw about the experiences of exile and of hope. As time allows, share drawings with one another.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Creating the Closing Worship](#) (included in this document)
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout
- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Recording of "Bein' Green" by Kermit the Frog
- Music player
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook or words to your chosen song
- Optional: Keyboard or drums for musical accompaniment

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.
- Decide on the order of worship for the closing and plan how you will include a contribution from all small groups. Use Leader Resource 2, *Creating the Closing Worship*, to help you plan.
- Invite three or more song leaders to lead "By the Waters of Babylon" as a round, and provide them with music so they can prepare.
- Write an order of service on newsprint. Here is a sample to adapt:
 - Opening music
 - Chalice lighting
 - Hymn

- Exile and Hope
- Reading the Prophet's Scrolls
- Musical Reflection
- It Gets Better
- Meditation/prayer
- Hymn
- Closing words
- Make copies of Taking It Home.
- Optional: Recruit a musician to teach and/or accompany the hymns.

Description of Activity

Create a worship service, weaving together contributions from all of the breakout groups. Do not over-script the worship service, but rather create a worshipful "container" to hold all of the insights, thoughts, feelings, creations, and contributions of participants. At the end of the worship, extinguish the chalice and read the words of Elizabeth Selle Jones, Reading 456 in the hymnbook, or choose a benediction or closing words familiar to participants. Distribute Taking It Home.

FAITH IN ACTION: MAKING IT BETTER NOW

Materials for Activity

- Computer and Internet connection

Preparation for Activity

- Explore the [Making it Better Now videos](https://vimeo.com/user5231817/videos) (at vimeo.com/user5231817/videos) produced by the UUA's Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries.
- Talk with youth group advisors and leaders, the RE Committee, the minister, the interweave group, OWL facilitators, and other appropriate people to learn if members of the congregation are aware of the Making it Better Now videos. Enlist their support for your group's work.

Description of Activity

Watch the Making it Better Now videos produced by the UUA's Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. Arrange for a multigenerational viewing of some of the videos, followed by a multigenerational conversation about responding to bullying. Publicize the videos in your congregation's literature, and on the congregational website and/or social media page.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to talk with your co-facilitator about how the workshop went, using these questions as a guide:

- What went well?
- What surprised us as facilitators? Amazed us? Challenged us?
- How did this workshop strengthen multigenerational community? How did it meet the faith development needs of individuals within that community?
- What needs adjustment in future workshops?

TAKING IT HOME

Despair? Did someone say despair was a question in the world? Well, then listen to the sons of those who have known little else if you wish to know the resiliency of this thing you would so quickly resign to mythhood, this thing called the human spirit. — Lorraine Hansberry (1930 — 1965), African American playwright and essayist, author of *A Raisin in the Sun*, which opened on Broadway in 1973

With family members and trusted friends, talk about your experiences of exile and suffering and of hope and triumph. Explore more of the videos in the It Gets Better project or find examples of the themes of exile and hope in popular culture, movies, and adult and children's literature.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CREATING A MULTIGENERATIONAL MUSICAL REFLECTION (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Selection of child-friendly musical instruments, such as harmonicas, drums, tambourines, castanets, harmonicas, bells and kazoos

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that there are at least two adults or youth to meet with this breakout group.
- Set out instruments.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to create a composition using a variety of musical instruments. Work together to create the sound of exile, despair, and hopelessness, and then work together to create the sound of hope.

With younger children, you might use the instruments to illustrate the feelings of the duckling as you retell the story of the ugly duckling.

STORY: ISAIAH — EXILE AND HOPE

Isaiah 52: 1-2, 13-15; 53: 1-8, 54: 2-4, 7-8 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

Awake, awake,
Put on your strength O Zion!
Put on your beautiful garments...
Shake yourself from the dust and rise up, O captive
Jerusalem;
Loose the bonds from your neck,
O captive daughter Zion!
... See, my servant will prosper;
He shall be exalted and lifted up
... So he shall startle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
and that which they had not heard
they shall contemplate.
Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For he grew up before him like a young plant,
like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.
Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb he is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
Who could have imagined his future?
Enlarge the site of your tent,
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;
do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen
your stakes.
For you will spread out to the right and to the left,
and your descendants will possess the nations
and will settle the desolate towns.
Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed;
do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace;
... For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great compassion I will gather you.
In overflowing wrath for a moment
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,
says the Lord, your Redeemer.

STORY: THE UGLY DUCKLING

This story is abridged from one published by Hans Christian Anderson in 1844 and translated by H.P. Paull in 1872. (Hans Christian Anderson: Fairy Tales and Stories).

It was lovely summer weather in the country. A duck was on her nest, watching for her young brood to hatch. At length one shell cracked, and then another, and from each egg came a living creature that lifted its head and cried, "Peep, peep!" "Quack, quack," said the mother, and then they all quacked as well as they could, and looked about them on every side at the large green leaves.

After a time, she asked "Are you all out?" "No, I declare," she said, "the largest egg lies there still."

At last the large egg broke, and a young one crept forth crying, "Peep, peep!" It was very large and ugly. The duck stared at it and exclaimed, "It is very large and not at all like the others. I wonder if it is a turkey. We shall soon find it out, however when we go to the water. It must go in, if I have to push it myself."

On the next day the mother duck took her young brood down to the water, and jumped in with a splash. "Quack, quack," cried she, and one after another the little ducklings jumped in. They swam about quite prettily with their legs paddling under them as easily as possible, and the ugly duckling was also in the water swimming with them.

"Oh," said the mother, "that is not a turkey; how well he uses his legs, and how upright he holds himself! He is my own child, and he is not so very ugly after all if you look at him properly. Quack, quack! Come with me now, I will take you into grand society, and introduce you to the farmyard and to the other ducks, but you must keep close to me or you may be trodden upon; and, above all, beware of the cat."

The ducklings did as they were bid, but the other ducks stared, and said, "What a queer looking object one of them is; we don't want him here," and then one flew out and bit him in the neck.

"Let him alone," said the mother; "he is not doing any harm."

"Yes, but he is so big and ugly," said the spiteful duck "and therefore he must be turned out."

The poor duckling was bitten and pushed and made fun of, not only by the ducks, but by all the poultry. "He is too big," they all said, and the turkey flew at the duckling, so that the poor little thing did not know where to go, and was quite miserable because he was so ugly and laughed at by the whole farmyard. So it went on from day to day till it got worse and worse. The poor duckling was driven about by everyone; even his

brothers and sisters were unkind to him, and would say, "Ah, you ugly creature, I wish the cat would get you," and his mother said she wished he had never been born. The ducks pecked him, the chickens beat him, and the girl who fed the poultry kicked him with her feet. So at last he ran away, frightening the little birds in the hedge as he flew over the palings.

"They are afraid of me because I am ugly," he said. So he closed his eyes, and flew still farther, until he came out on a large moor, inhabited by wild ducks. Here he remained the whole night, feeling very tired and sorrowful.

In the morning, when the wild ducks rose in the air, they stared at their new comrade. "What sort of a duck are you?" they all said, coming round him.

He bowed to them, and was as polite as he could be, but he did not reply to their question. "You are exceedingly ugly," said the wild ducks, "you cannot be one of our family."

The duckling remained alone in the moor, where it loved to swim and dive, but was avoided by all other animals, because of its ugly appearance. Autumn came, and the leaves in the forest turned to orange and gold. Then, as winter approached, the wind caught them as they fell and whirled them in the cold air. The clouds, heavy with hail and snow-flakes, hung low in the sky, and the raven stood on the ferns crying, "Croak, croak." All this was very sad for the poor little duckling. One evening, just as the sun set amid radiant clouds, there came a large flock of beautiful birds out of the bushes. The duckling had never seen any like them before. They were swans, and they curved their graceful necks, while their soft plumage shown with dazzling whiteness. They uttered a singular cry, as they spread their glorious wings and flew away from those cold regions to warmer countries across the sea. As they mounted higher and higher in the air, the ugly little duckling felt quite a strange sensation as he watched them. He whirled himself in the water like a wheel, stretched out his neck towards them, and uttered a cry so strange that it frightened himself. Could he ever forget those beautiful, happy birds; and when at last they were out of his sight, he dived under the water, and rose again almost beside himself with excitement. He knew not the names of these birds, nor where they had flown, but he felt towards them as he had never felt for any other bird in the world.

The winter grew colder and colder; he was obliged to swim about on the water to keep it from freezing, but every night the space on which he swam became smaller and smaller. At length it froze so hard that the ice in the water crackled as he moved, and the duckling had to paddle with his legs as well as he could, to keep the space from closing up. He became exhausted at last, and lay still and helpless, half frozen fast in the ice. It would be very sad, were I to relate all the misery and

privations which the poor little duckling endured during the hard winter; but when it had passed, he found himself lying one morning in a moor, amongst the rushes. He felt the warm sun shining, and heard the lark singing, and saw that all around was beautiful spring. Then the young bird felt that his wings were strong, as he flapped them against his sides, and rose high into the air. They bore him onwards, until he found himself in a large garden, before he well knew how it had happened. The apple-trees were in full blossom, and everything looked beautiful, in the freshness of early spring. From a thicket close by came three beautiful white swans, rustling their feathers, and swimming lightly over the smooth water. The duckling remembered the lovely birds, and felt more strangely unhappy than ever.

"I will fly to those royal birds," he exclaimed, "and they will kill me, because I am so ugly, and dare to approach them; but it does not matter: better be killed by them than pecked by the ducks, beaten by the hens, pushed about by the maiden who feeds the poultry, or starved with hunger in the winter."

Then he flew to the water, and swam towards the beautiful swans. The moment they espied the stranger, they rushed to meet him with outstretched wings.

The duckling bent his head down to the surface of the water, and waited for death. But what did he see in the clear stream below? His own image; no longer a dark,

gray bird, ugly and disagreeable to look at, but a graceful and beautiful swan. The great swans swam round the new-comer, and stroked his neck with their beaks, as a welcome.

Into the garden presently came some little children, and threw bread and cake into the water.

"See," cried the youngest, "there is a new one;" and the rest were delighted, and ran to their father and mother, dancing and clapping their hands, and shouting joyously, "There is another swan come; a new one has arrived."

Then they threw more bread and cake into the water, and said, "The new one is the most beautiful of all; he is so young and pretty." And the old swans bowed their heads before him.

Then he felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wing; for he did not know what to do, he was so happy, and yet not at all proud. He had been persecuted and despised for his ugliness, and now he heard them say he was the most beautiful of all the birds. Even the elder-tree bent down its bows into the water before him, and the sun shone warm and bright. Then he rustled his feathers, curved his slender neck, and cried joyfully, from the depths of his heart, "I never dreamed of such happiness as this, while I was an ugly duckling."

LEADER RESOURCE 1: ISAIAH — EXILE AND HOPE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This workshop presents a different kind of story from the Hebrew scriptures. It is not a story in the strict sense of the word, but poetic writings from the book of Isaiah, words that comforted a desolate and despairing people in exile.

These words, often referred to as the "suffering servant" passage, were composed and spoken at a terrible time in the life of the Jewish people. After 600 years of relative autonomy under King David, King Solomon, and their heirs, political tides in the region had led to the Babylonian conquest of first the northern kingdom of Israel, then the southern kingdom of Judah. In 587 BCE, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed the city of Jerusalem and with it the Temple of Solomon, the seat of Jewish worship life and what they understood to be the home for Yahweh, their God. In three waves, Hebrew political, religious, and cultural leaders were exiled to Babylon, leaving behind a ruined land and a depleted people.

The exile in Babylon (587 — 539 B.C.E.) was a painful time for the Jewish people, but it was also a watershed time. They needed to reconstitute their faith without a state of their own, without a homeland, without their seat of worship. And they needed to make sense of their humiliation in light of their covenant with Yahweh.

The "suffering servant" passages speak of the hope for eventual redemption, when the despised and humiliated people would be redeemed, and would be restored to their homeland and their nation.

The book of Isaiah, which contains this passage, was written over the course of two hundred years by a group of people more accurately described as the school of Isaiah than as a single figure. The "suffering servant" passage was most likely written between 550 and 539 BCE.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: CREATING THE CLOSING WORSHIP

In this program, the closing worship circle offers a time for the group to come back together to enrich each other's understanding of the story and of their own life experience. This is not a show-and-tell experience, but rather a participatory, co-created worship experience. You will need to do just enough planning to provide a container for participants to share with one another and grow in spirit. You cannot script a co-created worship service, but you can guide it so that all participants feel heard and valued, and all hear and value the voices and experiences of others, regardless of age or life stage. With practice, you and the participants will become adept at co-creating worship to end each workshop.

Here are suggested elements for the closing worship for Workshop 7, Isaiah — Exile and Hope. Add, subtract, and adapt to fit your situation:

Opening music

Recording of "Bein' Green" by Joe Raposo, the Sesame Street Song writer. It was recorded by Kermit the Frog as well as many other musical artists.

Chalice lighting

Use chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation or use Reading 452 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Hymn

Hymn 279, "By the Waters of Babylon," in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Invite song leaders to help you sing this piece as a round.

Making Sense of Suffering

Invite the discussion group to share some of their comments and insights about suffering, exile, and hope.

Reading the Prophet's Scrolls

Invite the group who created scrolls (Activity 7) to share their words and drawings about exile and hope.

Musical Reflection

Invite the group who did Alternate Activity 1 to share their musical reflections on exile and hope. If they retold the ugly duckling story as part of their activity, invite them to share that as well.

It Gets Better

Invite the group who created "It Gets Better" messages to share what they created.

Meditation/prayer

Begin a meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation. Then say, "We heard stories today of people—and an ugly duckling—who were exiled, despised, bullied, and treated badly. We remember the times when we, too, have suffered, and we wonder why. We remember also the ways in which we have embraced hope and grown because of what happened to us—how we became the swan, or how we figured out how to go on despite something terrible or sad happening to us."

Then say, "Let us enter silence for a moment to remember, and then, if we are moved, speak aloud of what gives us hope. (Allow about 30 seconds of silence, and then speak your own words and invite others to do the same). May we seek help and comfort when bad things are too hard for us to bear, and may we always believe that we have the power to move beyond suffering and to grow from it—making it better—now and in the future."

End the meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation.

Hymn

Hymn 209, "O Come, You Longing, Thirsty Souls." Point out that the words of the hymn are from the book of Isaiah.

Closing words

Use words familiar to your congregation, or Reading 456 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

FIND OUT MORE

Read the reflections of two contemporary Unitarian Universalist theologians, Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker and John A. Buehrens, on suffering and hope in [A House for Hope](#) (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010). Beacon Press also provides a [discussion guide](#) for the book.

WORKSHOP 8: CREATION

INTRODUCTION

We covenant to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part. — Unitarian Universalist Association Seventh Principle

This final workshop presents the very first story that appears in the Hebrew scriptures: the creation of the world. This passage was one of the later additions to the body of scripture, included after the Jewish people had returned home from their exile in Babylon. In this story, God is no longer the God of a particular people, but is rather the creator of all of the earth and sky, and of humanity itself. It is an extraordinary text in both its theology and poetic beauty. This text tells us that we are indeed kin, one to another and to all of creation.

This text is born of a time when the Jewish people, returned from exile two or three generations after the conquest of Jerusalem, sought guidance in their own history and traditions to reconstitute their society. It was an age when interpreting the text supplanted prophecy as a way to understand how to live in accordance with the Jewish covenant with God, a time in which the interpreters—scribes, priests, and others—turned to the text to find meaning and order for their society. Tasked with creating social order, they brought stories found in the cultural and religious traditions of the region into their own canon, adding stories that chronologically preceded the Abraham sequence. This creation story not only establishes our kinship one with another, it provides the scriptural basis for the central Jewish practice of keeping the Sabbath.

This workshop invites participants to appreciate the power and wisdom of this ancient creation story rather than deconstruct it in the light of scientific understandings of evolution. It asks: Who is the God that appears in this story, and how is God different from the God in other stories we have explored? What does it mean if we are all related? What wisdom is there for Unitarian Universalists in honoring Sabbath?

Before leading this workshop, review the Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters found in the program Introduction and make any accommodations necessary for your group.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Present the first Genesis story of Creation and invite participants to deepen understanding and knowledge of the passage

- Explore the wisdom in this passage for Unitarian Universalists, including its affirmation of human kinship and the practice of keeping Sabbath.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the first Genesis story of Creation in the context in which it was written
- Respond to the text
- Explore contemporary implications of this story and consider its wisdom for their lives and the world
- Connect with people of all ages and be enriched by a variety of perspectives.

WORKSHOP-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Creation	15
Activity 2: Retelling the Story	15
Activity 3: Sabbath	10
Activity 4: Explaining Small Group Options	5
Activity 5: Discussion — Option 1	25
Activity 6: Creation Drama — Option 2	25
Activity 7: Creation Mural — Option 3	25
Faith in Action: Green Sanctuary	
Closing	15
Alternate Activity 1: Kinship Litany	25

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

If you are familiar with the first Creation story passage from Genesis, recall the circumstances under which you heard or read it. What meaning was ascribed to it? How did it make you feel?

Try to set aside the "culture wars" debate over the literal truth of the story as opposed to the scientific understanding of evolution. Find the beauty and poetry in the text, and its vision of human kinship.

Reflect on how you responded (or might have responded) to this passage as an eight-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old youth, or a young adult making your

way in the world. Envision the way you will think about this passage when you are an elder, looking back on your life.

Bring each person in your group into your mind and hold them in appreciative thought and/or prayer.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags, durable or single use
- Bold markers
- Sign-in sheet and pen/pencil
- Small table
- Optional: Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sign-up sheet with columns for name, address, phone, and e-mail information and place it on the table.
- Place name tags and markers on the table.

Description of Activity

As people arrive, introduce yourself and invite them to make a name tag and sign in.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for the chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.

Description of Activity

Bring participants together and welcome them. Invite a volunteer to light the chalice as you share a favorite children's chalice lighting used by your congregation.

ACTIVITY 1: CREATION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Creation](#)" (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 1, [Creation Background Information](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story and practice reading it aloud.
- Print Leader Resource 1, Creation Background Information, and prepare to briefly present the information. Make copies for interested participants to take home.

Description of Activity

Using the information in Leader Resource 1, Creation Background Information, briefly set the stage for the story. Keep the background information brief, and offer copies of Leader Resource 1 to those who wish to take it home. Say, "This is a story about how the world and all its creatures, including people, began."

Read the story aloud.

ACTIVITY 2: RETELLING THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Creation](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the story so that you can guide a dramatized retelling.

Description of Activity

Say, "In this story, many of the important elements are not people. We are all going to play all the parts. Shake out your arms and legs and head and neck and all the parts of you. You are going to need all of your imagination and all of your body to help tell the story. For each day of creation, you will act out being that which is created—the sun, the stars, the animals, the plants, and so on. We will use the center of our circle as the stage.

Reread the story, pausing after each day for participants to act it out. After the re-telling, invite participants to offer comments, observations, and insights about the passage.

ACTIVITY 3: SABBATH (10 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Say, "At the time this story was told and written down, one of the most important elements was the idea that after six days of creating things, God rested. Jewish people still honor a tradition of keeping a Sabbath, or day of rest, every week. For Jews, that day is Saturday (from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday), and they observe that day by gathering with family or in the Temple and paying attention to important things such as being a good person, being thankful, and remembering that they are a people of God. Unitarian Universalists often observe Sunday as a special day." Guide a conversation with these questions:

- How is Sunday special in our congregation?
- What happens here on Sunday? Why is it important?

- What wisdom is there for Unitarian Universalists in keeping a weekly Sabbath?

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLAINING SMALL GROUP OPTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- List the small group options and their locations on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Explain options for small processing groups and point out breakout spaces. Explain that participants may choose any of the options that appeal to them. There is not one group for children, another for youth, and another for adults. All groups can have a mix of ages. Invite at least one adult or youth participant to take part in each breakout group, and ask those volunteers to set a tone that welcomes multigenerational participation.

ACTIVITY 5: DISCUSSION — OPTION 1 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write these questions on newsprint and post:
 - Why is this story preserved?
 - What were they trying to teach with this story?
 - What is it that we can learn?

Description of Activity

Invite participants to discuss the questions posted on newsprint. Use some of these questions to provoke, guide or further the discussion, as needed:

- Who is the God that appears in this story, and how is God different from the God in other stories we have explored?
- What does it mean if we are all related?
- Unitarian Universalists reject on scientific grounds the idea that there is a single creator and a single act of creation. Compare and contrast our seventh principle, respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part, with the understanding of the universe as a single creation.
- How is the scientific understanding that humanity is one (we are all descended from the same set of ancestors) in harmony with the idea of humanity in this biblical creation story? How is it different?

- What wisdom is there for Unitarian Universalists in honoring Sabbath?
- Are there ways in which you honor Sabbath in your life, or long to do so?

ACTIVITY 6: CREATION DRAMA — OPTION 2 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Lots of brightly colored fabric pieces and scarves of various sizes and textures

Description of Activity

Invite the group to pretend that they are among the Jewish people newly returned from exile in Babylon. The scribes and priests have invited them to help tell the creation story by acting it out. Invite them to prepare a drama of creation to be offered at the closing worship, using lots of body movement and brightly colored fabrics to add interest to their production.

ACTIVITY 7: CREATION MURAL — OPTION 3 (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Mural paper, about 10 1/2 feet long
- Poster paints, brushes, and water
- Smocks
- Pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure there is ample space to create a long mural. It might be helpful to provide two tables end to end on which to create the mural to accommodate those who cannot easily work on the floor. Provide chairs for those who prefer to sit or kneel as they work on the mural.
- Use a pencil to mark seven sections on the mural paper, roughly 18 inches each. Pencil in at the top of each section what was created each day of the story (e.g. "Earth, Seas, and Plants" in the third section; "God rested" in the seventh section).
- Set out materials.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to paint a creation mural. Ask participants to choose a section of the mural to paint, and ask the group to cover all seven sections. You might ask those who are older to move to the side of the table which requires them to paint upside down, while allowing younger ones to work right side up.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Creating the Closing Worship](#) (included in this document)
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout
- Chalice, candle and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Stand or table space for the chalice
- Decorative covering for chalice stand
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist Association hymnbook or words to your chosen song
- Optional: Keyboard or drums for musical accompaniment

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a welcoming space, including comfortable seating arranged in a circle around a small table with a chalice at its center.
- Decide on the order of worship for the closing and plan how you will include a contribution from all small groups. Use Leader Resource 2, *Creating the Closing Worship*, to help you with planning.
- Write an order of service on newsprint. Here is a sample to adapt:
 - Opening music
 - Chalice lighting
 - Hymn
 - Creation Drama
 - Creation Mural
 - Kinship Litany
 - Reflection
 - Meditation/prayer
 - Hymn
 - Closing words
- Make copies of *Taking It Home*.
- Optional: Recruit a musician to teach and/or accompany the hymns.

Description of Activity

Create a worship service, weaving together contributions from all of the breakout groups. Do not over-script the worship service, but rather create a

worshipful "container" to hold all of the insights, thoughts, feelings, creations, and contributions of participants. At the end of the worship, thank all participants for being part of this series of workshops. Extinguish the chalice and read the words of Elizabeth Selle Jones, Reading 456 in the hymnbook, or choose a benediction or closing words familiar to participants. Distribute *Taking It Home*.

FAITH IN ACTION: GREEN SANCTUARY

Preparation for Activity

- Find out about the UUA [Green Sanctuary program](#) and/or by reading the [UUA Green Sanctuary blog](#).
- Talk with your minister, social action committee, building and ground committee, or other appropriate group to find out how your congregation can participate in the Green Sanctuary program if it is not already doing so. If your congregation is involved, find out how to support that effort as a group.

Description of Activity

If your congregation is a part of the Green Sanctuary program or is otherwise involved in earth stewardship projects, find out how you can participate. If your congregation is not involved in earth stewardship efforts, organize a project that will engage people of all ages in caring for the earth (e.g. a recycling project, a litter clean-up project, signs to remind people to turn off unused lights, and so on). Bring Green Sanctuary information to the attention of your congregation's leadership if they are not aware of such resources.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to talk with your co-facilitator about how the workshop went, using these questions as a guide:

- What went well?
- What surprised us as facilitators? Amazed us? Challenged us?
- How did this workshop strengthen multigenerational community? How did it meet the faith development needs of individuals within that community?

TAKING IT HOME

We covenant to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part. — Unitarian Universalist Association Seventh Principle

Watch the three-part [Nova television series](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/evolution/whos-who-human-evolution.html) (at www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/evolution/whos-who-human-evolution.html) on human evolution and explore the website for updated information. Both the Hebrew scriptures and scientific discovery lead us to the understanding that all humans are kin. With your family or trusted friends, consider the ways in which you might honor that kinship in your daily life. What practices or habits of mind result from embracing this wisdom?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: KINSHIP LITANY (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Six sheets of paper and pencil/pen

Preparation for Activity

- Be sure that there are at least two adults or youth to meet with this breakout group.
- Recruit a scribe to record ideas.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to create a litany for the closing worship that honors the fact that we are related to all that lives on our planet and to the earth and the universe

itself. Explain that in this litany, each group will make lists of all the ways they are connected to all the parts of creation and after each list, the whole group will respond by saying together, "All these are connected to me." Work through an example with them, saying, "On the first day of creation, the story says that God created light and darkness, morning and evening. What are all the 'light' things you can name? And all the 'dark' things? Our scribe will write them down as you say them."

After all the thoughts have been recorded, explain that in the closing worship, one of the groups will read the list aloud, and then the whole group will say together, "All these are connected to me." Continue with each of the six days, asking the scribe to use a separate sheet for each day. If there are too many ideas or responses for some days (such as the days with plants or animals), suggest that each person only name their two favorites for the list. If you have time after creating the list, practice leading the litany. Invite those who are comfortable reading aloud to read one or more list, and those who cannot read or are uncomfortable reading, to join in the response after each list.

STORY: CREATION

Genesis 1: 1-31; 2:1-4 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our own image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: CREATION BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although the story of the creation of the world is the first story that appears in the Torah, it was one of the later additions to the body of scripture, added after the Jewish people had returned home from their exile in Babylon. After nearly 50 years, the Babylonian kingdom had fallen to Cyrus of Persia, who reversed the Babylonian practice of keeping occupied nations under control by disrupting societies and exiling their leaders. Cyrus allowed local people to govern their own societies and engage in their own religious practices. He not only permitted the Jews to return to their homeland in 538 BCE, he assisted them with the rebuilding of the Temple.

Two or three generations had come and gone since the religious and civic leaders of the Jewish people had been exiled and their way of life and religious practices disrupted. Those who returned to their ancient homeland (not all did), faced the challenge of articulating what it meant to be Jewish and establishing laws and observances which would bring order to their society. For this, they turned to their own ancient texts, traditions, and stories, as well as to religious stories that they had encountered and added to their own during the time of the exile in Babylon.

In this post-exile time, interpreting the text supplanted prophecy as a way to understand how to live in accordance with the Jewish covenant with God. A revision of the Hebrew scriptures was undertaken: some stories were added and some stories were augmented with additional material. The Priestly Revision of the Bible was intended to make the Israelite religion more religious and less political. After all, the theory that Yahweh guaranteed the political fortunes of Israel and Judah had been disproven by events. The revisions tended to focus attention on the priesthood, rather than the Kings or the prophets. Religious practices were brought to the foreground. For example, it is thought that the simple story of manna from heaven was revised to make sure it did not show the Hebrews collecting bread on the Sabbath. Genealogies, dates, and inventories were added to the biblical stories. Careful descriptions of the first Temple's furnishings were added.

In the Creation story told in this workshop, one of two distinct accounts of creation found in the book of Genesis, God is no longer the particular God of a particular people, but is rather the creator of all of the earth and sky, and of humanity itself. It is an extraordinary text in both its poetic beauty and its theology. This text tells us that we are indeed kin, one to another and to all of creation. It also provides the scriptural basis for the central Jewish practice of keeping the Sabbath.

Note: Text interpretation was in at its height during the period between the third century BCE and the first century CE. Jesus of Nazareth, who lived during the first century CE, alluded frequently to Jewish scriptures and was a participant in the rich interpretive tradition of the time.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: CREATING THE CLOSING WORSHIP

In this program, the closing worship circle offers a time for the group to come back together to enrich each other's understanding of the story and of their own life experience. This is not a show-and-tell experience, but rather a participatory, co-created worship experience. You will need to do just enough planning to provide a container for participants to share with one another and grow in spirit. You cannot script a co-created worship service, but you can guide it so that all participants feel heard and valued, and all hear and value the voices and experiences of others, regardless of age or life stage. With practice, you and the participants will become adept at co-creating worship to end each workshop.

Here are suggested elements for the closing worship for Workshop 8, Creation. Add, subtract, and adapt to fit your situation:

Opening words

Share Beauty is before me, Reading 682 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Chalice lighting

Use chalice lighting words familiar to your congregation or use Reading 452 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Hymn

Hymn 21, "For the Beauty of the Earth"

Creation Drama

Invite the drama group (Activity 6) to offer a dramatic retelling of the creation story.

Mural

Call attention to the mural and its painters (Activity 7).

Kinship Litany

Invite the composers of the kinship litany to lead it, inviting all to respond in unison to each day's list with, "All these are connected to me."

Sabbath

Invite the discussion group to share some of their comments and insights about what the practice of Sabbath means to them personally and to Unitarian Universalists.

Meditation/prayer

As a meditation/prayer, offer these words, written by the Reverend Kathy A. Huff:

Praise the sun, the moon, the stars,
Praise the ant, the tree, the shining leaf.
Praise every child large and small,
Praise the one within us all.
Praise the swimmers, crawlers, and creepers.
Praise the flower and the winding weed,
Praise each blade of grass and every dewdrop.
Praise dark moist earth.
Praise rock, sand, and shoal.
Praise wind -- nature's breath.
Praise those with fin, fur, and finger,
Praise the winged ones, the tiny ones,
and all the ones that live unseen.
Praise brightest morning and darkest night.
Praise the prickly and the unpopular.
Praise the crow's cry and the beggar's sigh.
Praise the dancers, the doers and the dreamers.
Praise those that give, those who love, and those who heal.
Praise to wanderers, weavers and seekers.
Praise sounds of thunder, crashing waves,
and shouts for justice.
Praise silence.
Praise spirit.
Praise all colors.
Praise all acts of compassion.
Praise all. Praise all. Praise all.
End the meditation or prayer as you normally would in your congregation.

Hymn

Choose an appropriate hymn. Possibilities include Hymn 25, "God of the Earth, the Sky, the Sea," Hymn 26, "Holy, Holy, Holy," Hymn 123, "Spirit of Life," Hymn 395, "Sing and Rejoice," and Doxology, Hymn 379.

Closing words

Use words familiar to your congregation, or Reading 456 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

FIND OUT MORE

To explore more about how the Hebrew scriptures came to be written, organized, and interpreted, read the work of biblical Scholar James L. Kugel. You can read about Kugel and his work in "[Final Architect](#)," by Janet Tassel, on the website of the Nahum Goldman Fellowship Program. Kugel's book is called *The Bible As It Was* (Boston: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997).

For an overview of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and their meaning for religious liberals, read [Understanding the Bible: an Introduction for Skeptics, Seekers, and Religious Liberals](#), by John Buehrens (Boston, Beacon Press, 2004).