

LOVE CONNECTS US

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children

Grades 4-5



BY MICHELLE RICHARDS AND LYNN UNGAR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	3
PREFACE	3
THE PROGRAM	5
SESSION 1: A COVENANT IS A PROMISE	15
SESSION 2: A HERITAGE OF LOVE.....	25
SESSION 3: LOVE IS THE SPIRIT OF THIS CHURCH	36
SESSION 4: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF	52
SESSION 5: MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY LIVE	63
SESSION 6: THE MORE WE GET TOGETHER.....	73
SESSION 7: ONE PERSON MAKES A DIFFERENCE	85
SESSION 8: THE POWER OF PEACE	94
SESSION 9: KINDNESS IS THE KEY	108
SESSION 10: PEACE INSIDE	123
SESSION 11: SCIENCE AND RELIGION	136
SESSION 12: SEEING TRUTH/TRUE SEEING.....	147
SESSION 13: A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE.....	155
SESSION 14: OUR HERITAGE'S CALLING	168
SESSION 15: ALL WORK TOGETHER	177
SESSION 16: WE ARE ACTIVE CREATORS OF OUR FAITH	186

Note: If you add or delete text in this program, you may change the accuracy of the table of contents. The Table of Contents is an auto-generated list; if you change content and want an accurate representation of the page numbers listed in the TOC, click the table and click "Update Field." Then, click "Update page numbers only." Click OK.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michelle Richards is a credentialed religious educator and author of the Skinner House books *Come Into the Circle: Worshiping with Children* and the forthcoming *Tending the Flame: The Art of Unitarian Universalist Parenting* as well as the author of several independently published curricula. She served the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Elkhart (Indiana) for seven years as director of religious education before becoming a religious education and small congregation consultant for the Central Midwest District.

Lynn Ungar is a graduate of Starr King School for the Ministry and holds a D.Min. in religious education from McCormick Theological Seminary. She co-authored the Tapestry of Faith curriculum *Faithful Journeys* and is the author of the 1996 meditation manual *Blessing the Bread*. Lynn served as a parish minister for ten years and a religious education director for three before taking up her current position as minister of lifespan learning for the Church of the Larger Fellowship, the online Unitarian Universalist congregation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The sessions of this program focus on the covenant created by the Reverend James Vila Blake during the time he served the Unitarian Church in Evanston, Illinois. Many congregations have adopted or adapted this covenant to express the fundamental values that bond them as a community and as Unitarian Universalists.

Rev. Blake was a poet with several volumes of published poetry to his credit. He received national attention when he calmly directed worshipers at the Third Unitarian Church to exit the building because of a fire which had been ignited during a service. His words, "There is reason for haste, but not alarm," encouraged everyone to leave the building quickly, in an orderly fashion, and without panic. Rev. Blake waited at the pulpit until all 140 worshipers had left, and then made his own exit. Less than a minute later, the entire meeting room was engulfed in flames from floor to ceiling.

Tapestry of Faith Core Team

The following UUA staff brought Tapestry to fruition:

Judith A. Frediani, Curriculum Director, Tapestry Project Director

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We are grateful to these former UUA staff members who contributed to the conceptualization and launch of Tapestry of Faith:

Tracy L. Hurd

Sarah Gibb Millspaugh

Aisha Hauser

Pat Hoerltoerfer

Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

PREFACE

As Unitarian Universalists, we belong to a beloved community with a heritage of love, truth-seeking, and peacemaking from our Unitarian and Universalist forebears. Although our theological beliefs can be diverse, our covenant with one another and the love we bring to it tie us together in a common bond. The covenanted community we share is embodied in the words of Reverend James Vila Blake which provide the structure for this program:

Love is the spirit of this church,

And service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another.

THE PROGRAM

Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. — Helen Keller, author and activist for people with disabilities

Love Connects Us celebrates important ways Unitarian Universalists live our faith in covenanted community. Moved by love and gathered in spirit, we embrace our responsibility toward one another and the world at large. We encourage one another's search for truth and meaning. We strive to be active in peace-making and other efforts to improve our world.

The sessions explore our legacy, from both Universalism and Unitarianism, of living our connections in loving service, inquiry, and action for social justice. At the same time, the program builds active participants in our faith. Children learn how our actions create a new heritage of connecting in love which will shape the faith of future generations.

By exploring the key ideas of the Blake covenant, participants grow in Unitarian Universalist identity, explore their connections to one another in our beloved communities, and discover ways they are called to act in our congregations and the wider world.

Crafts and games that use tying and knots makes tangible the concept of connections we share with one another. Participants physically explore what it means to be linked to others and how one person's actions can affect the whole system to which they belong. Many activities involve participants in teams or small groups, emphasizing their experience as individuals working together in community.

GOALS

This program will:

- Introduce the covenant statement by the Reverend James Vila Blake, which many Unitarian Universalist congregations use, and explore the covenant's key concepts
- Build Unitarian Universalist identity by highlighting people in our Unitarian and Universalist heritage who embodied the key ideas in the Blake covenant—people who sought truth in love, dwelled together with others in peace, and helped one another when called on to act
- Demonstrate that we actively create our living faith; we contribute to its legacy when we engage with others in community and work for peace and justice

- Reveal ways in which we are called to help one another and to encourage spiritual growth in our congregations
- Explore what it means for Unitarian Universalists to be connected by love and covenant rather than shared theological belief.

LEADERS

It is suggested that adult leaders have experience with both the congregation and Unitarian Universalism. The ideal teaching team of two adult co-leaders for each session will have some diversity, which might be in gender, age, race or ethnicity, socio-economic class, theological beliefs and/or learning styles. If possible, leadership could include adults comfortable with leading songs or who can contribute musical accompaniment. Additional adult or youth volunteers will be needed to help facilitate small groups in some sessions.

PARTICIPANTS

This program is written for fourth- and fifth-grade children. You may find it useful to think about the developmental norms for this age group. Not all children arrive at each developmental stage at the same time, but knowing what to expect overall can be quite helpful, especially to first-time leaders.

In her book, *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd lists characteristics of the older school-age child:

- Uses gross and fine motor skills, which are almost fully developed
- Enters puberty toward the end of school-age years (particularly girls)
- Is influenced by media images
- Engages in logical thinking
- Practices cognitive skills of acquiring, storing, and retrieving information
- Develops specific learning styles (auditory, visual, sensory, and/or kinesthetic)
- Exhibits domain-specific intelligence (verbal/linguistic, musical/rhythmic, local/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, or naturalist)
- Engages in gender-specific play.

Faith Development Skills

- Uses student identity and knowledge as sources of self-esteem
- Engages peers and learns through mutual friendship
- Comprehends the perspective of others
- Works on developing racial, ethnic and gender identities and seeks peers' affirmation of these identities
- Shows interest in concrete aspects of faith and religion
- "Does" religion or spirituality by participating in traditions
- Explores religious or spiritual ideas as a way of deepening faith.

Moral Development

- Interested in moral issues/ what is fair and right
- Practices figuring out what is fair when developing rules
- Moral decision making is complex
- Practices reconciling moral ideals with pragmatic realities
- Demonstrates interest in broader moral issues
- Reconciles the violence of the world with personal own moral code (e.g., violent video games)
- Interest in knowing and living out moral ideas
- Uses the Golden Rule (treat others as you would like to be treated)
- Wrestles with moral dilemmas in relationships
- Demonstrates awareness of societal moral issues and interest in helping to solve community problems
- Ponders increasingly complex moral and spiritual questions.

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

A group can include children with a range of physical and cognitive abilities and learning styles, food allergies, and other sensitivities or limitations. Adapt activities or use alternate activities to ensure that every session is inclusive of everyone in the group.

Love Connects Us was developed primarily with the kinesthetic learner in mind, offering myriad activities

involving both small motor control and large muscle groups. Many participants in this age range need to move and benefit from the opportunity to physically explore new concepts. However, some activities can present a challenge for children with limited dexterity or mobility. Assess the physical abilities of the group early in the program. Many activities have an Including All Participants section which offers specific adaptations to meaningfully include children with mobility and other limitations. Certain activities, in their Preparation section, will direct you to an Alternate Activity that is less physically active and may better engage children's musical or logical/mathematical intelligences.

FAMILIES

The loving family unit, of whatever configuration, is the primary source of spiritual nurture and religious education in a child's life. The religious education children experience in Love Connects Us will be enhanced by involvement of parents or caregivers. To help, each session includes Taking It Home for you to download, customize, and share with families as a handout or email.

Taking It Home summarizes the session's content and provides questions and activities to stimulate family conversations and extension activities. With Taking It Home, a parent will have enough details to ask an engaging question, such as "What experiments with air did you do today?" or "What did you think about Elizabeth Blackwell's determination to become a doctor against all the odds?" Taking It Home guides parents to share their own life experiences and wisdom with their children, and to draw out their children's feelings and observations. For example, families are encouraged to share about ideas each person used to think were true and to tell how they gained a new perspective, or to talk about some ways they each feel love is stronger when it is given away. Taking It Home also suggests games, activities, excursions, and/or rituals parents can do with their children, related to the session.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

All 16 sessions in Love Connects Us follow the same structure. Between an Opening and a Closing, activities guide participants to explore what it means to be a covenanted community.

The program employs the statement of covenant by James Vila Blake, used in many Unitarian Universalist congregations, as a thematic framework. Individual sessions lift up the covenant's key themes of love, service, peace, seeking truth, and helping one another. For each theme, one session explores how a significant figure from our faith history embodies the theme,

another session centers on how we can express the theme in community, and a third focuses on how we can each express the theme personally.

Rainbow Wall Hanging and Ornaments. In Session 1, after hearing the biblical story of Noah and the rainbow sign of his covenant with God, participants create a Rainbow Wall Hanging which, if possible, should remain displayed in your meeting space for the duration of the program. Starting in Session 2, each session begins with the opportunity for children to create ornaments related to a theme (e.g., love, service, peace). On cut-out ornament shapes, they each write ways they express or observe that aspect of our Unitarian Universalist covenant in their lives.

If you expect some children to arrive before the formal session begins, have these children cut out the ornament shapes (see each session's Welcoming and Entering activity). Otherwise, you will need to create the ornaments beforehand, so children can write on them in the opening activity.

In Session 16, participants are invited to cut a piece from the wall hanging so each may take some knots and ornaments along as they continue on their faith development journey.

Faith in Action. Each session offers a Faith in Action activity. These activities are optional and the time you will need for them is not calculated into a 60-minute session. Nevertheless, Faith in Action is an important element of Tapestry of Faith. Incorporate Faith in Action into regular sessions, if you have time. Or, adapt Faith in Action activities for the group to complete during additional meetings. You can open them up to multiple age groups in your religious education program, or expand them to the broader congregation. By design, Faith in Action activities often involve congregants or community members outside your group and require additional meeting times and/or places. Before you commit to a long-term Faith in Action project, make sure you obtain the support of congregational leadership and the children's families.

Alternate Activities. Every session has at least one alternate activity. You may add these to a session, or substitute one for a core activity if the alternate better fits your group or the time available. Feel free to use alternate activities outside of the Love Connects Us program for gatherings such as family retreats, wide-age span religious education programs, or multigenerational dinners.

Quote

A quote introduces each session. You may read a quote aloud to your group as an entry point to the session.

However, the quotes are primarily for leaders. Co-leaders may like to discuss a quote while preparing for a session. Exploring a quote together can help you each feel grounded in the ideas and activities you will present and can help co-leaders get "on the same page." Quotes are also included in Taking It Home for families to consider.

Introduction

The session Introduction orients you to the session topic, central story, and activities. It may mention any special preparations, such as arranging for visitors..

Goals

Goals provide general outcomes for the session. Reviewing the goals will help you connect the session's content and methodologies with the four strands of the Tapestry of Faith religious education programs: ethical development, spiritual development, Unitarian Universalist identity development, and faith development.

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives are the intended outcomes for participants who do the core session activities. As you plan a session's activities, apply your knowledge of the particular group of children, the time and space you have available, and your own strengths and interests as a facilitator to determine the most important and achievable learning objectives for the session.

Session-at-a-Glance

Session-at-a-Glance lists the session activities in a suggested order for a 60-minute session and provides an estimated time for completing each activity. The table includes all the core activities from the Opening through the Closing. The table also shows the Faith in Action activity for the session. The Session-at-a-Glance table also presents any alternate activities, with their estimated times.

Spiritual Preparation

Taking five or ten minutes to center yourself within the session's purpose and content will support and free you to be present with the children and provide the best possible learning experience. Each session offers a short Spiritual Preparation exercise to focus you on the theme of the session and help you reflect on its connection to your own life and your Unitarian Universalist faith. Calling forth your own experiences, beliefs, and spirituality will prepare you to bring the topic to the group in an authentic manner and help you experience teaching as an event in your own spiritual growth and faith development.

Session Plan

The session plan presents every element of the session in detail, in the sequence established in the Session-at-a-Glance table: Opening, Activities, and Faith in Action activity, Closing, and Alternate Activities. Immediately after the Closing, Taking It Home explains extension activities for families. Download Taking It Home and adapt in using your own word processing software. A set of questions for Leader Reflection and Planning, after the session, appears after Taking It Home.

Following the Alternate Activities, find all the stories, handouts, and leader resources you need to lead the session activities. Finally, a Find Out More section suggests additional sources to help you further explore the session topics. It can be useful to scan Find Out More before you lead a session.

If you are reading Love Connects Us online, you can move as you wish among sessions and their various elements (Opening, Activity 4, Story, etc.). Each element occupies its own web page.

You can click on "Print this Page" at any time. However, if you click on "Download Entire Program" or "Download Session," you will have a user-friendly document on your computer to customize as you wish, using your own word processing software. Once you decide which activities you will use, format and print only the materials needed.

Opening: Each session begins with a chalice-lighting and sharing of opening words. To ensure safety, obtain an LED/battery-operated flaming chalice or use a symbolic chalice. The Opening is a time for centering, both for individuals and the group. Take the liberty you need to shape an opening ritual that suits the group, works within space limitations, and reflects the culture and practices of your congregation.

Activities: Generally, the sequence of activities for Love Connects Us sessions is designed to activate prior knowledge; pique interest; engage children in experiential learning, including hands-on interaction with the topic; then help them process and apply their observations and new knowledge. Activities address different learning styles you may find among participants; and, you will find guidance about alternate activities that might work better for your group. Choose according to the learning styles, developmental readiness, energy level, and other aspects of the particular children in the group.

Materials for Activity: This checklist tells you the supplies you will need for each activity.

Preparation for Activity: Review the bulleted "to do" list for each activity at least one week before a session. The

list provides all the advance work you need to do for the activity, from securing parent permissions for an off-site walk to downloading leader resources, practicing telling a story aloud, and organizing art materials.

Description of Activity: This section provides detailed directions for implementing the activity and a rationale which links the activity thematically to the rest of the session and to the entire program.

Read the activity descriptions carefully during your planning process so that you understand each activity and its purpose. Later, when you are leading the group, use the description as a step-by-step how-to manual.

Including All Participants: Adaptation to include all participants should always be part of your planning process. For certain activities, an Including All Participants section suggests specific modifications to make the activity manageable and meaningful for children with limitations of mobility, sight, hearing or cognition.

Faith in Action: An important component of the program, Faith in Action activities gives children practice at being Unitarian Universalists in the world. When you lead a Faith in Action project, you create an opportunity for participants to actively express faith values.

Faith in Action activities engage leaders, participants, their families, other congregants, and sometimes members of the wider community, often outside the group's regular meeting time and place. They can provide a way for children to meet, inspire, and be inspired by others in the congregation and strengthen multigenerational bonds.

Let the ideas offered in each session stimulate you to devise short- or long-term Faith in Action projects to reinforce and implement session themes for the children in your group. Take advantage of the expertise and interests of members of your congregation, opportunities for service and education in your community, and the Internet. Most Faith in Action activities will require you to make arrangements in advance. As you begin planning a Faith in Action project, you may find it useful to develop a materials checklist, a list of preparation steps, and a detailed activity description, as we have done for the core and alternate activities in this program.

Taking It Home: This section helps parents engage with and extend their children's religious education experiences. Taking It Home may include games, conversation topics, ideas for incorporating Unitarian Universalist rituals into the home, or resources families can use to further explore themes or stories. Customize Taking It Home to reflect the actual activities you have

included in each session. Copy it for all the children to bring home, or send it as a group email.

Alternate Activities: You can substitute an alternate activity for a core session activity or add it to the session. Some alternate activities are simpler versions of a core activity; some require more time than a core activity; some are particularly suited to be inclusive of children with developmental or ability differences. Materials, preparation, and descriptions for alternate activities appear in the same format as they do in Openings, Closings, and Action activities.

Leader Reflection and Planning: Find guide questions to help co-leaders reflect immediately after the session.

Stories, Handouts and Leader Resources: Following any Alternate Activities, you will find the stories and other resources you will need to lead every element of the session:

- The full text of the session's central story and any other stories you will need for session activities
- Any pages you need to print out and copy for participants to use in the session (handouts)
- Any additional materials you need to plan, prepare for, and lead the session activities. These might include detailed craft or game instructions, a script for a skit, or other materials essential to leading a session.

Find Out More: Scan this section before leading a session for relevant books, DVDs, websites; audio links to music that could enhance the session; and background such as biographical information about historical or contemporary figures mentioned in the session.

LEADER GUIDELINES

It is expected you will adapt sessions to fit your resources, time constraints, and particular group of children. However, take care to preserve the intent of a session and its purpose in the overall program.

Read each session ahead of time, several days before leading it. Getting a feel, doing extra research where you feel necessary or curiosity strikes, and following your interests will only make the sessions better.

Preparing with co-leaders is very important. Set up the meeting room, ensure the materials and equipment you need are ready, and be very familiar with the session. Do the Spiritual Preparation exercise together or take a moment before children arrive to share briefly about your expectations for the session.

Keep in mind, and share with co-leaders, all you know about particular children's family situations and personal sensitivities, and how these might intersect with the day's topics. For example, if a child's family is facing homelessness and the story for the day centers on a UU community's actions to combat homelessness, both you and the child may encounter an unintended learning experience. Be ready. Communicating with the other leaders on your team in an evaluative way is absolutely necessary.

IMPLEMENTATION

These sessions can be used at any time of year. It is recommended they be used in sequence. The order of sessions and the order of activities within each session have been designed to help participants with diverse backgrounds and learning styles accumulate and deepen their learning in community. Because the curriculum uses three-session blocks to examine each theme, significantly changing the order of the sessions may create confusion.

The Session-at-a-Glance section presents core activities for a one-hour session. Be aware of time and the flow of the session and the program, so you can be flexible when a "teachable moment" appears or when you feel the need to tailor your plan to suit where the group is. For example, if children seem reluctant to share their thoughts in the group, you might expand the games or artistic activities, at first, and gradually increase time for sharing insights as sessions proceed. To build a sense of community that will draw children into the program, choose and tailor the activities to meet children's need for challenge, physical activity, and enjoyable moments. If the children do not want to come, there will be no opportunity for teachable moments.

When scheduling this program, leave room for your congregational traditions around holidays. Being part of the life of the congregation is as important for children as attending religious education sessions with their peers. Don't miss multigenerational services, such as Flower Communion. You may wish to schedule non-curriculum-based meetings at times such as winter holidays, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King Day or Valentine's Day.

Love Connects Us, is, in essence, about the ways that we live our covenant as a faith community. Opportunities for your group to be in active relationship with the rest of your UU community are strongly supportive of this overarching theme.

BEFORE YOU START

This chart provides a snapshot of Love Connects Us for long-range planning. In Session 1, find guidance for

planning and displaying the Rainbow Wall Hanging which the group will use each time they meet.

In most sessions, during the Opening, the children attach heart-, hand-, peace sign-, question mark-, or bucket-shaped ornaments to the Rainbow Wall Hanging. The Welcoming and Entering activities for each of these

sessions explain how to make templates and set out materials so early-arriving children can cut out ornament shapes. If you do not expect the children will make enough ornaments before the session for every child to have one during the Opening, cut the ornaments yourself.

Session	Central Story	Rainbow Wall Hanging	Faith in Action
1 A Covenant is a Promise	Noah and the Rainbow Covenant	Assemble a Rainbow Wall Hanging to use throughout the program	Banner of Congregational Covenant
2 A Heritage of Love	Judith Sargent Murray: Turn Around	Attach heart-shaped ornaments and/or friendship bracelets	Helping a Younger Religious Education Group
3 Love is the Spirit of This Church	The Mish-Mash Heart	Attach heart-shaped ornaments and/or "mish-mash" hearts	Multigenerational Mish-Mash Hearts
4 Love Your Neighbor as Yourself	Crossing the Finish Line Together	Attach heart-shaped ornaments and/or affirmation badges	Making Greeting Cards
5 Meeting People Where They Live	Joseph Tuckerman's Revolution	Attach hand-shaped ornaments and/or sailor knots	Direct Service at a Shelter or Other Program
6 The More We Get Together	The Ants and the Grasshopper	Attach hand-shaped ornaments and/or straw loom bookmarks	Volunteer in Service to the Congregation
7 One Person Makes a Difference	One Person Makes a Difference: Craig Keilburger and Free the Children	Attach hand-shaped ornaments and/or fringed fabric rugs	Hold Benefit for Free the Children
8 Great Minds Think Alike	Great Minds Think Alike	Attach peace sign ornaments	Hold Peace Vigil
9 Kindness is the Key	The Christmas Truce	Peace sign ornaments and/or (optional) paper peace cranes	Congregational Peace Crane Mobile
10 Peace Inside	Serenity, Courage and Wisdom	Attach peace sign ornaments and/or knotted beads	Teach Centering Exercises
11 Science and Religion	Discovering Truth Through Science and Religion	Attach question mark ornaments	Planting a Tree
12 Seeing Truth/True Seeing	Hard Truths	Attach question mark ornaments and/or God's Eyes (made out of craft sticks)	Political Issues Research
13 A Matter of Perspective	Filling the House	Attach cut-out of an optical illusion	Video Project
14 Our Heritage's Calling	The Woman Who Wouldn't Give Up	Attach bucket ornaments	Heeding our Calling to Help Others
15 All Work Together	No More Turning Away	Attach bucket ornaments	Create "Box House" with Information on Homelessness
16 We Are Active Creators of Our Faith	The Treehouse Rules	Children cut and remove a piece of the Rainbow Wall Hanging	Covenant Quilt or Banner

PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

There are seven Principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalism (UU) draws from many Sources:

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

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

RESOURCES

[Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook](#) (at

www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=706) by Tracey L. Hurd (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005)

[The Gift of Faith](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=10): *Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children* by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar, second edition (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003)

[Welcoming Children with Special Needs](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=756): *A Guidebook for Faith Communities* by Sally Patton (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004)

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2005)

The Outrageous Outdoor Games Book by Bob Greyson (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, Inc., 2001) includes more than 100 group projects, games and activities. These include activities for multiple intelligences and a variety of learning styles. All games are easy to play, require little or no preparation, are adaptable to a variety of situations and skill levels, and provide step-by-step instructions.

Junkyard Sports by Bernie DeKoven (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 2005) offers 75 innovative, creative demonstration games that foster leadership, compassion and cooperation as participants adapt games to suit a wide range of ages and abilities. Games are based on six traditional team sports including soccer, baseball and volleyball yet use nontraditional approaches.

The Arts and Spirituality

Tapestry of Faith offers two multi-chapter guidance resources online. [Spirituality and the Arts in Children's Programming](#) (at www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/spiritualityand/index.shtml) is by Dr. Nita Penfold, creator of the Spirit Play program. [Making Music Live](#) (at www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/makingmusic/index.shtml), by Nick Page, provides guidance for incorporating music into religious education, including how to teach songs even if you are not a musician.

Scribble Art: Independent Creative Art Experiences for Children by Mary Ann F. Kohl, 2nd revised edition (Bellingham, WA: Bright Ring Publishing, 1994) includes many media: drawing, painting, assemblage, printmaking, collage, sculpture and crafts. It contains open-ended projects that are suitable for almost any age. Each page presents one project and is illustrated with line drawings. Each project is coded to show at a

glance how much time and preparation are needed and

what age or experience levels are appropriate.

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@uua.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:

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

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation or group:

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

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

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

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

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

SESSION 1: A COVENANT IS A PROMISE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

*Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.*

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

*And to help one another. — James Vila Blake
(1842-1925), Unitarian minister*

One of the central tasks of religious life is the creation of beloved community: a group of people joined together by shared commitment to one another and to values which define the group.

In this session the biblical story of Noah highlights the idea of a covenant—a sacred promise. Participants create a wall hanging to display the rainbow sign which God gives in the Noah story as an emblem of this first covenant. This rainbow wall hanging will serve as the basis for an introductory activity to be used throughout this curriculum.

In addition to the covenant between God and Noah, this session introduces Unitarian James Vila Blake's covenant, "Love is the spirit of this church, and service its law. This is our great covenant: To dwell together in peace, To seek the truth in love, And to help one another." This covenant articulates the essence of what it means to gather in Unitarian Universalist community, and will serve as the structure underlying subsequent sessions.

With participants creating the knotted wall hanging and playing a human knots game, this session introduces knots and tying together as metaphors which unify this curriculum.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the concept of religious community as people joined together by covenant
- Draw from the Jewish and Christian sources of our living tradition as the root of our concept of covenant
- Use the Blake covenant, used in many Unitarian Universalist congregations, to exemplify what it means to be a covenanted Unitarian Universalist community

- Invite participants to reflect on what covenant means within this group.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Build community by cooperatively solving a puzzle in a human knots game
- Learn about the concept of covenant through the ancient Noah story
- Create a communal art project, the rainbow wall hanging
- Explore what covenant might mean to their particular group
- Understand our Unitarian Universalist Principles as a statement of covenant.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Human Knots Game	7
Activity 2: Story — Noah and the Rainbow Covenant	15
Activity 3: Rainbow Wall Hanging	15
Activity 4: Group Covenant	13
Faith in Action: Banner of Congregational Covenant	35
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Ark Animals Game	15
Alternate Activity 2: Sharing Joys and Concerns	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- Where do you find community in your life? What makes a group feel like beloved community rather than simply a gathering of people?

- What covenants have you made in your life?
With family? With friends? With your faith home?
- What actions or activities tie you together with those you care about? What makes community happen?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Read aloud the Blake covenant.

This welcoming ritual honors both the coming together of this community and the other communities to which the participants belong. Say:

All of us in this room belong to this community, even if it our first time here. But who we are and what we bring into the room with us includes the other communities we belong to. We will begin our time in community today with each person giving their name and then saying the name of another community they belong to. For instance, someone might say "My name is Jake and I belong to 4-H" or "My name is Reba and I belong to the Bat Rays swim team." or "My name is LaShandra and I'm a member of Ms. Chang's 4th grade class." You can think of your neighborhood, or even your family as a community.

Invite a volunteer to start, or model by going first. Proceed around the circle. Allow anyone who does not wish to participate to pass.

If your chalice contains an actual candle flame, gather around the chalice and blow it out together.

Including All Participants

If you know a child in the group is extremely uncomfortable speaking in front of the group you may wish to do the opening ritual "popcorn" style, with children self-selecting who will go next, rather than going around the circle, so that no one is put in the position of having to speak or pass.

ACTIVITY 1: HUMAN KNOTS GAME (7 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have an open space large enough for all participants to stand in a circle with their arms outstretched.

Description of Activity

Have children stand in a very close circle, shoulder to shoulder. Then invite them to take the hands of two others in the circle. Participants may take hands across the circle or near their position, but may not hold both hands of the same person. When everyone is holding the hands of different people, ask the participants to continue holding hands while they untangle the knot, so that everyone ends up standing in a simple circle again. Participants may end up facing into or out of the circle, but should not drop hands at any point. Some knots, however, may not be possible to resolve completely. You may wish to play the game more than once, as time allows.

After finishing the game explain in the course of this curriculum the group will do many different activities which involve knots, as a way of exploring how we are all tied together. In the game, did it feel uncomfortable to have to stay connected to two other people? Does staying connected make things more complicated? How? What would the game be like if players simply dropped hands?

Including All Participants

A child who has mobility or balance issues can participate by sitting in a chair or wheelchair and having other children maneuver around them. This ritual does involve close physical contact, and children who are uncomfortable being touched may wish to opt out.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — NOAH AND THE RAINBOW COVENANT (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Noah and the Rainbow Covenant](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to share it with the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the children share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable. You may say:

This story is the first instance in the Bible of the idea of a covenant, a sacred promise. Later in the Hebrew scriptures, God makes a covenant with other people, including Abraham and Moses, and people make covenants with each other. The covenant in this story is special not only because it is the first, but also because it is between God and all of creation.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- What makes a covenant different from a set of rules or a promise? (You may suggest that a covenant involves big ideas or high ideals, and that it is a two-way commitment, not just a rule or promise that goes one way.)
- Can you think of modern ways people make covenants? (Some possibilities might include marriage, joining an organization or club such as Scouts, playing in a band or on a team, joining the congregation, etc.)
- Have you ever made a covenant?
- Why might a covenant be important?

ACTIVITY 3: RAINBOW WALL HANGING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- For Rainbow Wall Hanging:
 - Wide ribbon in each of the colors of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet); or, thick yarn in all seven colors
 - Scissors, including left-handed scissors
 - Yardstick or measuring tape
 - Two sticks or dowels approximately three feet long
 - A rope for hanging the finished piece
 - Optional: Beads, shells with holes through them, and other decorative items

Preparation for Activity

- Read the Description of Activity so you understand what materials will work best for the rainbow wall hanging in your meeting space, for your program. Think about how wide and long you want a wall hanging to be, to make sure you obtain adequate supplies. Consider how many sessions of the program you will do; in each session, participants tie items to the hanging. Identify a place to display the wall hanging for the duration of this program—ideally, a location in your meeting space that is both easy to see and easy to reach. Obtain permission and arrange to have someone help you affix the hanging, if needed.
- Set out materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

This activity introduces the metaphor of knots that unifies this curriculum. The children work cooperatively to create an art object which will evolve as they add items to it in subsequent sessions.

Tell the group that together they will make a "rainbow sign," a rainbow wall hanging for the group to use throughout this program. Ask if any know what makes a rainbow. Affirm that the colors we see in a rainbow are light made visible. In these words or your own, say:

The spectrum of colors in a rainbow is really just a set of different reflections of the same light. Communities, such as our Unitarian Universalist congregation, sometimes use a rainbow as a symbol that we belong together. A rainbow says

"We are connected. We share the same humanity, although we may look different from one another." Likewise, in our Love Connects Us sessions we will discover different ways the individuals in this group belong together, ways we are tied together in our beloved community.

Show them the ribbon and a dowel. Explain that they will:

1. Cut lengths of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet ribbon.
2. Arrange the lengths of ribbon in clusters by color.
3. Tie the ribbons to the dowel so they hang in a rainbow pattern.

Indicate where the finished product will hang. Allow the group to decide how many strands of each color they will use. Suggest they cut lengths of ribbon that are double the desired length of the wall hanging, so they can drape these over one stick or dowel so the two ends hang evenly, below. Explain that after all the ribbon is hung, they will tie the bottom ends of ribbon to the other dowel.

Now assign tasks. Invite a volunteer to use a yardstick or measuring tape to determine how long each strand should be (double the desired length). Have some participants cut the ribbon. Others can arrange the strands in color groups and tie strands to the dowel using a square knot.

If you wish, children can tie beads or other decorative items to the ends of the ribbon. However, leave the middle open, as you will use it in future sessions.

Leave room along the dowel to tie two ends of a rope by which you can hang the finished piece. Optional: Instead of a rope, have children make a braid using multiple colors of ribbon.

Hang the finished art work in your meeting space now or sometime before the next meeting.

Including All Participants

Children who lack the dexterity to measure, cut, or tie ribbon can participate by holding the dowel while others tie ribbon to it.

ACTIVITY 4: GROUP COVENANT (13 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers and tape
- Newsprint with words of James Vila Blake's covenant (see Opening)

- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist Principles

Preparation for Activity

- Post the newsprint with the Blake covenant, if it has been moved.
- Post a sheet of blank newsprint next to it.

Description of Activity

This activity explores the Blake covenant which is used throughout the program and invites participants to consider what covenant means for their group. Say, in these words or your own:

In the Noah story, God makes a covenant with all of creation that they should create more life, and God will preserve it by never causing another great flood. That idea of covenant, of an agreement, has come down to us across the centuries as a way to describe the big commitments that people make. For instance, our UU Principles begin: "We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, COVENANT to affirm and promote...

Invite children to name any of the Unitarian Universalist Principles they can remember. Start them off with "the inherent worth and dignity of every individual;" affirm contributions. Then say:

In 1894, a man named James Vila Blake created the covenant statement that we read as our chalice-lighting earlier today. He wanted his congregation, the Unitarian Church of Evanston, Illinois, to have a way of saying why they came together, and what they were committing to do together as a faith community.

Indicate the newsprint where you have posted the Blake covenant. Ask participants to identify key words that define the purposes and commitments of this covenant statement. Then invite children to suggest words or phrases that could be part of a covenant statement for your group.

Point out that they may have gone through a process of creating classroom rules before, but a covenant statement is different. You might say:

Class rules often focus on what is forbidden, such as hitting, or interrupting. But a covenant centers on what the community is for, and what commitments the members of the community make to each other. This is a very important point and the crux of what a covenant is.

As participants make suggestions, write them on newsprint.

When the list seems complete, ask the group whether they are prepared to covenant with each other, or if there are elements of the statement they are not prepared to commit to. Adjust the statement as necessary. When you have a statement that everyone is prepared to commit to, have the group read the statement aloud together as their covenant.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Say in your own words:

The session is almost over and we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space.

Ask everyone to first clean up their own area and the materials they were using, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

When clean-up is done, bring the group back to the circle. Ask them to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together by..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about what ties us together. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out, and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: BANNER OF CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A large roll of blank paper, and markers and tape; or, alternatively, a few yards of plain fabric, and fabric paint or permanent markers
- Pencils

- Newspaper to protect floor or work tables
- A copy of your congregation's covenant

Preparation for Activity

- Print out your congregation's covenant on newsprint, and post. If the covenant is very long, you may wish to rephrase each item to state its essence succinctly.
- If you are using permanent markers or paint, spread newspaper to protect the working surface.
- Tape down a suitable length of roll paper (or fabric) so it will stay in place while children work with it.
- Work with your religious educator, building and grounds committee, or others to determine a public location where your finished banner can hang.

Description of Activity

Many congregations have their own covenant statement. It may be one created by the congregation or a version of a traditional statement such as the Blake covenant. This activity gives participants the chance to engage with their own congregation's covenant, and results in a display that will encourage members of all ages to pay attention to the purpose and commitments shared by the faith community.

Explain to the group that you will create a large banner to display your congregation's covenant. Display the congregational covenant on newsprint and (if it is not too long) read it aloud. Determine who will write what part on the banner. Encourage participants to sketch out in pencil what they will write, and to try to fill the space evenly. While some children write the words on the banner, others can decorate with pictures or symbols to represent the words of the covenant.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What connections did we make with the children? What connections did the children make with each other? How was this evident? How could we improve a sense of community within this group?

Approach your director of religious education for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake
(1842-1925), Unitarian minister

IN TODAY'S SESSION... the children heard the story of Noah, and the covenant that God makes with creation following the flood. We made a rainbow wall hanging, a reminder of the rainbow sign that God gave to Noah, and we talked about what a covenant might mean for our own group. Our activities emphasized cooperation and connection.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... what covenant means. How is a covenant the same as or different than a promise? Who makes covenants? Do you have any family covenants? Has your family done a baby or child dedication ceremony which involved a covenant on the part of the parents or the congregational community?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Create a covenant statement for your family. What are your highest goals as a family? What commitments do you make to one another? How are the commitments which parents make to a family different from those the children make? How are they the same?

A Family Ritual. At bedtime, offer your child a special promise, such as "I promise I will listen to you," or "I promise to honor your creativity." Or, agree on a ritual way to seal agreements you make in daily life ("I'll try not to yell if you'll try not to yell.") A hug makes a good ritual of commitment, but you may wish to choose an action that is unique to your family and serves as a reminder of the special nature of a covenant.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: ARK ANIMALS GAME (15 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have an open strip of space across the length of the room.

Description of Activity

This activity requires cooperation, compromise, and creative communication. Divide the group into pairs, and

choose a pair to go first. (If you have an odd number of children, a leader can pair up with a child.) Instruct the pair of children that they will portray a pair of animals making their way to the ark. They must both portray the same kind of animal, and the group will guess what kind of animal they are. The trick is that before they proceed across the room as their animal they must decide jointly what the animal will be. And they must make that choice without talking, and use no more than two minutes to figure out what their joint animal will be.

When the game is complete, ask what techniques they found useful for coming to agreement without talking. Do you still need to listen even if no one is talking?

Including All Participants

Be ready to adapt the rules of this game and to pair children thoughtfully, to make sure the game is manageable and meaningful for any child with vision or mobility challenges.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn
- Optional: Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Description of Activity

In addition to building community through sharing information about important events in their lives, this version of sharing joys and concerns uses a ritual activity based on the metaphor of knots, allowing children to experience being literally "tied together."

Gather participants in a seated circle. Say:

We are all tied together by the bonds of community. What affects any one of us affects us all. We take time now to share our greatest joys and deepest concerns, events from the past week that we hold in our hearts.

Invite a volunteer to go first, and give them the ball of yarn. Ask them to share their joy or concern and then, holding the end of the yarn, throw the ball of yarn to another child in the circle. This child may either share a joy or concern or choose to pass, but in either case they keep hold of the strand of yarn as they throw the ball of yarn to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a chance to share or pass, and the whole group is connected by a web of yarn.

At the end of the sharing you may invite participants to take turns winding the yarn back onto the ball. Or, pass

around scissors and invite the children to cut a short piece of the yarn and tie it around their wrist as a sign of the covenant of caring which the group shares.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 1: STORY: NOAH AND THE RAINBOW COVENANT

Perhaps you've heard the story of Noah and the flood, from Hebrew scripture, or the Bible. It goes something like this:

Did you ever make such a mess of your homework that you just got crazy mad and frustrated and wanted to crumple the whole thing up and throw it away? That's how God was feeling, looking around at the world. "You pour your heart and soul into making this wonderful world, full of people and animals and plants—and if you think it's easy, try getting the stripes on a zebra just right—all that effort and for what? A year or two or 1,500 go by, and the whole thing is a mess. People! What was I thinking? They're rotten to the core! They lie, they cheat, they murder, they steal—there's not a decent one in the whole bunch! Dang it all, I should just start over. Obliterate the whole mess and start from scratch. Yep, I think that's just what I'll do."

God took a good look around to make sure that there were not, in fact, any decent people about to be destroyed. And it turned out that God found one good, kind, clean-living family, the family of a man named Noah. And so God went to Noah and said: "This world is just plain no good, and I'm planning on getting rid of all of the people, except you and your family. So this is what you have to do: Build a really big boat, big enough for not only you and your family, but also a pair of every kind of animal there is. I'll give you time, but you better get on it, because I'm going to rain this whole place out, and anyone who isn't on that boat is going to drown."

I imagine Noah had a hard time believing his ears, but he gathered up his family and told them what he'd heard. They, no doubt, had a hard time believing Noah, but they trusted him, and so some of the family set about building the boat, called an ark, while others went and gathered up animals. Of course, everybody else thought Noah was just plain nuts for building this ginormous boat and filling it with animals, but Noah and his family just kept right on working.

And eventually the rain came. It rained and rained and rained, like no rain you ever saw. It was as if the sky was full of millions of fire hydrants, all opened at once. And the water got higher and higher and covered the land, and the giant boat, full of animals and Noah's family, gently rose with the water. For days and days and nights and nights the rain went on until, finally, it just stopped.

The people ran to the windows of the ark and were astonished to see blue sky. And blue water. And nothing else. Just water and sky. There was nowhere to go and nothing to do, so they waited. And waited.

Finally, Noah sent a raven out to fly around and look for land, but it came back tired, for there was nowhere to rest. Noah waited a week. Then he sent out a dove to fly around and look for land, but it just came back tired, too. So he brought the dove back in, waited another week, and sent it out again. This time the dove came back with a twig from an olive tree in its beak—it had found land! Eventually the water backed off enough for Noah to see the ark had come to rest on the top of a mountain, and there was land around them. Maybe not dry land—wet and mushy land—but land, all the same. Finally, finally, the people and the animals were able to leave the crowded, smelly ark and touch the earth. They were all overcome with gladness, and Noah made an altar to thank God for bringing them to safety.

"Welcome home," said God. "I will make a deal with you, a promise—a covenant. My covenant is with all the beings of the earth, not just the people. You go forth and populate the earth and fill it again with all your kind. And I promise never to flood the earth again. And as a sign of my covenant with you I will put a rainbow in the clouds. And every time you see a rainbow it will remind you of our covenant to create and preserve life."

FIND OUT MORE

James Vila Blake

The website of the Unitarian Church in Quincy, Illinois, where Blake served as minister from 1877 to 1884, offers this information about him:

A man of varied talents and of unusual energy and activity. He was a hymn lyricist and a [poet](#) (at www.archive.org/details/jamesvilablakeas00hughrich) with several volumes of poetry to his credit and several volumes of sermons. In 1896, he was mentioned briefly in this article from the [New York Times](#) (at query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9F0CE4D7133BEE33A25755C2A9669D94679ED7CF). While he was minister at Evanston, Illinois [Church of All Souls], he penned the affirmation that we say during every service, and which has been adapted by many other Unitarian Congregations: "[Love is the spirit](#)

[of this church...](#)" (at uuquincy.org/uuq/ministry.shtml#affirmation)

Noah

A wide range of articles, texts, and artwork related to the story of Noah's Ark is available at [Noah's Ark on the Web](#) (at www.isidore-of-seville.com/noah-ark/index.html).

Read the [English Standard Version of the Noah story](#) (at www.biblestudytools.com/esv/genesis/6.html), through God's covenant with Noah, in [Genesis 6-9](#) (at www.biblestudytools.com/esv/genesis/6.html), on the Bible Study Tools website.

To read an October, 2008 sermon on the topic of covenant by Unitarian Universalist minister Erika Hewett at the Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Goleta (California), click [here](#) (at www.liveoakgoleta.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,20/Itemid,43/) and scroll down to find "Lost on the Freeway: Thoughts on Covenant and Asking for Directions."

SESSION 2: A HERITAGE OF LOVE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. — Christian scripture, 1 John 4:16

Our beloved communities are places where people are tied together through the spirit of love. This heritage comes to us from the ideas of liberal Christians who rejected the concept of an angry, vengeful God in favor of a loving God who would not torture "his children" by sending them to a place of everlasting torment but, after death, would welcome them into his fold like a loving parent.

Through the story of Judith Sargent Murray and her quest to teach children love, not fear, participants discover how the idea of God as love changed everything: This new philosophy shaped the Universalist tradition of love which would give rise to the notion of the inherent worth and dignity of all people and a shared emphasis on encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. In short, this heritage of love from our Universalist roots shapes our living tradition even today as our communities of faith support one another in love and friendship; these are the primary ties which hold us together.

Background information: Judith Sargent Murray and the Spirit of Love

When John Murray first arrived in the American colonies of New England, he found people more than willing to accept the message of a loving and forgiving God. Making a swift departure from the oppressive teachings of Calvinism which preached salvation only through God's grace, John Murray and Universalism offered a new perspective—universal salvation—which was available to all humankind through God's love. This emphasis upon salvation through love had people rethinking the nature of the Divine and preachers considering how to preach this message from the pulpit.

Judith Sargent was among the first to seek a way to teach these ideas to children. In this changing religious environment, she found herself working with children of the Universalist congregation in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where John Murray served as minister. She discovered the need for a new religious catechism, as existing materials for children ran contrary to Universalism. Judith was an educated woman and accomplished writer (even in an era when women were expected solely to serve their husbands as wife and mother); she was the perfect person to create such

important materials. After the death of her first husband, Judith Sargent married John Murray, cementing an important partnership in the articulation and development of American Universalism.

GOALS

This session will:

- Through a story about Judith Sargent Murray, introduce the Universalist heritage of love which comes to us from our Universalist roots and lift up an early feminist writer from our faith tradition
- Demonstrate how an emphasis on love creates an environment of acceptance and fosters cooperation
- Provide experiences where participants act to fulfill our third Principle, "encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations."

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn about early Universalism in colonial America and about Judith Sargent Murray
- Explore ways our heritage of love is alive in our Unitarian Universalist congregations today
- Create a symbol of the heritage of love which ties us together by making a friendship bracelet
- Reflect on how love can be the spirit of a congregation
- Experience working together cooperatively through games.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	15
Activity 1: Turning Circle Inside-Out	10
Activity 2: Story — Judith Sargent Murray: Turn Around	15
Activity 3: Making Friendship Bracelets	15
Faith in Action: Helping a Younger Religious Education Group	

Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Spirit of Love Collage	15
Alternate Activity 2: Three Puzzles	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, think back to a time when you felt a strong sense of warm, supportive and perhaps even unconditional, love. Consider how this felt, to be held in love and encouraged to just be who you are—no strings attached. Was this time during your childhood?

Was it part of a special friendship you experienced? Was it in relationship with another adult? In a beloved faith community? You may wish to close your eyes and think about this time in your life when you felt true love surround you, and dwell in it for a while. Then open your eyes and consider:

- What was it like to feel surrounded by love? Where did this love come from?
- What does it mean to grow up with a heritage of love? How might this affect a person's life?
- How can we help children internalize this notion of a heritage of love and what difference might it make for the shaping of their identities?

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in colors of red, pink, and orange
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Heart shaped cookie cutters or card stock to make heart-shaped templates

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sample heart hanging: Cut a heart shape out of card stock, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the heart can be hung.
- Obtain heart-shaped cookie cutters. Or, create a few templates by drawing hearts on card stock and cutting them out so participants can trace this shape to create ornaments.
- Set out materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to use the cookie cutters or templates to trace heart shapes onto card stock. Encourage them to cut out the heart shapes, punch a hole in the top of the heart, and pass a piece of yarn through the hole to create a heart-shaped ornament. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the group wall hanging they created in Session 1.

Including All Participants

If some participants have difficulty with small motor control and cannot effectively manipulate scissors, encourage them to choose card stock colors for others to cut into heart shapes, or invite them to hold cookie cutters or templates in place for another child to trace.

OPENING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Heart ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)

- Pens, pencils, or markers

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:
Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another. — James Vila Blake
- Set heart-shaped ornaments, and pens, pencils, and markers by the chalice. If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants create heart-shaped ornaments), make some in advance and set them by the chalice. Make one for each participant, plus a few extra.

Description of Activity

The opening activity brings participants together for a chalice-lighting ritual which honors the coming together of this community in the spirit of love, and reintroduces the Blake covenant.

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Suggest participants begin thinking about what is meant by "spirit of love." Continue by saying something like:

We started our session by saying the covenant created by the Unitarian James Vila Blake. It starts with the words, "Love is the spirit of this church." Today we will explore the idea as love as the spirit which ties us together in our community. Let's consider ways we can show love for another person.

Ask a volunteer to start, and invite them to select a heart ornament, share verbally an example of how someone might show love, and briefly write the words or a symbol for the words on the heart ornament. Or, model this by selecting a heart ornament yourself. Allow anyone who would like to write on an ornament to do so, whether they choose to share verbally or not. Remind the participants that anyone who does not wish to participate may pass.

Ask participants to attach their finished heart ornaments to the group wall hanging. Show them how to tie the yarn which is looped through the ornament onto the wall hanging.

After everyone who wants to write on a heart ornament and attach it to the wall hanging has had a chance to do so, if your chalice contains an actual candle flame, gather around the chalice and blow it out together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who are unable to write on a heart ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways we show love to another person. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time; they can also pass if they choose.

ACTIVITY 1: TURNING CIRCLE INSIDE-OUT (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have an open space large enough for all participants to stand in a circle with their arms outstretched.

Description of Activity

Have participants stand in a circle, facing inward and holding the hands of the participants on either side of them. Invite them to close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so. Challenge the group to "turn the circle inside out" so everyone is facing in the opposite direction (the outside of the circle), without letting go of anyone's hands. Tell the group they will need to work together cooperatively to accomplish this task.

Give the group a few minutes to discover the solution: Two people need to raise their hands in the air and the rest of the group follows through their "opening" like a train, which will turn everyone around to face the other direction.

After the group has solved the puzzle, encourage them to reflect on the experience with questions such as:

- How did you finally figure out the solution for this activity?
- Did everyone work together cooperatively, or were individuals trying to solve the problem on their own?
- If you closed your eyes, how did it feel to have your eyes closed during this process?

- Did you have to let go of anything in order to make this happen such as your skepticism, anxiety, or a wish to solve it yourself?

Including All Participants

Children with balance or mobility issues could participate by sitting in a chair or wheelchair and having other children maneuver around them. This game does involve close physical contact, and children who are uncomfortable being touched may wish to opt out.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — JUDITH SARGENT MURRAY: TURN AROUND (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Judith Sargent Murray: Turn Around](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times so you are comfortable telling it to the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the children share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional: Gather background information about Judith Sargent Murray. See this session's Introduction and resources provided under Find Out More.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the group the story.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable. If you wish, provide some background information you have learned about Judith Sargent Murray. Sum up the recap with words such as these:

This story reveals the experience of many early Universalists who were, in many ways, forging a new path. Their theology of a loving and forgiving God was quite different from what was taught in most churches of the time. So, they had to start from scratch when to create materials for teaching children in Sunday school. They had to break away from how things were done before, to create a new heritage of love which has now been passed down to us.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- What does the word "heritage" mean to you?
- How is this spirit of love alive in our Unitarian Universalist congregations today?
- Does anyone know what salvation is? (Affirm appropriate answers: your soul going to Heaven; your soul achieving grace. A contemporary Unitarian Universalist understanding of salvation is a feeling of being saved from something you need to be saved from, such as guilt, or fear.) How did Universalists think differently about salvation than the predominant Christian religion of the time? (Universalists believed in universal salvation or that everyone would be saved whereas Calvinism taught that only a select few, designated by God, would be saved by God's grace).
- What is meant by "catechism?" (Affirm or explain: a summary of religious doctrine traditionally used in Christian religious teaching based on Christian scripture. A catechism takes the form of questions and answers to teach the "right" answers.)
- How can we take this heritage of love and build on it for the children in the younger religious education groups, who will someday sit where we are sitting now? How would you teach them?

ACTIVITY 3: MAKING FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Embroidery floss or hemp cord in a variety of colors, masking tape, and scissors
- Chairs, tables, or other sturdy objects to which strands of floss or cord can be taped
- Timepiece (minutes)
- A bell or chime
- Optional: Beads, shells, or other decorative items with small holes in them

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain floss or cord. Cut strands to about 25 inches long—enough to give each participant three, different color strands.
- Decide in advance what you will do with the finished friendship bracelets. You might like to attach one, or a few, to the group's wall hanging, but first, choose how you will distribute them so each individual can own one of the bracelets the

group has made. For example, you might assign each bracelet to the person who started it or the person who completed it, or invite participants to select the ones they want. Then, be ready to seek volunteers to tie their bracelets to the wall hanging during the Closing (or, make a few extra bracelets for this purpose).

- Optional: Set out decorative items where all participants will be able to reach them.

Description of Activity

This activity provides a symbolic way to build on our heritage of love by sharing its meaning to us with others.

Gather participants at work tables, with the group forming a circle, if possible. Give each participant three, different color strands of embroidery floss or hemp cord. Help them knot each set of three strands together at one end and tape the knotted end to a chair or table so they can pull it gently to braid the strands.

Demonstrate as needed how to braid the three strands together. Indicate any decorative items with holes in them you may have brought, and explain how you would like participants to braid them into their bracelets.

If you plan to hang some or all of the bracelets on the group's wall hanging, tell participants before they begin braiding. Give them a heads-up if you will be seeking some volunteers to contribute bracelets rather than take them home.

Encourage participants to start braiding their bracelets. After two minutes, ring the bell or chime and tell them loudly to "freeze." Invite participants to reach for the next person's bracelet on the right with one hand while holding their own bracelet together with their other. Say "switch" and tell all participants to let go of the bracelet they had just been braiding, take the new one in their hands, and start braiding it. After two more minutes, ring the bell or chime again and tell them loudly to "freeze." This time, they will probably know what to do, but coach them again on how to move on to the next bracelet. Continue the process of braiding, freezing, switching, and braiding, either until the bracelets are completed or your time for this activity has nearly run out.

Take a moment to encourage reflection on the activity, using these questions:

- How did it feel to switch and work on bracelets other participants had started?
- Were you able to easily freeze, switch, and begin working on the next bracelet? Or did you have strong feelings of not wanting to stop what you were doing, not wanting to hand it to someone else, not wanting to change someone

else's braid, or another feeling that made it hard to switch?

- How did the way others had begun braiding dictate how you continued work on a bracelet? Did you follow the same style of knotting, or did you add your own?

Say in your own words:

The session is almost over and we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space.

Ask everyone to first clean up their own area and the materials they were using, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

As part of clean-up, the friendship bracelets will need to be tied off with a final square knot (if they are complete) or simply removed from the objects to which they were taped.

You might give each bracelet to whomever started it or to the person who completed it. Or, you can hold them up and pass them out "auction-style," by asking participants to raise their hand if they want the one you are holding. Make sure everyone who wants to take one home gets one.

If you plan to hang some or all of the bracelets on the group wall hanging, ask for volunteers if needed to contribute and hang their bracelets. Or, you may prefer to wait and do this during the Closing.

Including All Participants

Children who lack the dexterity to braid the floss can hold a bracelet or two steady for other participants (rather than having the braider use tape). If some children have mobility issues, the switching may happen more slowly than it would otherwise. If it will be simpler or save time, participants can shift by scuttling their chairs over to the next station each time they freeze and switch.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home
- Optional: Friendship bracelets made in Activity 3

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Bring the group to the circle. If you have not yet done so, invite one or more volunteers to attach friendship bracelets to the group's wall hanging.

When all are back together in the circle, ask participants to cross their arms in front of their body and then take the hands of the people on either side of them. Say "We are tied together by the spirit of love when we ..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about what ties us together in the spirit of love. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out, and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: HELPING A YOUNGER RELIGIOUS EDUCATION GROUP

Materials for Activity

- Embroidery floss or hemp cord in a variety of colors, masking tape, and scissors
- Chairs, tables, or other sturdy objects to which strands can be taped
- Optional: Beads, shells, or other decorative items with small holes in them

Preparation for Activity

- With your religious educator, arrange for participants to visit another religious education group to show them how to create friendship bracelets. Confirm the plan, along with the date and time, with leaders of the other religious education group. If the activity will take place outside the regular religious education time, notify parents of both groups' participants about the date, time, and place.
- Select pairs of participants to visit the religious education group together.

Description of Activity

Our heritage of love feeds our living tradition, in which we continually make new meaning and pass our heritage on to others. One way participants can put their faith in action and actively share the heritage of love is

to spend a time with a religious education group that includes younger participants. For example, they might assist with craft projects, games, or storytelling. For this Faith in Action project, arrange for participants to visit one or more other religious education groups, during their meeting times, to show them how to create friendship bracelets by braiding floss or cord (see Activity 3, Making Friendship Bracelets).

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- How long did it take for the participants to discover a solution to turning the circle inside out? Did it seem too easy or too challenging? How might it be made more challenging, or easier, next time?
- Were the participants able to reflect on the issues raised in the story? How do they perceive this heritage of love which has been passed on to them?
- How did the creation of the friendship bracelets go? Were participants able to move on to the next bracelet, or did they cling to their previous bracelet? If so, was it because they had too strong a sense of ownership? What other reason(s)? How might this activity be conducted more smoothly? How might it be improved to, for example, take into consideration the needs of some participants to find ownership in their project?

Approach your director of religious education for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. — Christian scripture, 1 John 4:16

IN TODAY'S SESSION... participants heard the story of Judith Sargent Murray and how the pioneers of Universalist thought with their emphasis upon God as love was a strong departure from the prevailing religious notion of the time. This new view of the divine meant having to consider how this message could be preached from the pulpit and taught to children through religious education. Through this story and the activities of the session, we explored the idea which starts the James Vila Blake Covenant, "Love is the Spirit of this Church" and recognized how this heritage of love from our

Universalist roots is still alive in our Unitarian Universalist congregations today. This session emphasized cooperation and connection with the creation of friendship bracelets; everyone had the experience of working on a bracelet which had already been started by someone else. We added some of the friendship bracelets to our group wall hanging.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... what "the spirit of love" means to you. How do you see the spirit of love embodied in your Unitarian Universalist congregation? How does the heritage of love from Universalism manifest itself elsewhere in your life? What are some ways you pass on this heritage of love to others in your congregation? Sing the song "Spirit of Life" together as a family. How does the song's image or idea of a divine presence reflect to the Universalist perspective of God as love?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Volunteer in your congregation together as a family, to honor the heritage of love you receive by sharing it with others. You might offer to pass the offertory baskets together as a family, light the chalice together at the start of the worship service, or spend a day cleaning up the congregation's grounds.

A Family Adventure. Visit the first official Universalist church on American soil, founded by John Murray and attended by Judith Sargent Murray in Gloucester, Massachusetts. You might also visit the beautiful Sargent House Museum and an outdoor mural which depicts the history of the Gloucester and prominently displays a portrait of Judith Sargent Murray.

A Family Game. Challenge yourself and your children to a game of Unitarian Universalist history at the Fun Trivia [website](http://www.funtrivia.com/trivia-quiz/Religion/Unitarian-Universalist-History-115733.html) (at www.funtrivia.com/trivia-quiz/Religion/Unitarian-Universalist-History-115733.html).

Spend an evening together as a family. Light a chalice or candle and take turns sharing a thought or two about why you love the other people in your family. You might also try creating a special family prayer to say at bedtime or before a special meal which acknowledges the heritage of love in your own family, such as, "We honor in our hearts all the love we receive from the people around us: Grandma, Grandpa, and Aunt Sophia, etc."

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: SPIRIT OF LOVE COLLAGE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Magazines, catalogues, and old calendars with colorful pictures and printed words to cut up for collage
- Large sheet of poster board or art paper to create collage on
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors, and glue sticks
- Hole punch and yarn

Preparation for Activity

- Gather a variety of magazines to use for the collage. Seek diversity in images of people and families. If you wish the group to focus on "spirit of love" interactions in your congregation, gather congregational photos (or publications with photos) that the children can cut up.

Description of Activity

Invite the participants to explore the ideas of this session by creating a collage of images and words which embody the spirit of love. Encourage them to think about many different kinds of love and how people show love for one another as they create their collage. Ask them to think about the love they have received as a heritage from their Universalist roots and consider how this love is manifest today in ways people interact at their Unitarian Universalist congregation. Invite them to depict this idea with words and images in the collage.

Use the hole punch and yarn to secure the finished collage to the group's wall hanging in your meeting space.

Including All Participants

If any children are unable to cut out pictures and word phrases, invite them to choose some for other participants to cut out and/or to help place images and words on the collage.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: THREE PUZZLES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Three large floor puzzles
- Bell or chime

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain three puzzles, each with at least 25 large, brightly colored, odd-shaped pieces. Then:
 - Set aside the corner and edge pieces of all three puzzles.
 - Take several pieces from the first puzzle and add them to the second puzzle.
 - Take several pieces from the second puzzle and add them to the first puzzle.
 - Distribute the pieces from the third puzzle equally between puzzles one and two.

Description of Activity

Form two teams and assign each a floor or table work space. Give one team the first puzzle and the other team the second puzzle. Tell the participants they will be asked to complete the puzzles with their teams and the first team to complete their puzzle will win. Ring a bell or chime and say "Begin."

At some point, the two groups will realize they have pieces which do not belong to their puzzle and they are missing pieces they need. Eventually they will understand that they need to work with the other group in order to complete their puzzle. Let them figure out a process for trading pieces. Once they do, they will further realize that both teams have pieces of a third puzzle. Let them figure out whether they need to complete the third puzzle for anyone to win, and what to do about it.

After the puzzles are all completed, take some time to reflect on the group's experience:

- How did it feel when they discovered some pieces were missing and others were there which didn't go with the puzzle they needed to solve?
- How did the teams resolve the issue of trading pieces with each other?
- How did the group respond to assembling the third puzzle as a whole?

Remind the group, in these words or your own:

We may not always have all the pieces available when we set out to solve a puzzle or problem. Just like Judith Sargent Murray, it may be necessary to look around a bit, or even create resources to solve the dilemma. It may also require a new way of thinking such as what

happened when your group realized the pieces were mixed up and a third puzzle was involved.

Including All Participants

If any children are unable to participate in puzzle assembly on the floor, use tables instead. Children who lack the dexterity to fit puzzle pieces together may be able to help sort pieces by color and direct others to fit pieces into the puzzle.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 2: STORY: JUDITH SARGENT MURRAY: TURN AROUND

Like most children growing up in the American colonies before the Revolutionary War, young Judith Sargent attended church with her family on Sundays. Because her family was wealthy, they had a prominent pew in the First Parish Church where Judith had to sit still, without fidgeting, for hours while the preacher thundered on and on about how evil all people were and how angry God was at them.

Many years later, in 1774, when Judith was grown up and married, her father invited John Murray to come be the minister of a new church. This church was a Universalist congregation, with different ideas about God. Murray preached about God as a loving, forgiving parent who would never condemn anyone to everlasting torment in Hell.

[Ask participants: What do you think it was like for Judith to hear John Murray's preaching that God is loving, after growing up thinking God was like an angry father who punishes people? How might the idea of a loving God change the way she felt about herself, about the times when she had made mistakes, or done something wrong or mean?]

Around the time John Murray began preaching Universalism in church, Judith agreed to take in her husband's two, orphaned nieces and raise them. Judith had always believed girls should learn, just as boys of the time did, whether there was a school for them to go to or not. So she set out to teach her nieces herself. As she began to teach them the three "R"s of reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, it became clear to Judith that the girls should also learn another "R"—religion. But Judith could find no books that taught Universalist ideas to children, only books which perpetuated the ideas about an angry God that Judith and her family had rejected.

Judith remembered listening in church when she was a child. She remembered the frightening sound of the preacher's voice, and the frightening things he had said about God's anger. So Judith set out to create her own religious education program, teaching her nieces about a loving, forgiving God who offered salvation to everyone.

When other families at the Universalist congregation learned what she was doing, they asked Judith to write down her teachings. Despite much self-doubt and concern that others might think her unqualified to write about religion, Judith published a catechism, which gave

Universalist answers to the kinds of questions children ask about what God is and how we should live our lives. This important work became the first, ever Universalist religious education program, part of the heritage of love which has been passed down to us through the ages.

Writing this catechism was a turning point in Judith's life. By not only publishing it, but freely admitting that she, a woman, had written it, she established herself as an author in a time when it was uncommon for women to receive an education, let alone create educational materials. She went on to become an accomplished poet, essayist, and columnist.

Judith's first husband—the uncle of the little girls she raised—was killed in a war in the West Indies. After a while, Judith married the preacher, John Murray. As Judith Sargent Murray, the feminist author became her new husband's partner in spreading Universalism throughout New England.

FIND OUT MORE

Learn about Judith Sargent Murray and explore her [archives](http://www.jsmsociety.com/JSM_Archive.html) (at www.jsmsociety.com/JSM_Archive.html), including the [Universalist catechism](http://www.jsmsociety.com/Catechism.html) (at www.jsmsociety.com/Catechism.html) she wrote in 1782, on the [Judith Sargent Murray Society](http://www.jsmsociety.com/) (at www.jsmsociety.com/) website.

Discover the amazing relationship between Judith and John Murray on the Brigid Alverson [website](http://www.brigidalverson.com/Site/MFP/DearJohn.htm) (at www.brigidalverson.com/Site/MFP/DearJohn.htm). Learn how their relationship blossomed from friendship and spiritual mentorship, to romantic love and partnership.

Read "Our Miracle Story: John Murray and Judith Sargent Murray" a sermon by Rev. Rod Richards given at The Unitarian Universalist Church of Southeastern Arizona at their [website](http://www.uuchurchseaz.org/sermons_pdf/2006/richards_murray.pdf) (at www.uuchurchseaz.org/sermons_pdf/2006/richards_murray.pdf).

Learn more about Calvinism and the concept of predestination online at the [All About God](http://www.allaboutgod.com/predestination.htm) (at www.allaboutgod.com/predestination.htm) website, the [Calvinist Corner](http://www.calvinistcorner.com/predestination.htm) (at www.calvinistcorner.com/predestination.htm) website, and [The Highway](http://www.the-highway.com/articleAug02.html) (at www.the-highway.com/articleAug02.html).

SESSION 3: LOVE IS THE SPIRIT OF THIS CHURCH

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more. — Malvina Reynolds (from the song "Magic Penny")

This session explores the essence of a beloved community as sharing the good times as well as the bad with each other; this is what creates a true spirit of love in a religious community. When people are tied together by the spirit of love, we share the ordinary moments of life as well as the momentous occasions. When love is the basis of a shared experience, we are motivated to overcome conflict and reach out to help one another. Therefore, when love is the spirit of the congregation, our religious community helps us, each and all, to grow and to support one another in both good times and bad.

One way people in Unitarian Universalist communities share with each other is by lighting candles of joys and concerns (Activity 4). If your congregation regularly engages in this ritual, this session will place the ritual for these participants in a context of how people in caring communities support one another. If sharing joys and concerns is not a ritual of your congregation, you may want to replace Activity 4 with one of the alternate activities.

GOALS

This session will:

- Explore the idea that love is most powerful when it is given away or shared
- Demonstrate how our beloved religious communities are places of sharing, caring, and love
- Lead participants to experience their role in creating, in their congregation, the beloved community that shares experiences together and offers caring to one another.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Experience and respond to a story about how love becomes more powerful when it is given away
- Experience activities which require working together to accomplish an objective
- Understand how sharing joys and concerns together is one way people in a beloved

community can support one another in good times and bad

- Reflect on how we all have a role in creating our beloved communities.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — The Mish-Mash Heart	10
Activity 2: Creating Our Own Mish-Mash Hearts	15
Activity 3: Cat's Cradle	10
Activity 4: Sharing Joys and Concerns	10
Faith in Action: Multigenerational Mish-Mash Hearts	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Pyramid Building	15
Alternate Activity 2: Song — Magic Penny	10
Alternate Activity 3: Ranking Order	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, think about the times you have felt a strong sense of belonging in your congregation. Consider what it is about your congregation that keeps you returning and perhaps brought you back after the very first time you walked in the door. Is it the people who make up the community? Is it the way you feel in the company of those people? Is it the support they have given you during difficult times in your life? Is it your sense of making a difference together through social action? Think about any times when your religious community makes you feel the spirit of love is truly the spirit of this church; hold these feelings close as you explore this session with the participants.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Scrambled Word Puzzle](#) (included in this document) , and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Copy the handout for all participants.

Description of Activity

Give a copy of the scrambled word puzzle and a pencil to each participant as they arrive. Encourage children to decipher as many words as they can from the scrambled words. Do the words have a message they recognize?

Including All Participants

If any participants might have trouble unscrambling words on their own or writing down the words they find, group participants into teams of two or three to work on the puzzle together, inviting teams to choose one person to list the words the group finds.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A large, clear bowl and a selection of stones on a large plate (at least one for each participant)

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Fill the bowl with water about halfway.
- Set the stones beside the bowl of water.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

Description of Activity

The opening activity brings participants together for a chalice-lighting ritual which honors the coming together of this community in the spirit of love, and reintroduces the Blake covenant.

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Suggest participants begin thinking about what is meant by "love is the spirit of this church."

If the group has done the Welcoming and Entering activity, you might ask them if they unscrambled any words that also appear in the Blake covenant.

Continue this ritual of welcoming which honors the coming together of this community in the spirit of love, by saying something like:

We started our session this morning by saying together the covenant created by the Unitarian James Vila Blake. It starts with the words, "Love is the spirit of this church." Today we will further explore the idea of love as the spirit which ties us together in our community by considering some of the ways we help each other.

Invite participants to select a stone to drop in the bowl of water, and, as they do so, to hold in their mind one way someone has helped them. Invite them to share a few words about the person and the help they are thinking of, if they wish, or to silently drop their stone in the water.

Conclude the opening ritual with a statement such as:

Just as the stones we dropped in the water caused a ripple effect, so do the actions of others. When someone helps us, we feel the ripple of good feelings which comes from their love for us.

As participants move on to the next activity, a co-leader should remove the stones from the bowl and return them to the plate, if you plan to use the bowl and stones again in Activity 4, Sharing Joys and Concerns.

Including All Participants

If any participants are unable to select a stone and drop it in the bowl, ask one volunteer to drop all of the stones into the water.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — THE MISH-MASH HEART (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[The Mish-Mash Heart](#) (included in this document) "
- Sample mish-mash heart (see Activity 2)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times so you are comfortable telling it to the group.
- Make a sample Mish-Mash heart to use for storytelling, by taking a simple heart shape and adding an assortment of fabric, other colored card stock, and some ribbon; tear or punch a small hole in the heart.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the children share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group. Show the participants the Mish-Mash heart you have pieced together at appropriate parts of the story, perhaps pointing to areas which are jagged or torn at the right times. Read or tell the story to the group. After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about it.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- Why did Emily think there was something wrong with the woman's heart?
- Why did Emily give the woman a piece of her heart?
- Do you believe we give away a piece of our hearts when we truly love someone? Why or why not?
- Can something be a happy time and a sad time all at once? Why or why not?
- What might your heart look like if it was visible, and people could see how happy times and sad times affected it?
- How might you have affected someone else's heart by your actions?

Including All Participants

Be aware that talking about sharing parts of our hearts may bring up painful experiences for some children. If any child who usually participates in discussions and activities like this appears withdrawn or uncommunicative, you might want to speak with your minister and/or religious educator after leading this session. Any participant who appears to joke around inappropriately or laugh at the responses of others may also be experiencing something painful but having trouble expressing feelings about it. In this case, it may be helpful to remind all participants that sometimes we laugh in order to cover up uncomfortable feelings, but it is not appropriate to laugh at the comments of others; everyone deserves to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas in our community. Both sorts of instances may be worth a discussion with the religious educator and/or minister.

ACTIVITY 2: CREATING OUR OWN MISH-MASH HEARTS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in a variety of colors
- Fabric pieces, ribbons, and other decorative items
- Glue sticks, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and hole punch(es)

Preparation for Activity

- Cut card stock into equal-sized heart shapes.
- Set out on work tables the fabric pieces, ribbons, and other decorative items.

Description of Activity

Encourage participants to create their own mish-mash hearts by cutting up the heart shapes and gluing together a new heart with a variety of colors. Explain they may add fabric, ribbons, or other decorative elements, as well as rips and tears, to make the mish-mash heart their own.

After everyone has finished decorating their hearts or time is almost up, invite volunteers to share what some of the elements on their heart mean and how they relate to any particular happy or sad moments in their life.

As with any activity which involves sharing personal thoughts, some participants may not wish to share. Remind the group it is always okay to pass. If needed, also remind them it is important to respect the person who is sharing by listening to their words without interruption, comment, or judgment.

When all who wish to have shared, lead the group to reflect on this experience with questions such as:

- What does your mish-mash heart reveal about you?
- What do you think your mish-mash heart might look like in 10 years? 20? 30?
- What kinds of happy or sad events might change your mish-mash heart in the future?
- How does our Unitarian Universalist community help us with our mish-mash hearts?

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty working scissors or gluing pieces together, invite participants to work in teams. Suggest one person do the cutting, someone else assemble the elements, and any other members of the team add decoration and/or help decide how to make the hearts.

ACTIVITY 3: CAT'S CRADLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Pieces of string or yarn about 24" long
- Leader Resource 1, [Playing Cat's Cradle](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Tie together the ends of each string or yarn piece to create a loop. Make a loop for every two participants.
- If you are unfamiliar with Cat's Cradle, use the illustrated instructions in Leader Resource 1. If more visuals may help you, author Libby Koponen's [website](http://www.ifyoulovetoread.com/book/chten_cats1105.htm) (at www.ifyoulovetoread.com/book/chten_cats1105.htm) has additional pictures to illustrate each step.

Description of Activity

Pair participants (if needed, make a group of three). Give each pair a loop of string. Invite the pairs to work together with their partner to create a cat's cradle, an old and timeless string game which has entertained children for years.

Start by asking if anyone has already done this activity and knows how it's done. If any participants volunteer, encourage them to show the other pairs how to do it. If no one has done it before, demonstrate (using Leader Resource 1, if necessary) how to create the Cat's Cradle shape out of the yarn or string, transfer it to their

partner's hands without destroying the shape of the Cat's Cradle, and then transfer it back to the first person.

Besides Cat's Cradle, there are many more shapes which can be done by people playing string games together. If some participants know them and wish to demonstrate, encourage them to do so if you have time available.

After all partners have successfully transferred the pattern of Cat's Cradle at least once (or participants have had some time to create different shapes together), invite them to reflect on the experience. Ask questions such as:

- What was it like transferring the pattern to the other person's hands?
- How did you have to rely on the other person to do their part correctly?
- How did your actions affect what your partner could do with the string?
- What happened if you made a mistake? Did you take it lightly, or seriously? Did you feel any sense of blame toward your partner? Did you feel the responsibility for the mistake was shared? Or, all your own fault?
- How and when does this working together symbolize what we do in our congregation?

Including All Participants

If any participant is unable to manipulate their fingers to exchange the string with another person, suggest they can serve as the "base" for their partner to build the Cat's Cradle shape. They can hold their arms still and their fingers spread apart while a partner loops the string onto their hands, and then off again to make a new shape.

ACTIVITY 4: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Votive candles or tea lights, and a lighter and extinguisher; or, a set of LED/battery-operated votive candles, enough for all participants
- Optional: A large, clear bowl and a selection of stones on a large plate (at least one for each participant)

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether to use candles or stones and obtain needed materials. The clear bowl of water and the plate of stones from the session Opening may serve very well.

- Set up the candles, the tray of sand, and the lighter and extinguisher near the chalice. Or, re-set the clear bowl of water and the plate of stones from the Opening.

Description of Activity

This sharing ritual is an important way many Unitarian Universalist congregations bring people together in community. It invites members to voice what is happening in their lives and hearts, and helps listeners understand who needs extra help and support.

Invite participants to come forward and either light a candle or select a stone to drop in the bowl of water. Encourage them, as they do so, to share a few brief words about either an important joy in their life or a recent sorrow which is troubling them. To conclude the ritual, light one final candle for "all the joys and concerns which remain unspoken but which we keep in our hearts."

Including All Participants

Make it clear that sharing is voluntary; participants who feel uncomfortable sharing in the group may choose to pass. If any participant cannot move forward to light a candle or drop a stone in the bowl, invite one participant to light all of the candles or drop a stone as each joy or concern is shared. Setting the candles or stones in the center of a circle rather than on a table up front might make it easier for someone with limited mobility to participate.

As with any activity which involves sharing personal thoughts, some participants may feel uncomfortable. Remind the group that it is always okay to pass and that it is important to respect the person who is sharing by listening to their words without interruption, comment, or judgment.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home
- Mish-mash hearts made in Activity 2
- Hole punch and yarn

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Say in your own words:

The session is almost over and we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space.

Ask everyone to first clean up their own area and the materials they were using, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

When clean-up is done, ask the participants whether they would like to take their mish-mash hearts home with them as a reminder of today's session or would like to add them to the wall hanging. Invite anyone who would like to add their mish-mash heart to the wall hanging to punch a hole in it, loop a piece of yarn through the hole, and attach the heart to the wall hanging.

After everyone who wants to add a heart to the wall hanging has done so, bring participants back to the circle. Invite them to begin the closing ritual by crossing their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together in the spirit of love when we..." and invite volunteers to say a word or phrase to complete the sentence.

When everyone who wishes to has shared, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so everyone is facing out and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

Including All Participants

If a child is unable to prepare and hang their own mish-mash heart, pair them with another participant who can help them punch the hole, string the yarn through in a loop, and/or tie the heart to the wall hanging.

A child who has mobility or balance issues can participate by sitting in a chair or wheelchair and having other children maneuver around them. This ritual does involve close physical contact, and children who are uncomfortable being touched may wish to opt out.

FAITH IN ACTION: MULTIGENERATIONAL MISH-MASH HEARTS

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "[The Mish-Mash Heart](#) (included in this document) "

- A sample mish-mash heart made by a leader or participant in Activity 2
- Card stock in a variety of colors
- Fabric pieces, ribbons, and other decorative items
- Glue sticks, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and hole punch(es)
- Optional: A copy of the discussion questions (below) for each multigenerational work table

Preparation for Activity

- Plan with your minister, religious educator, and/or lay worship leaders a time when the entire congregation can hear the story, "The Mish-Mash Heart," and immediately afterward meet for a multigenerational craft activity. Worship followed by coffee hour, with extra work tables set for making mish-mash hearts, could be ideal.
- Cut card stock into equal-sized heart shapes.
- Set out on work tables the fabric pieces, ribbons, and other decorative items.

Description of Activity

As part of a multigenerational worship service or program, read or tell the story to the group. At appropriate parts of the story, show the mish-mash heart you have pieced together, perhaps, at the right times, pointing to jagged or torn areas. Read or tell the story to the group. After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about it. Then, form small, multigenerational groups and encourage each group to discuss the story, using questions such as these:

- Why did Emily give the woman a piece of her heart?
- Can something be a happy time and a sad time all at once? Why or why not?
- What might your heart look like if it was visible, and people could see how happy times and sad times affected it?
- How might you have affected someone else's heart by your actions?

After the discussion, encourage all of the participants to create their own Mish-Mash hearts by cutting up the heart shapes and gluing together a new heart with a variety of colors and adding fabric, ribbons, or other decorative items.

After everyone finishes decorating their hearts or when time is almost up, ask if anyone would like to share what

some elements on their heart mean and how they relate to any happy or sad moments in their life.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it better?
- How did participants respond to the story? Did they "get" it?
- How did participants respond to creating their own mish-mash hearts? Were any able to relate their designs to events or feelings in their own lives?
- How did the Cat's Cradle string games go? Did participants find a spirit of cooperation and enjoy creating the shapes together?
- How was the atmosphere for sharing of joys and concerns? Did participants get into the spirit of sharing with one another, or were they resistant? Depending on their response to this activity, you may consider offering opportunities for this group to share joys and concerns in future sessions.

Approach your director of religious education for guidance as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more.

— Malvina Reynolds (from the song "Magic Penny")

IN TODAY'S SESSION... the children heard a story, "The Mish-Mash Heart," about how love becomes richer when it is given away or shared. We talked about the ways we share our love with one another in our beloved community—our Unitarian Universalist congregation. We made our own mish-mash hearts as symbols of the love we have shared with others in our lives, played Cat's Cradle string games with a partner, and shared joys and concerns which we learned is one way Unitarian Universalists share their feelings and needs for support with each other in community.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... the ways you volunteer your time and efforts to help your religious community to "give back" some of the good feelings you get from participating in your congregation. Share some of the times you have felt the spirit of love

in your religious community and how the people at your congregation make this happen.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... volunteering in your congregation together as a family to "give back" some of the love you receive from your religious community. You might offer to pass the offertory baskets together as a family, light the chalice together at the start of the worship service, or spend a day cleaning up the congregation's building or grounds.

Family Discovery. Create a family heart together with different parts of the large heart symbolizing the good and bad times you've had together as a family. Without using words, colors and designs can depict experiences and reveal feelings as you represent the times of your lives together.

A Family Game. Obtain some string or yarn—or a pre-looped, elastic string, made just for this purpose—and play Cat's Cradle together as a family. Find suggestions and instructions for playing a variety of string games including Cat's Cradle on the [Alysion](http://Alysion.org/figures/main.htm) (at Alysion.org/figures/main.htm) website, Momsminivan.com (at www.momsminivan.com/article-stringfigures.html), and author Libby Koponen's [website](http://www.ifyoulovetoread.com/) (at www.ifyoulovetoread.com/). String games are particularly good on long family trips, as they do not require additional supplies and can occupy minds as well as hands when sitting for long periods of time is necessary.

A Family Ritual. Share joys and concerns together as a family by lighting candles or simply joining hands and sharing the best thing about a particular day or what you are particularly grateful for on this day.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: PYRAMID BUILDING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Plastic cups (six for each team)
- Rubber bands (one for each team)
- String and scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Calculate how many teams of four to six participants you will have, and obtain the appropriate materials.
- Cut string into 12" lengths (one for each participant). Tie six strings securely to each rubber band. Test the rubber bands with another adult to make sure they will not snap apart when used as the teams will use them.

Description of Activity

Form teams of four to six participants. Give each team six plastic cups. Set the cups on work tables, upside down, with space between them.

Challenge the teams to build a pyramid of cups without touching the cups or any other participants. Then give each team the rubber bands you have prepared with strings.

Teams will discover that with each member pulling and relaxing their string in cooperation with the other members, they will be able to stretch and manipulate the rubber band to pick up and move the plastic cups.

For a greater challenge, encourage the teams to complete the task without talking.

After all teams have managed to stack the cups into pyramids or time is almost up, take a few minutes to reflect on this activity as a group. Consider:

- How long did it take for the group to discover the trick was working together to pull on their strings?
- Was the game frustrating for anyone? Why? How could it have been less frustrating?
- How did it feel needing the cooperation of everyone to make the pyramid work?
- What would have happened if one person had chosen not to cooperate and pull their string as necessary?
- How does this relate to how people function together in a religious community? What if someone refused to participate with the rest of the group by pulling their string the wrong way? What if someone did not understand their part in working together?

Including All Participants

If any participant is unable to manipulate their string to help their team, they can give verbal instructions to the team while the others remain silent and obey the commands. Do not change the game mid-stream to make such an accommodation. Rather, start out with a rule that each team must have one person lead with verbal instructions while the others follow.

Some children may want to shoot the rubber bands or play with them inappropriately. Minimize temptation by holding on to all the rubber bands until the teams are ready to begin the game, and collecting them immediately afterward. If a child misuses a rubber band, ask the child to sit out the rest of the game so others can enjoy playing it.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SONG — MAGIC PENNY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A recording of the song "Magic Penny" by Malvina Reynolds, and music player

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a recording of the song "Magic Penny" by Malvina Reynolds on a CD or downloaded from the Internet, and a music player.
- Optional: Download the song's lyrics (available on this [website dedicated to Malvina Reynolds](http://www.wku.edu/~smithch/MALVINA/homep.htm) (at www.wku.edu/~smithch/MALVINA/homep.htm)) and prepare a handout.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to listen to the song "Magic Penny." Then invite reflection on the idea presented by the song—that love is something that multiplies when it is given away. Ask the participants to share a time in their life when they gave away love and felt it multiply. To conclude, play the song again and encourage anyone who wishes to sing along to go ahead and do so.

Including All Participants

If any participants may be unable to hear music or discern the words of the song, distribute a handout with the lyrics for everyone to follow as the song is played.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: RANKING ORDER (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A list of committees at your congregation
- Pencils
- Timepiece (minutes)

Preparation for Activity

- Calculate the number of three-person teams you will have. Copy the committee list for each team.
- Find out the responsibilities of each committee on the list, so you can answer participants' questions.

Description of Activity

Divide participants into teams of three. Give each team a pencil and a copy of the committee list.

Say, in your own words:

Imagine that the Board of Directors of our congregations has determined there are too many committees. They want to eliminate some of them. Your task is to rank the committees in order of importance. Give a number "one" to the committee you think is the most important, a number "two" to the next important, and so on, until you have a ranking for each committee.

Let them know that this is a group activity and that each team member will have to agree on a ranking before it is officially determined. Tell them they will have ten minutes to accomplish this task and they may ask questions about any committee they are unfamiliar with. Say "Go!" to start the teams.

Watch the time and be available for any questions which may come up. Give the teams a one-minute warning. Then call "Time!" to signal the end of the exercise.

Ask the teams to share how they ranked the committees and why they made those selections. Encourage teams to explain how they decided which committee was the most important and which one was the least important on the list; lead them to articulate the criteria they used.

After each team has presented their rankings, note the similarities and differences in teams' responses.

Lead the group to compare the criteria used by the different teams to determine what committees are the most important to the congregational community. Did any groups get stuck, and not complete the ranking? If so, was it because they could not agree on criteria? Or, maybe they agreed that all the committees are equally important to the congregation.

Leave time to lead reflection on the experience with questions such as:

- How difficult was it to make a decision as a group about this?
- Suppose the congregation really was going to eliminate some of these committees? How do you think the disappearance of the "X" committee (give an example of a committee some children ranked least important) might affect how we share love with one another in our religious community?

Ask participants if they would give you permission to share their findings with the minister and the Board. If they agree, make sure to follow up. Your congregation's leadership may find it enlightening to know the children's perceptions of various congregational committees and their understanding of different committees' value.

Including All Participants

If the group has non-readers or any who struggle with reading, take time to read aloud the list of committees before signaling teams to "Go!"

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 3: STORY: THE MISH-MASH HEART

Recently at a multigenerational event at a Unitarian Universalist congregation, everyone was encouraged to create a heart. They were given some construction paper and some glue and some markers to design their heart. Emily worked diligently to create the most perfect, beautiful heart she could. It even had glitter in the shape of diamonds all around the outside.

As she was helping to clean up, she noticed the heart of one woman who was around the same age as her grandmother sitting at a nearby table. It was a mish-mash mess of odd colors and had pieces which were ripped and torn glued haphazardly upon it. Parts of it were wrinkled and crinkled and there was even a little hole in it!

Thinking there was something wrong, Emily offered to help the woman fix her heart. But the woman merely smiled and explained that there was nothing wrong with her heart; it merely revealed all the things which had happened to her in her life. She said there were happy times here: the beautiful colors and designs represented when she first met her husband, their wedding and the birth of each of their three children. There were other beautiful parts, too, which stood for watching her

children taking their first steps on their own, riding a bike for the first time and graduating from college.

"But what about all the rips and tears and wrinkles?" Emily asked. "Why are they there?"

These were for the sad times in her life, the woman explained. The time her best friend was stricken with measles, the time someone lied or did something to hurt her feelings and the hole was left when her husband died. "In fact, every time a person comes into my life that I care about," she explained, "they take a piece of my heart with them."

This was distressing to Emily, thinking of the woman having to give part of her heart away to others. "But what happens if you give it all away?" she asked. "You'll be left with nothing."

"No, I won't," the woman responded with a smile.

"Because you see, they give me a piece of theirs as well."

Emily looked down at her beautiful, perfect heart with the glitter and the designs she worked so hard to make. Then she looked again at the woman's mish-mashed heart with the jagged colors, rips and wrinkles. Without hesitation, Emily ripped a piece off of her perfect heart and handed it to the woman.

"Thank you," the woman said as she placed it with her mish-mash heart and tore off a piece to hand to Emily.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 3:

HANDOUT 1: SCRAMBLED WORD PUZZLE

Unscramble the words to create a message about our beloved community.

VLOE

PTISIR

HHCCRU

RSVECEI

LWA

WLDLE

GTTOEERH

ACEEP

LEPH

TREAHNO

VCENNAOT

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 3:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: PLAYING CAT'S CRADLE

Cat's Cradle images and text come from The Project Gutenberg eBook, *My Book of Indoor Games*, by Clarence Squareman.

To play Cat's Cradle, two or more people make shapes out of a loop of string as they pass the string back and forth between their hands.

One person takes the loop of string and places it around the fingers of both hands while leaving the thumbs free. Loop the string back around so that it goes all the way around each hand while still keeping the thumbs free. Using the middle finger of one hand, slide it inside the loop of string across the palm of the opposite hand. Do the same thing with the middle finger of the other hand. When you pull both hands apart, the string stretches to form the Cat's Cradle.

The second person should locate the two places in the cradle where the string makes an "X." With a thumb and forefinger, the second person pinches together those "X" shaped parts of the string. Keeping it pinched, the second person moves their hands farther apart until the string is taut, points their fingers down to gather the string, then scoops the string up through the middle. As they pull, the first person should let the Cat's Cradle slide off their hands. If it is done correctly, the string will keep the Cat's Cradle shape on the second person's hands.

Step-by-step instructions

Take a piece of string and knot the ends together to make a loop. Then, slip it over your hands:

Next wind the string around your palms, not including the thumbs:

Slip the second fingers through the string on your hands and you have your cat's cradle:

You must now ask a second person to pinch the "X" on the sides of the cradle, using their thumbs and first fingers...

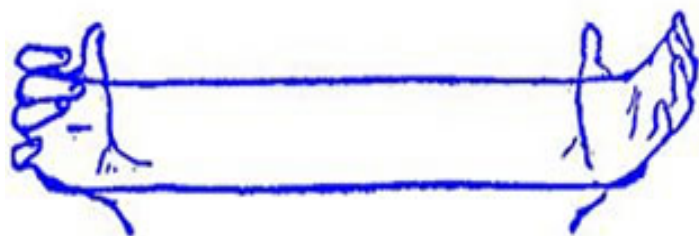
... dive inside the middle from below, and pull the strings away:

Now curl the little fingers around the two, inside "X"s, slipping hands under the outside strings as shown to draw the string sideways and take it under the cradle:

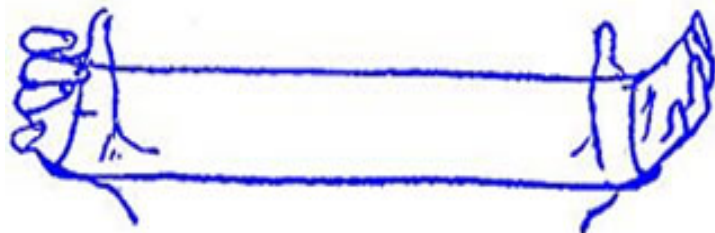
Now curl the little fingers around the inside strings, slipping hands under the outside strings as shown, and draw out the side pieces:

Slip the thumb and first fingers under the side string, bring them up the middle, and you have your original cat's cradle again:

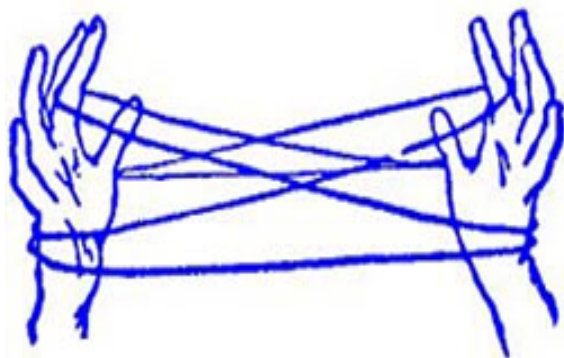
Take a piece of string and knot the ends together to make a loop. Then, slip it over your hands:



Next wind the string around your palms, not including the thumbs:



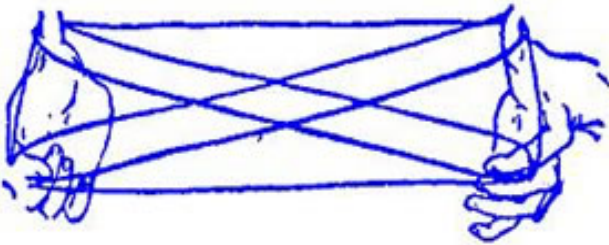
Slip the second fingers through the string on your hands and you have your cat's cradle:



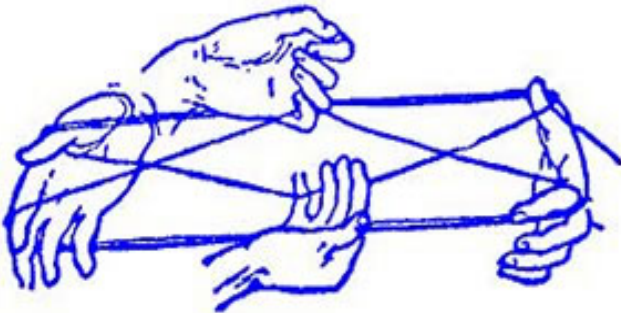
You must now ask a second person to pinch the "X" on the sides of the cradle, using their thumbs and first fingers...



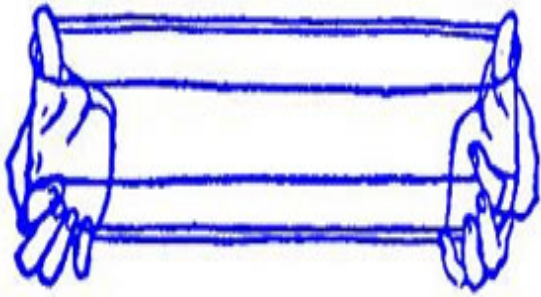
... dive inside the middle from below, and pull the strings away.



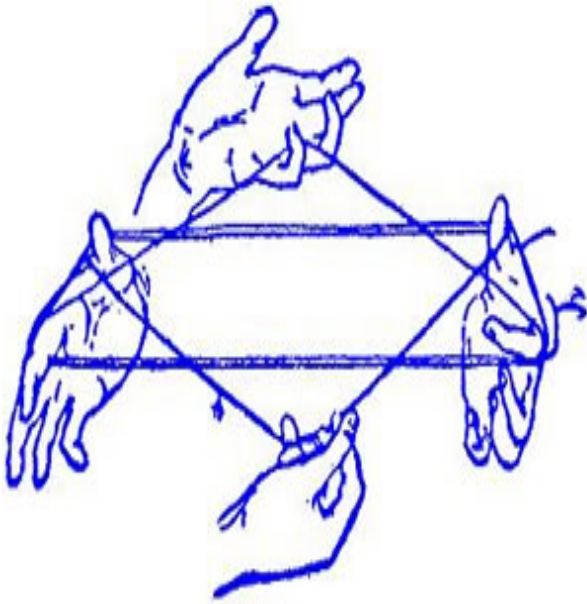
Now curl the little fingers around the two, inside "X"s, slipping hands under the outside strings as shown to draw the string sideways and take it under the cradle:



Now curl the little fingers around the inside strings, slipping hands under the outside strings as shown, and draw out the side pieces:



Slip the thumb and first fingers under the side string, bring them up the middle, and you have your original cat's cradle again:



FIND OUT MORE

Learn about the singer and songwriter who was awarded a doctorate in 1939 despite the Depression and the fact that she was Jewish, socialist, and a woman, at this [website dedicated to Malvina Reynolds](http://www.wku.edu/~smithch/MALVINA/homep.htm) (at www.wku.edu/~smithch/MALVINA/homep.htm). Reynolds' songs have been performed and recorded by Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Harry Belafonte, Pete Seeger, and others.

Find suggestions and instructions for playing a variety of string games including Cat's Cradle on the [Alyson](http://alysion.org) (at alysion.org/figures/main.htm) website.

SESSION 4: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. — Hebrew scripture, Leviticus 19:18

Commonly known as the Golden Rule, the ethic of reciprocity appears in some form in every major religion—Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam—as well as in many other traditions. We can consider the ethic of reciprocity a universal value on which people of diverse faiths can agree. This session explores how it guides us to cooperate, for the good of all.

For Unitarian Universalists, this ethic comes to us both from our Jewish and Christian heritages and from the wisdom of world religions. In the context of this program, children explore the ethic of reciprocity as a guide toward actions that strengthen the beloved community—in our congregations, in our families, and in other communities to which we belong.

This ethic is related to the idea of "radical hospitality" in our congregations. Radical hospitality invites us to welcome not only those to whom we are naturally drawn because of their similarity to ourselves, but also those who seem different from us.

Radical hospitality and the ethic of reciprocity can help us promote justice. When we are truly open to the "other" and welcome them into our beloved communities, we help build a more just society in our congregations and in the world.

Be aware that in discussions about the Golden Rule and kind and affirming behavior, participants may bring up their experiences with quite different behavior—mean and bullying behavior. Be prepared to discuss these experiences, to report abusive incidents to your congregation's minister or religious educator and the child's parent(s), and talk about what resources are available to the family in this situation. Bullying is a serious issue.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the ethic of reciprocity as a universal religious value
- Explore how, in Unitarian Universalism, the ethic of reciprocity encourages radical hospitality

- Examine ways the ethic of reciprocity and radical hospitality give us ways to act on our first Principle, to affirm and promote "the inherent worth and dignity of every person"
- Demonstrate ways to practice radical hospitality.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Reflect on and discuss a story that demonstrates both the ethic of reciprocity and a kind of radical hospitality
- Experience, in games and activities, how affirming one another deepens our connections and builds our sense of community
- Reflect on how radical hospitality enriches our communities and each of us as individuals
- Explore their individual responsibility and practical ways to offer radical hospitality to others.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Center Knot	20
Activity 2: Story — Crossing the Finish Line Together	10
Activity 3: Affirmation Badges	15
Faith in Action: Making Greeting Cards	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Sharing Affirmations Ritual	15
Alternate Activity 2: Role Play	15
Alternate Activity 3: What's in the Boxes?	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When

you feel settled and relaxed, think about a time when you reached out to someone who was very different from you. How did it feel to be open to someone whose background, perspectives, or ideas seemed very different from yours? Did it make you feel vulnerable? How?

Were you able to make a connection, despite your differences? How did you reach across barriers which could have limited your ability to communicate or find common ground? If your experience was not a positive one, how might it have been different?

Now, think of some assumptions you hold about others, perhaps people who may have different political views than yours or appear to have a background or lifestyle

quite different from yours. How would it feel to be open to someone who you feel naturally inclined to turn away from, ignore, argue with, or attempt to convince to believe as you do? How could you overcome your negative assumptions and open yourself up to the other person? How could you accept them and offer hospitality to them, despite your differences?

You might also think about a time when you were welcomed by someone different from you. What was that like? How were you welcomed, and what difference did it make for you? Did you recognize their hospitality as "radical"?

Hold these thoughts and feelings in your mind, as you lead the participants in this session.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Blank paper, one for each participant plus a few extra
- Yarn or string, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and hole punch(es)
- Optional: Markers, pens, or color pencils

Description of Activity

Encourage early arriving participants to help you by making "affirmation badges" to use later in the session. Instruct them to punch two holes in a sheet of paper, cut a piece of yarn long enough to hang the paper around a person's neck without choking them, loop the yarn through the holes in the paper, and tie knots to fasten the yarn to the paper. If time allows, invite participants to decorate the borders (leaving plenty of room in the middle).

Including All Participants

If any participant lacks small motor skills, assign them a step you know they can do and make sure they have one or more partners to work with.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Leader Resource 1, [Golden Rule Sayings from Around the World](#) (included in this document)
- Tape

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

- Print out Leader Resource 1 and cut the Golden Rule sayings into strips. Or, write each saying on an individual strip of construction paper.
- Place the paper strips with Golden Rule sayings near the chalice.
- Pre-arrange for one of the participants to be the Golden Rule reader (or invite a guest to join the group for this). Give the reader a copy of the Golden Rule sayings to look over and practice reading ahead of time so they are comfortable with the words.

Description of Activity

The opening activity brings participants together for a chalice-lighting ritual which honors the coming together of this community in the spirit of love, and reintroduces the Blake covenant.

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant:

Love is the spirit of this church

And service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another.

Continue by saying something like:

Today we continue to explore how we come together in the spirit of love. We will learn a new way to show that "love is the spirit of this church."

Ask participants if any are familiar with the Golden Rule and know what it means. Affirm or explain that the Golden Rule, also known as the ethic of reciprocity, is often stated as:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Ask if participants know what religion this comes from. Some may say "Christian" or "Jewish." Tell them that this wording comes from Hebrew scripture (in the Book of Leviticus), this notion is also central to Jesus' teachings and some form of this ethic of reciprocity exists in all major religions of the world. As a result, we consider it a universal value which is affirmed by people of all religious faiths.

Ask your Golden Rule reader to present each of the sayings, one by one with pauses in between, as participants take turns coming forward to take a strip of paper with a Golden Rule saying on it and hang it on the wall or your wall hanging.

When all the sayings have been posted, invite reflection with questions such as:

- Which one is your favorite?
- Are there any you do not like?
- How does the difference in wording reflect the values of the religious traditions?
- Why do you think so many religions have come up with the same idea, even if it is phrased a bit differently?

Including All Participants

It may be tempting to select the best reader of the group to be your designated reader. However, if you distribute the Golden Rule sayings ahead of time, a participant who might normally be uncomfortable reading in front of a group can take the time to practice at home and learn the words they need to read. This can be an empowering experience for someone who normally struggles with reading aloud and give them a chance to shine in an area which is usually challenging for them.

ACTIVITY 1: CENTER KNOT (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Clothesline or other strong rope, and a knife

Preparation for Activity

- Cut rope into pieces about four feet long. You will need one fewer than the total number of participants.
- Arrange to make a space is large enough for this activity. If necessary, the group may need to do this activity outdoors or in a larger room.
- If the group will have fewer than eight participants, consider substituting Alternate Activity 3, What's in the Boxes? for this activity.

Description of Activity

Divide participants into two teams and invite each team to form a line. Then pass out the lengths of rope, asking participants to stay in the line formation and take one end of a length of rope in each hand. When you are done, each team will form a long chain of people and ropes. Only the two participants at the ends of each line will have a hand free; all the others will have both hands on a rope.

Note: This works best for teams with an even number of members, so the number of ropes will be odd, creating a center rope for the knot. You may wish to make unequal teams (for example, divide 14 children into a team of eight and a team of six, rather than two teams of seven). If one team has an odd number of members, a co-leader can participate.

Say, in your own words:

Each team's task is to create one knot in the center of your rope-and-people chain without letting go of the ropes you are holding.

Help teams identify the center of their chain if they are not sure where it is.

Eventually they will discover that the trick is to have all the team members act as one large rope and manipulate their bodies like a train so the knot can be tied in the center. After the teams manage to tie the center knot by working together, reflect on the activity with questions such as:

- How did you figure out how to work together to tie the knot?
- After you realized what you needed to do, how easy or difficult was it?
- Did anyone feel uncomfortable going along with the group to create the knot?
- Did anyone do something to make that person feel better about the process? Why or why not? What did they do, or what might they have done?
- What would have happened if someone had actively resisted the rest of the group's efforts?

Including All Participants

Position a participant in a wheelchair, on crutches, or with other mobility challenges at either end of their team's line, so they will have one hand free to assist their movement. If a participant cannot grasp the rope or move freely and safely enough to participate on their own, you could pair that person with a volunteer who will partner with them to act as a single team member.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — CROSSING THE FINISH LINE TOGETHER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Crossing the Finish Line Together](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times so you are comfortable telling it to the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the children share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about it.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- What motivated the other racers to stop and help their competitor?
- How does this story show an example of the ethic of reciprocity in action?
- Do you think the racers thought about it first, or instantly stopped to help? If they stopped to think about it, what made them decide to turn around?
- Could this happen in a regular Olympic race? Why or why not?
- Do you think we need to be taught to "treat others how we want to be treated"? Or, is it something that comes naturally?
- When have you acted from the ethic of reciprocity or Golden Rule? Do you always act on it? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY 3: AFFIRMATION BADGES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Heavy paper or card stock, one for each participant plus a few extra
- Yarn or string, scissors, and hole punch(es)
- Washable markers

Preparation for Activity

- If you have skipped the Welcoming and Entering activity or the early arriving participants did not make enough affirmation badges for each child in the group, make badges: Punch two holes in each blank sheet of paper and string a piece of

yarn through the holes to create a hanging sign for each participant.

Description of Activity

Pass out the hanging signs. Invite each participant to place their string over their head and then flip the paper around so it hangs on their backs. Tell participants these are their affirmation badges. Explain that an "affirmation" is a positive statement. We are going to write words that make each other feel good.

Ask the group:

Look around. Is there anyone here today whom you do not know very well? Think about how you can write an affirmation for that person.

Distribute markers and invite the children to move around the space and write a positive statement on the badges others are wearing.

When all the participants' badges have at least two comments (or time is almost up), invite them to move their badges around to the front of their body and read the messages written on them. Invite a few volunteers to read their affirmations aloud. Guide participants to reflect on the experience, with questions such as:

- What did it feel like to read the messages others had written about you?
- What affirmations did you think of to write for someone you do not know well?
- What would it be like if we all took the time to think about the good things about a person and acknowledge these instead of noting the differences between us?
- What are some other ways (besides affirmation badges) that affirm someone we know well or someone we do not know well?
- How can we use this idea to build a more beloved community here in our congregation?

Encourage participants to reflect upon how communicating positive messages to others is a way of living out the ethic of reciprocity, or the Golden Rule. Ask: How does the idea of radical hospitality reinforce our first Principle, "the inherent worth and dignity of all persons"?

Including All Participants

If any participants are unable to move about the space, make sure others come to them, or have another participant help them move. If any participant requires assistance to write messages, pair them with another participant as needed.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Bring the group to the circle. If you have not yet done so, invite one or more volunteers to attach their affirmation badges to the group's wall hanging, with the comments side facing out.

When all are back together in the circle, say, in your own words:

Today we talked about the ethic of reciprocity and how some form of it appears in just about every religion. Unitarian Universalists hold this as an ideal way of living out our first Principle, which affirms each person's inherent worth and dignity, and as a way of being welcoming even to people very different from ourselves; this way of interacting is known as Radical Hospitality.

Now, ask participants to cross their arms in front of their body and then take the hands of the people on either side of them. Say "We are tied together by the spirit of love when we ..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about what ties us together in the spirit of love. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out, and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

Including All Participants

Children in wheelchairs or with balance issues may participate in the closing ritual by sitting in a chair or wheelchair and having other children maneuver around them. This ritual does involve close physical contact, and children who are uncomfortable being touched may wish to opt out.

FAITH IN ACTION: MAKING GREETING CARDS

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in different colors

- Markers, pens, or color pencils
- Optional: Envelopes
- Optional: Decorative stickers

Preparation for Activity

- Fold the card stock in half to make greeting cards.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to create a greeting card to encourage someone they do not know very well. The person could be someone in your congregation, or, someone at school who is teased because they are different or who seems to have few friends. It is up to them who they will make a card for. The important thing is that they create and deliver the card to affirm the inherent worth and dignity and/or specific positive qualities of someone they do not know well.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it better?
- How did the participants respond to the story? Did they "get" it?
- How long did it take participants to figure out the secret behind the center knot activity? What might we do differently to make it go better?
- Did participants easily come up with comments for all of the badges? What might we do differently next time?

Approach your religious educator for guidance as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. — Hebrew scripture, Leviticus 19:18

IN TODAY'S SESSION... participants explored how, when love is the spirit of our church, we can find it in our hearts to treat others as we would like to be treated. Participants heard different statements of the ethic of reciprocity (also known as the Golden Rule) from a variety of religions and philosophies and a story about racing competitors who gave up their own chance to win when they chose to help a fellow runner after he fell. The participants worked together as a team to tie a knot in a rope. They wrote affirmations to each other to emphasize the idea of offering hospitality to everyone.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

ways you have extended friendship toward someone who seemed very different from yourself, or times when you forged or continued a relationship of some sort with a person who had vastly different (or even opposing) viewpoints. Share some experiences where you found it difficult to be welcoming to someone different (such as someone with opposing political viewpoints); explore what you did to overcome this or what you could do differently if you find yourself in the same situation again.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. As a family, reach out in some way to a neighbor, family member, or friend who has a different viewpoint than yours. You might invite them over for dinner to your house, plan a picnic at a park together, bring over a covered dish or dessert to their house or even write a letter of appreciation to them.

Family Discovery. Take some time away to do something together as a family that you might not normally do. If your family getaways usually involve hotel stays, try tent camping instead. If you usually hit the beach on sunny summer days, try a hike in the woods; or go to a beach on a cool autumn day to experience a much different place. Sometimes when we "mix it up" and do things differently, it helps us experience life from another perspective. This can be a handy way to open ourselves up to the possibility of accepting the viewpoints of others.

A Family Ritual. Share affirmations together as a family by lighting candles and each sharing one positive trait another family member has. Or, each share a positive memory you share with another family member. You might also adopt this as a mealtime ritual: Take a minute to express your thankfulness for the meal and the presence of your family members, and then encourage each family member to state a positive affirmation about someone else at the table.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: SHARING AFFIRMATIONS RITUAL (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Votive candles or tea lights, and a lighter and extinguisher; or, a set of LED/battery-operated votive candles, enough for all participants
- Optional: A large, clear bowl and a selection of stones on a large plate (at least one for each participant)

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether to use candles or stones and obtain needed materials. The clear bowl of

water and the plate of stones from the Session 3 Opening may serve very well.

- Set up the candles, the tray of sand, and the lighter and extinguisher (or the bowl of water and the stones) near the chalice.

Description of Activity

This sharing ritual is an adaptation of the candle-lighting ritual conducted in many Unitarian Universalist congregations known as "sharing of joys and concerns."

Invite participants to come forward and either light a candle or select a stone to drop in the bowl of water. Encourage them, as they do so, to share a few brief words about how and when they feel affirmed (for example, "I feel affirmed when I know I am being listened to"). To conclude the ritual, light one final candle for "all the affirmations we will receive or give to others until we gather again in community."

Including All Participants

Make it clear that sharing is voluntary; participants who feel uncomfortable sharing in the group may choose to pass. If any participant is unable to move forward to light a candle or drop a stone in the bowl, invite one participant to light each candle or drop each stone as thoughts are shared. Setting the candles or stones in the center of a circle rather than on a table up front might make it easier for someone with limited mobility to participate.

As with any activity which involves sharing personal thoughts, some participants may feel uncomfortable. Remind the group that it is always okay to pass and that it is important to respect the person who is sharing by listening to their words without interruption, comment, or judgment.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: ROLE PLAY (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Props for role play, such as fabric, hats, paper bags, boxes, empty paper towel rolls, etc.

Preparation for Activity

- Gather props for children to use in the role play. Keep them simple. For example, a swath of fabric can become a cape, a skirt, a carpet, or hair.

Description of Activity

Form teams of three or four, if the group has more than six participants. Give each team the scenario and encourage them to create a role play based on it:

One person is new at your school, having just moved from across the country and appears to talk differently and wear an unusual style of clothing. Some members of the group will act as if the person has a contagious illness because of these differences, but one person will have the courage to get to know the new person and reach out to them. BUT, whoever is acting as the new kid needs to be initially resistant to the advances of friendship. (Note: "Initially" is the key. The role play should resolve itself with the new person accepting the overtures of friendship and possibly even having the others coming around to being open as well.)

Tell the teams they will have ten minutes to plan what they will do and who will do what part. Then they will role play their scenario for all the participants.

Call "Time!" after ten minutes, and ask which group would like to go first. If none volunteer, choose a group. After each team's role play, ask the entire group to reflect on what happened and discuss what they liked about it, whether they thought something was unrealistic, and how it could have been done differently.

To conclude, invite the entire group to talk about the process. Was this a challenge, or was it relatively easy to do a role play and offer hospitality to someone much different from them? Would it be the same in "real" life? Why or why not? Also, why is it important to include new people?

Including All Participants

Some participants really shine in role play activities, while others may feel uncomfortable performing. To accommodate individuals who are more reserved, make sure each team includes some extraverted participants who will step up to take on the major roles. This will allow self-conscious individuals to take a minor role which may be more comfortable for them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: WHAT'S IN THE BOXES? (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Different size empty boxes (cereal box, cracker box, cake mix box, etc.)
- A roll of plain wrapping paper
- Rice or another material to fill the empty boxes
- Tape and scissors, including left-handed scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Fill the boxes so they rattle when shaken.

- Seal the boxes with tape and then cover them with plain wrapping paper.

Description of Activity

Set out the wrapped boxes on a table or in the center of the circle of participants. Invite volunteers to take a box and examine it in order to determine what is inside—without opening it.

After several participants guess what a box holds, ask them explain how they determined what was inside the box:

- What senses did you use to come up with your answer?
- Without actually experiencing what is inside, how did you make this determination?

Open the boxes, or invite participants to do so. Compare the real contents with the guesses. Encourage reflection with questions such as:

- How close were you to the truth? Why or why not?
- What does this exercise tell us about making assumptions?
- How do we know what is inside a person when we are guessing based upon their appearance or what we may hear?
- How can we get others to open up to us so that we may discover what inside them?

Including All Participants

If one or more participants cannot lift and shake a box, select one person to be the designated examiner. If any participants are visually impaired, you might have someone announce the findings inside the box or allow the participant to stick a hand inside the box in order to discover what is inside.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 4: STORY: CROSSING THE FINISH LINE TOGETHER

Based on a true story which happened at the 1976 Special Olympics in Seattle, Washington.

Years ago at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants lined up at the starting line for the 100 yard dash. At the sound of the starting gun, they all started off in their own way, making their best effort to run down the track toward the finish line. That is, except for the one young boy who stumbled soon after his start, tumbled to the ground and began to cry. Two of the other racers, hearing the cries of the boy who fell, slowed down and

looked back at him. Then without hesitation, they turned around and began running in the other direction—toward the injured boy.

While the other contestants struggled to make it to the finish line, the two who had turned around to run in the other direction reached for the boy and helped him to his feet. All three of them then linked arms and together they walked to the finish line. By the time the trio reached the end, everyone in the stands was standing and cheering, some with tears rushing down their faces. Even though by turning back and helping the boy who fell, they lost their own chance to win the race, they all had smiles on their faces because they knew they had done the right thing.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 4:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: GOLDEN RULE SAYINGS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

While religious beliefs and practices vary widely around the world, there is near unanimity among religions, ethical systems, and philosophies that each person should be treated as we all wish to be treated. Here are examples of passages from holy texts and the words of religious leaders that promote the ethic of reciprocity (commonly referred to as the Golden Rule).

"And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself."

—Baha'i Faith, from *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*

"Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

—Buddhism, from the Udana-Varga 5:18

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

—Christianity, from Matthew 7:12, King James' version

"Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you."

—Confucianism, from Analects 15:23

"Do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you."

—Hinduism, from Mahabharata 5:1517

"None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."

—Islam, from Number 13 of Imam Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

—Judaism, Leviticus 19:18

"Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss."

—Taoism, words of T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien

"An' it harm no one, do what thou wilt."

—Wiccan, the Wiccan Recede which governs all behavior

"Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others."

—Zoroastrianism, from Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29

FIND OUT MORE

The Ethic of Reciprocity

On the [Religious Tolerance](http://www.religioustolerance.org/reciproc.htm) (at www.religioustolerance.org/reciproc.htm) website, find Golden Rule statements from a wide array of faiths and philosophers.

SESSION 5: MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY LIVE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual warrior's pledge: Not for myself alone, but that all the people may live. — Brooke Medicine Eagle, Buffalo Woman Comes Singing

There is nothing to make you like other human beings so much as doing things for them. — Zora Neale Hurston, Dust Tracks on a Road

Unitarian Universalism has a long and proud history of addressing the plight of those in need. In this session, our tradition of social service is embodied in the story of Joseph Tuckerman (1778-1840), Unitarian Universalism's first community minister and widely considered to be the founder of social work in the United States.

In honor of Tuckerman's work with poor families of Boston sailors, the children learn how to tie sailor knots. These knots also remind participants that we are "tied together" in caring relationships. Participants interview one another to learn more about one another's lives, in much the same way Tuckerman entered into deep conversation with the people he wanted to help.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the concept of service and its role in Unitarian Universalist faith as articulated in the Blake covenant, "And service its law."
- Build connection to Unitarian Universalist history through the story of 19th-century Unitarian minister Joseph Tuckerman
- Deepen relationships among participants
- Empower participants to think of themselves as people who are of service.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Give examples of how they and their congregation embody a faith covenant through acts of service
- Learn about Joseph Tuckerman, Unitarian minister and pioneer in the field of social work
- Experience the theme of connections to Tuckerman's work with waterfront families by tying sailor knots

- Experience Tuckerman's method of asking families what service they needed, by interviewing one another
- Understand "service" as an important Unitarian Universalist value.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Joseph Tuckerman's Revolution	15
Activity 2: Tying Sailor Knots	10
Activity 3: Personal Interviews	20
Faith in Action: Direct Service at a Shelter or Other Program	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Decorate Bags for Food Drive	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- In what ways are you of service—to your family, your community, your congregation, the larger world? Do you consider your service part of your faith? How so, or why not?
- In what ways are you tied to people in your community who are in need? Does your connection include asking others what they need?
- One of the gifts Joseph Tuckerman brought to his service to the poor of Boston was a willingness to listen to and learn from the people he served. In what situations do you feel you are an excellent listener? In what situations might you listen better?

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils or markers

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sample hand ornament: Trace your own hand on card stock, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the hand can be hung.
- Set out sample and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to trace the shape of their hand on the card stock. Encourage them to cut out the shapes, punch a hole in the top of the hand, and pass a piece of yarn through the hole to create a hand-shaped ornament. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the group wall hanging they created in Session 1.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with small motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold their hand in place while another person traces the shape. Then cut out the hand shape, punch the hole, and string the yarn for them.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Hand ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Pens, pencils, or markers

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants create hand-shaped ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set hand-shaped ornaments, and pens, pencils, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Suggest participants begin thinking about what is meant by "spirit of love." Continue by saying something like:

We started our session by saying the covenant created by the Unitarian James Vila Blake. Today we will explore the idea that service is the law of our community. What might it mean to say that service is the law of our religious community? What is service? Who makes that law? Who enforces it? To start, let's consider ways we can be of service to other people.

Ask a volunteer to start. Invite them to select a hand ornament, share verbally an example of how someone might be of service, and briefly write the words or a symbol for the words on the hand ornament. Or, model this by selecting a hand ornament yourself. Allow anyone who would like to write on a hand ornament to do so, whether they choose to share verbally or not. Remind the participants that anyone who does not wish to participate may pass.

Ask participants to attach their finished hand ornaments to the group wall hanging. Show them how to tie the yarn which is looped through the ornament onto the wall hanging.

After everyone who wants to write on an ornament and attach it to the wall hanging has had a chance to do so, if your chalice contains an actual candle flame, gather around the chalice and blow it out together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who cannot write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways we help another person. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time. They can also pass.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — JOSEPH TUCKERMAN'S REVOLUTION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Joseph Tuckerman's Revolution](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times so you are comfortable telling it to the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the children share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional: Learn more about Joseph Tuckerman. See this session's Introduction and resources provided under Find Out More.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the group the story.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Then say:

Unitarians and Universalists have a long history of believing that service to other people is an important part of religion. Can you think of any other Unitarians and/or Universalists who are famous for their service to people? (Some examples are Dorothea Dix, Clara Barton, Martha and Waitstill Sharp, and Theodore Parker.)

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- Think about times when people have helped you. Were there times when having someone help you felt bad? Why? Were there times when having someone help you felt good? Why?

- Think about times when you have helped someone else. Why did you want to help them? How did helping them make you feel? How do you think it made them feel? How could you tell?

ACTIVITY 2: TYING SAILOR KNOTS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Sailor Knot Instructions](#) (included in this document)
- Slender rope or cord, and a knife or scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Review Leader Resource 1 so you will be able to teach the group how to tie a basic sailor knot. You may wish to print out a few copies for visual learners to refer to.
- Cut the rope into 18" lengths. Provide several lengths of rope for each participant. This way, each child will be able to take home all the knots they succeeded in tying.
- Optional: Select a few additional nautical knots you can demonstrate without confusing the directions or spending much time consulting instructions. Choose knots that vary in difficulty, so a variety of participants can be both successful and challenged. Make sure you choose knots that make sense to you! Some illustrated resources include: the U.K. [Tollesbury Sailing Club](#) (at www.tollesburysc.co.uk/Knots/Knots_gallery.htm) website, and the [Animated Knots](#) (at www.animatedknots.com/) website (click on "Boating").

Description of Activity

Participants tie a variety of sailor knots. This activity connects with Joseph Tuckerman's service to the sea-faring families of Boston while reinforcing the program's metaphor for ties that hold us in covenanted community. The success of the activity depends on leaders being comfortable demonstrating how to tie sailor knots.

Distribute lengths of rope. Lead participants through the process of tying several types of knots. Choose some which are relatively easy and will guarantee success, and some which are more difficult and provide a challenge.

To conclude, ask participants to reflect on how they felt about tying the different knots. Did they have favorites? Ones they found very frustrating? Remind them that knots are a metaphor for the ways we are all tied

together. Ask them to reflect on the different ways they are tied in relationship with others. Are some connections easy to make and maintain? Are others more difficult? Are participants tied to people they do not necessarily like? How are they tied to people whom they do not even know?

Including All Participants

Participants with vision or hearing limitations or who have difficulty focusing may need a leader to sit next to them for this activity.

ACTIVITY 3: PERSONAL INTERVIEWS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Paper and pens/pencils

Description of Activity

A radical aspect of Joseph Tuckerman's service to the poor of Boston was his commitment to listening to and learning from the people he sought to help. This activity invites participants to ask caring questions, to listen deeply, and to share personal information they might not know about one another.

In a small group, it can be powerful to have each person interviewed by the whole group. This way, each person is heard by everyone, and everyone learns whatever each person chooses to share. However, if you have a large group you may wish to form smaller groups, each with an adult leader to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be interviewed. Assess the time you have for the interviews and calculate how much time each interview may have. Stick to the time limit to make sure each person is interviewed.

Ask the group whether they have seen celebrities interviewed on television. Say in your own words:

Joseph Tuckerman believed every person's life was worth hearing about. When he asked poor people what they needed, his questions came from genuine interest and concern. Now we will have the opportunity to interview the members of our group and learn more about each other. Each person will have a turn to be interviewed, and all members of the group will be asking questions.

Remind the group of your covenant, and point out the importance of treating the person being interviewed with respect. Affirm that no one has to answer any question they do not want to. Anyone can say "pass" if they would rather not answer. Some possible questions include: What have you done that you are most proud of? What scares you? What is your favorite activity? Why were

you given the name that you have? What would you do with \$1000?

After everyone has had the opportunity to be interviewed, lead the participants to reflect:

- How did it feel to be interviewed?
- Did any questions make you uncomfortable?
- Did it feel good to have the group learn more about you?
- How did it feel to learn more about others?

Including All Participants

Have participants volunteer to be interviewed rather than going around a circle, so that anyone who is uncomfortable as center of attention can easily pass.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Explain that the session is almost over and that we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space. Ask everyone to clean up their own area and the materials they were using first, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

Then bring the group back to the circle. Ask them to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together by..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about what ties us together. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out, and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body.

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: DIRECT SERVICE AT A SHELTER OR OTHER PROGRAM

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a nearby shelter for homeless families or survivors of domestic violence, or a program that serves meals to people in need.
- Speak with a staff person for that program and ask permission to bring your group to visit. Offer to help cook and serve a meal, to play games with participants or other project that would be of use.
- Arrange permission slips and transportation. Obtain any materials you might need.

Description of Activity

Tuckerman served the poor of Boston by building relationships with people who were in need. The best way for participants to experience Tuckerman's style of social service will be to engage in similar relationships themselves. Perhaps your congregation houses a shelter for the homeless or has an ongoing relationship with an organization which provides similar services. Make arrangements for participants in your group to spend time with the residents of a shelter or group home or clients of a program which provides meals.

In discussion with staff of the program you will be visiting, plan to be of service in a way appropriate to that program—cooking or serving a meal, reading to young residents, playing games, etc. Strive to participate in a form of service which involves direct conversation with residents/clients. For instance, distributing food at a food pantry will illustrate the theme of this session much more clearly than, say, stocking shelves at the same food pantry.

Before you go, ask participants what they expect to see and what they think the people they meet will be like. You might help the group think about asking residents or clients what they need in the context of the service you are planning. For example, children helping to serve a meal may have the opportunity to offer clients a choice of a side dish, rather than silently placing food on people's plates.

Take time after you return to process. Discuss:

- What was surprising?
- What was as you expected?
- How did you feel while we were helping?

- What interactions or conversations did you have with the people we were there to help? How did that feel?

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What connections did we make with the participants? What connections did the participants make with each other? How was this evident? How could we improve a sense of community within this group?

Approach your director of religious education for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

Spiritual warrior's pledge: Not for myself alone, but that all the people may live. — Brooke Medicine Eagle, *Buffalo Woman Comes Singing*

There is nothing to make you like other human beings so much as doing things for them. — Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road*

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we introduced the topic of service through the story of Joseph Tuckerman, a Unitarian minister who founded the practice of social work in America and created the organization which is now the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry. We tied sailor knots like those which might have been used by the sailors whose families Tuckerman served, and we listened deeply to one another through personal interviews.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... what it means to be of service. How do members of your family serve one another? In what ways is your family of service to your community? In what ways are you of service to your church? One of the themes of this week's session was the importance of listening and being in relationship in order to be of service. In what situations do members of your family wish that others would listen to them more carefully?

A Family Adventure. Joseph Tuckerman reached out to the poor of Boston, helping people to get everything from shoes to medicine to jobs. What organizations in your community serve those in need? Can your family help prepare or serve a meal, help younger children with homework, or otherwise connect with a nearby social

service organization (perhaps affiliated with your congregation)?

A Family Game. Ask your child to show you the knots they tied in class. Learn from your child how to tie some of the knots. Then have knot-tying races—or race to see how quickly you can untie them and then tie them up again.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: DECORATE BAGS FOR FOOD DRIVE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large paper grocery bags
- Color markers
- Optional: Plain paper and staplers if bags have printing on them

Preparation for Activity

- Work with your minister, religious educator, or lay leaders to identify a food bank for your donations, and to determine when and where to provide empty bags for the congregation and request the bags be returned filled with non-perishable food.
- Choose a date and a place for filled bags to be returned and make arrangements for reminder announcements.
- Contact a local food bank to determine what kinds of food they can use and where/when it can be dropped off.

Description of Activity

Participants invite others in the congregation to join them in doing service. Decorate large paper grocery bags with pictures and messages that will inspire non-perishable food contributions to a local food bank. Then, distribute the bags to the congregation, and at a future date collect the filled bags and bring them to the food bank.

Engage the group in a discussion about what foods make appropriate donations. Frame the discussion around answering the food bank's request for items *the organization says they need* (as opposed to asking participants to brainstorm what they think the food bank needs).

Ask the participants for messages about service they could put on the bags to encourage contributions of food. If the bags you are using have printing on the outside, participants can write and/or draw on sheets of paper, and then staple or tape the artwork to the bags.

Distribute bags and art materials. As children work or when they have completed decorating the bags, ask them to reflect on the fact that they are inviting others to be of service. How do they feel about asking other people to help? How do they feel when they, themselves, are asked to be of service in their home, school or community?

Make sure to include the group in follow-up plans to collect filled bags and bring the bags to the food bank.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 5: STORY: JOSEPH TUCKERMAN'S REVOLUTION

By Janeen K. Grohsmeyer.

On a cold January day in 1778, more than 200 years ago, while the United States was still fighting its War for Independence against Great Britain, a baby boy was born in Boston, Massachusetts. His parents named him Joseph.

"What will he be when he grows up?" wondered Joseph's father. "A lawyer? A soldier? A merchant?"

"He might choose to be any of those," answered Joseph's mother. "We must wait and see."

Sixteen years later, his parents got their answer. Joseph decided to become a minister. He went to Harvard College, but he didn't do a very good job at school.

"You should study harder," said his roommate, whose name was William Ellery Channing and who studied a lot. "It's an important job, leading a church and helping people." Joseph knew it was important, but he did not want to study all the time. "What do you want?" asked his roommate.

"To learn, but not just from books," Joseph said. So he would talk with people and go on walks, and he did study his books some of the time. Eventually, he and his roommate both finished at Harvard and became ministers.

"Would you like to be our minister, Mr. Tuckerman?" asked people in the town of Chelsea in 1801, when Joseph was 23 years old.

"Yes," said Joseph. "Thank you for asking." He became the minister at the church in Chelsea. He preached on Sundays—twice a day—and he helped the people in his congregation.

He also helped people who were not in his congregation. The town of Chelsea was near the ocean, and many sailors and their families lived there. Sometimes the men were away at sea for months or years, and their families had little money. Joseph would help them get food or clothes or whatever they needed.

After 25 years of preaching twice on Sundays, Joseph Tuckerman resigned from his job at the church. But he didn't stop helping people. Instead, he went to the city of Boston to help people there—hundreds and hundreds of people.

In 1826, Boston had many sailors and factory workers. There were also new immigrants from many different

nations, and farmers who had just come to Boston from the countryside. Almost all of them were poor. Their jobs—if they had them—did not pay very much. Many people could not afford enough food to eat. They couldn't afford to buy fuel to cook with or keep warm. They couldn't afford shoes or clothes, for themselves or their children.

Joseph's college roommate, who was now the Reverend William Ellery Channing, had just helped to create the American Unitarian Association. An important belief of the Unitarian religion is to do service by helping people, and so the Association hired Joseph Tuckerman as the minister-at-large in Boston, to work with the poor.

First, Joseph followed his roommate's advice from all those years ago: He studied books. He learned what other religious organizations had done to help poor people—what had worked and what had not. He learned what governments had done—or had not.

Then, he listened to what rich people in Boston had to say about poor people. "People are poor because they are lazy," said one man. "And they are all thieves."

"They're poor because they drink too much alcohol," said another person. "If we give them money, they'll just spend it to buy more drink."

"We shouldn't help them," said another. "The poor will always be with us. Jesus said so in the Bible."

Now Joseph was a minister, and he had read the Bible. He knew Jesus had also said we should help one another, especially the hungry, the sick, and the poor. He knew Jesus had been kind to everyone, even thieves and people who drank too much alcohol, and had preached that we must do likewise. Joseph Tuckerman believed in that message of Jesus, and he believed it is our duty to create a just society, a society that treats everyone fairly. He believed everyone should be encouraged to become the best person they can be.

Joseph Tuckerman knew he needed more information about how to help the poor. So he walked up and down the streets of Boston and along its waterfront, and talked to the poor people themselves. "What do you need?" he asked.

"Food," they would answer. Or sometimes clothes, blankets, shoes, medicine, a crutch for their brother who had lost a leg in a factory accident, wood to burn to keep warm and cook, or even a stove to cook on and a pot to cook in. They needed almost everything. Joseph tried to bring them what they asked for. "Thank you," they said. "And thank you for asking. No one ever asks us what we need. They give us what they think we need instead."

So Joseph Tuckerman listened some more. He heard stories of fathers who had gotten hurt at work and died, for there was no money for a doctor, and then the families had been told to leave their homes, because they had no money for rent. He heard stories of blind people slowly starving to death in their rooms. He heard stories of children, four and five years old, working long hours every day, and of old people left all alone.

Yes, he heard stories of people stealing, and people drinking too much alcohol, just as the rich people had said. But Joseph Tuckerman learned that mostly the poor people stole because they were hungry, and he believed drinking too much was a sickness, not a sin. Everyone still deserved help.

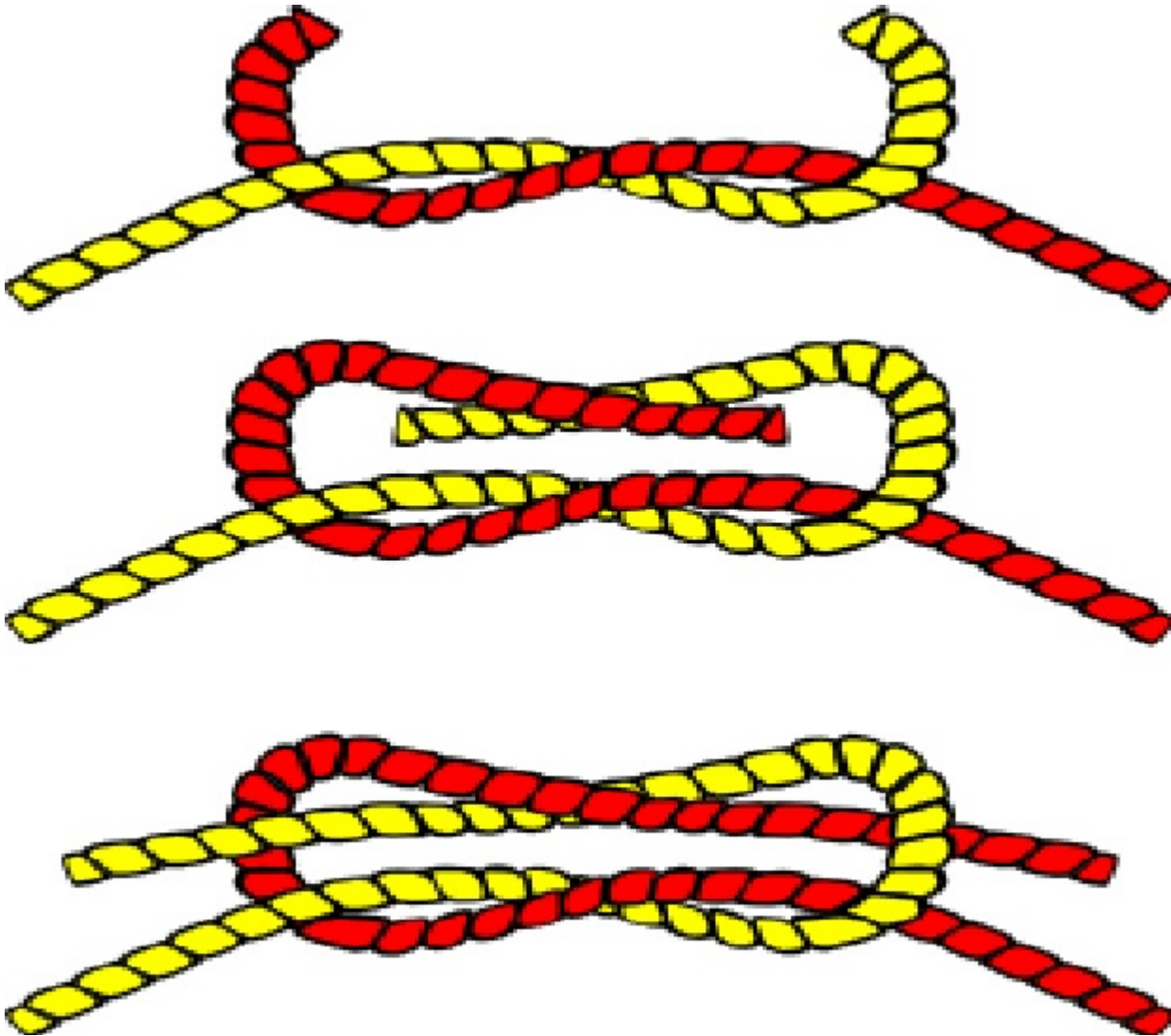
Helping hundreds of poor people was a service that could use many hands. Joseph was glad to work with friends, such as other ministers and congregations in Boston that had also been helping poor people. In 1834 Joseph and the American Unitarian Association started an organization called the Benevolent Fraternity. The

Ben Frat (that was its nickname) helped the churches work together, so each neighborhood in Boston had a place for people to get food and clothes.

As the years went by, the Ben Frat provided more than food and clothes. The Ben Frat listened to what people said they needed to help themselves. Its volunteers offered schools for the children, summer camps away from the city, and five chapels where people could worship on Sundays.

Joseph Tuckerman died in 1840, when he was 62 years old. But his social service lives on. Boston still has the Ben Frat, though it's now called the UU Urban Ministry. And Joseph Tuckerman's ideas—of treating everyone with respect, of seeing alcoholism as a disease instead of a sin, and of accepting our responsibility to stop poverty—are shared and acted on by people all around the world. Unitarian Universalists have placed his ideas in our seven Principles, and we still remember and honor the Unitarian minister Joseph Tuckerman for the way he made service his law.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 5:
LEADER RESOURCE 1: SAILOR KNOT INSTRUCTIONS



FIND OUT MORE

Contemporary Urban Ministry

Visit the website of the [UU Urban Ministry](http://www.uuum.org/templates/System/default.asp?id=42140) (at www.uuum.org/templates/System/default.asp?id=42140), the successor to the Benevolent Fraternity of Unitarian Churches which Joseph Tuckerman founded.

Joseph Tuckerman

Learn more about the life of [Joseph Tuckerman](http://www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/joseph-tuckerman.html) (at www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/joseph-tuckerman.html) on the Unitarian Universalist Historical Society's Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography website. Also find an [article on Tuckerman](http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/Heralds/Joseph-Tuckerman.php) (at [www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/Heralds/Joseph-](http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/Heralds/Joseph-Tuckerman.php)

[Tuckerman.php](http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/Heralds/Joseph-Tuckerman.php)) in the online collection Heralds of a Liberal Faith, on the website of the Harvard Square Library website.

The Art of Tying Sailor Knots

If you liked tying sailor knots, you might enjoy E. Annie Proulx's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel [The Shipping News](http://www.amazon.com/Shipping-News-E-Annie-Proulx/dp/0671510053) (at www.amazon.com/Shipping-News-E-Annie-Proulx/dp/0671510053), which is interwoven with the art of tying knots.

The website, [Animated Knots](http://www.animatedknots.com) (at www.animatedknots.com), has a section on "Boating" which offers how-to illustrations. Animated Knots by Grog (TM) has a slogan, "Better to know a knot and not need it, than need a knot and not know it."

SESSION 6: THE MORE WE GET TOGETHER

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. — Mark Morrison-Reed

Unitarian Universalist congregations are called to be of service to the world. At the same time, the vitality of each congregation depends on individual members' service to their own community. This session recognizes people who support their community with volunteer service. An adaptation of the Aesop's fable about the grasshopper and the ant helps children reflect on how members come together in service to their community. Children conduct a virtual treasure hunt to identify members whose service supports their congregation. They make woven bookmarks to give, in thanks, to congregational volunteers.

GOALS

This session will:

- Demonstrate how volunteer service sustains their Unitarian Universalist congregation
- Build connections between participants and adult congregational member/volunteers
- Empower participants to act in service to sustain their congregational community.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand service as a crucial element of sustaining a covenanted community
- Identify tasks and roles that constitute service to the congregation
- Articulate ways they do or could embody their faith through service to their congregation
- Appreciate the very different ways people contribute to a community, by responding to an adapted Aesop's fable
- Identify and thank adults who volunteer their service to the congregation.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — The Ant and the Grasshopper	10
Activity 2: Virtual Treasure Hunt for Congregational Volunteers	10
Activity 3: Make Straw Loom Bookmarks	25
Faith in Action: Volunteer in Service to the Congregation	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Make Beaded Bookmarks	15
Alternate Activity 2: Learn the Song "From You I Receive"	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- In what ways do you act in service to your congregation?
- In what ways does your work with your congregation serve you?
- What task which you have done to your congregation has been most meaningful or joyful for you? Why?
- Whose service to your congregation do you particularly value or admire? Why?

By leading this session as a volunteer, you provide a role model for participants and exemplify the session's purpose.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils or markers

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sample heart-shaped ornament to attach to the Rainbow Wall Hanging: Cut a heart shape out of card stock, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the heart can be hung.
- Obtain large, heart-shaped cookie cutters for participants to use as templates. Or, create a few templates by drawing hearts on card stock and cutting them out so participants can trace this shape to create ornaments.
- Set out materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to use the cookie cutters or templates to trace heart shapes onto the card stock. Encourage them to cut out the heart shapes, punch a hole in the top of the heart, and pass a piece of yarn through the hole to create a heart-shaped ornament. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the group wall hanging they created in Session 1.

Including All Participants

If some participants have difficulty with small motor control and cannot effectively manipulate scissors, encourage them to choose card stock colors for others to cut into heart shapes, or invite them to hold templates in place for another child to trace.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- Heart ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Pens, pencils, or markers

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,

and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake
- Set heart-shaped ornaments, and pens, pencils, and markers by the chalice. If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants create heart-shaped ornaments), make some in advance and set them by the chalice—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Be ready to model your own brief description of a way you have acted in service to the congregational community.

Description of Activity

The Opening brings participants together for a chalice-lighting ritual which honors the coming together of this community in the spirit of love, and reintroduces the Blake covenant.

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

The covenant we said together says service is the law of this congregation. What does "service" mean?

Allow some responses. Then say:

If service means helping, how can that be a law?

Allow responses, if there are some. Then say:

Let's think about what would happen if, in our congregation, no one followed the law of

service. What kinds of things would not get done?

Take a moment and think of ways our congregation depends on people acting in service of our community. Perhaps you can think of ways you or someone in your family has given service to help or support our congregation. What service have you done or could someone do?

Pause a moment. Then, ask a volunteer to select a heart shape, tell an example of an action to serve the congregational community, and briefly write or draw their idea on the heart. Or, model this yourself.

Invite participants to share verbally, one at a time. Also, invite anyone who would like to write on an ornament to do so, whether they choose to share verbally or not.

When all who wish to write on a heart shape have done so, ask participants to attach their heart ornaments to the Rainbow Wall Hanging. Show them how to tie the yarn which is looped through the ornament onto the wall hanging.

If your chalice contains an actual candle flame, re-gather the group around the chalice and blow it out together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who may be unable to write on a heart shape to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may be reluctant to share in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways we act in service to our congregational community. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time; however, do not put any participant on the spot to share in the group.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[The Ant and the Grasshopper](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to share it with the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the children share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- How do you think Hard-Working Ant felt watching Grasshopper play while she was working so hard? Have you ever been in a situation where you were working hard and people around you were not? What did you do? How did you feel about the person/people not doing their share?
- Would you have wanted to let Grasshopper in to eat some of the food?
- If you did not want to let him in, and he came in anyway, how would you feel? What would you do?
- What if he did not have any helpful skills like singing? Would you feel any different about him being there?
- Do you think when the next summer comes, Grasshopper will help gather food? Do you think next summer any of the ants will choose to sing and dance rather than work to prepare for the winter?
- What do you think will happen if Grasshopper, next year, does not work? Will he ask the ants for food again? Will Welcoming Ant and Hard-Working Ant feel and act the same as they did in this story?

ACTIVITY 2: VIRTUAL TREASURE HUNT FOR CONGREGATIONAL VOLUNTEERS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of your congregation's member directory
- Leader Resource 1, [Volunteer Treasure Hunt](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: List(s) of congregational committees and their members
- Optional: Paper and pens/pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Review Leader Resource 1 and adapt, add, or delete questions to suit your congregation. If

you do not already know, find out what work volunteers (as opposed to paid staff) do at your congregation. Be prepared to help the children answer the questions you will give them. You may need to dig to learn about some volunteers' behind-the-scenes roles.

- Decide whether participants will work as one large group or in groups of three or four. For a whole group discussion, write each question from Leader Resource 1 on an individual sheet of newsprint and post the sheets. For small group work, prepare a list of questions, blank paper, and a pen/pencil for each group.

Description of Activity

This activity provides a treasure hunt for valuable people, rather than valuable items.

If religious education time runs concurrently with a worship service or other, adult programming, lead participants in a "virtual" hunt for the names of people who volunteer, rather than tracking down the people themselves. However—if you have the opportunity to do so without disrupting worship or meetings—you might lead the children to ask actual people the questions and collect names of congregational volunteers that way.

Say, in your own words:

In the story about Grasshopper and the Ants, the insect community needed the efforts of all its members in order for all to eat. Similarly, our congregation needs the efforts of many different people to sustain everything we do with and for one another. Let's see how much we know about who these people are and what they do to help us all.

If you are forming small groups, distribute the questions from Leader Resource 1, the member directories and other information you have gathered, and pens/pencils. Invite the groups to compete to see which can complete the treasure hunt first.

If the group will work together, post the sheets of newsprint with the questions. Lead everyone to pool their knowledge of the congregation to fill in the volunteers' names on each sheet. Let the group drive the process, even if it means you do not share all you know about congregational volunteers.

When the treasure hunt seems complete, ask the children whether it was easy or difficult. How well do the children feel they know the adult members of the congregation? You may also wish to have the children guess how many different volunteer jobs there are in your congregation on any given year. See if they can

think of more volunteer jobs that somehow get done but are not on the list of questions you prepared. Discuss:

- What do you suppose motivates people to do these various jobs?
- What do the volunteers get out of their service?
- What jobs might you want to take on in this congregation, when you are older? What jobs might you want to help with now?

Including All Participants

A child who is new to the congregation should work with others who are more likely to come up with answers to the questions. The child could look for names in a member directory or write down the names as other children identify volunteers.

ACTIVITY 3: MAKE STRAW LOOM BOOKMARKS (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Straw Loom Bookmark Instructions](#) (included in this document)
- Variegated (multicolored) yarn
- Drinking straws, six for each participant (preferably milkshake straws, which are both longer and wider than a standard straw)
- Sewing needles, one for each participant, appropriately sized for the yarn, beads, and the straws
- Books of different sizes to serve as measuring guides
- Masking tape and scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Optional: Beads large enough to thread onto the yarn

Preparation for Activity

- Read the instructions in Leader Resource 2, obtain the materials, and make a sample bookmark to show participants.
- Set out materials at work tables.
- Invite one or more adult lay leaders to join the group at the close of this activity or session to accept bookmarks on behalf of the designated recipients. Or, make a plan to present the bookmarks to volunteers at another time when the children are present. Be ready to share the plan with the group at the close of this activity.

- Optional: Review Alternate Activity 1, Make Beaded Bookmarks and consider substituting it for this activity. The beaded bookmarks take less time to make.

Description of Activity

Participants weave bookmarks to give to congregation members identified in Activity 2, Virtual Treasure Hunt for Congregational Volunteers. Weaving and giving the bookmarks not only honors volunteers who sustain the community, it also embodies the "tied together" theme of the program and, if an adult guest can come receive the gift, gives the children an opportunity to connect with adult members of the congregation.

As participants work, engage them in choosing congregational volunteers to thank with a bookmark. Call their attention to the results of the Activity 2 "treasure hunt;" encourage them to choose someone outside their own family. Ask children the reasons for their choices. Help them prepare what to say when they give a volunteer the gift. You might suggest words such as, "Thank you for your service which helps tie our community together." If adult volunteers are present to receive the bookmark gifts, these words spoken by one of the participants may be enough for a simple, symbolic presentation from the group.

Invite one or more volunteers to make a bookmark for the Rainbow Wall Hanging. Invite them to tie a bookmark to the wall hanging now or during the Closing.

If no adults can join you to accept participants' gifts, tell the group your plan for presenting the gifts at another time. If you will give bookmarks to adults on behalf of the group, be sure to report back to the children after you have made the presentation. If children will give bookmarks to recipients on their own, make a note to ask them at a future meeting about their interaction with the adult volunteer(s).

Including All Participants

A leader should pair up with any child who lacks the manual dexterity to weave a bookmark on their own.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home
- Optional: Bookmarks made in Activity 3

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

- Optional: Invite a few participants to make a bookmark to hand on the group wall hanging.

Description of Activity

Say in your own words:

The session is almost over and we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space.

Ask everyone to first clean up their own area and the materials they were using, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

Then, gather the group in the circle. If you have not yet done so, invite one or more volunteers to attach bookmarks to the group's wall hanging. When all have returned to the circle, ask participants to cross their arms in front of their body and then take the hands of the people on either side of them. Say "We are tied together by the spirit of service when we ..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out, and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: VOLUNTEER IN SERVICE TO THE CONGREGATION

Preparation for Activity

- Talk with congregational leaders who are responsible for the area(s) in which you wish participants to volunteer. Find out what the children can do, and when they might do it. Arrange the service opportunity, including additional adult supervision, as needed.

Description of Activity

An opportunity to serve empowers children as participants in a community covenant and demonstrates that every person, whatever their age, can contribute. Children can volunteer in many ways, such as:

- Serving as greeters and ushers at a worship service
- Preparing and serving snacks at coffee hour

- Collecting orders of service and other disposable paper for recycling
- Pulling weeds, watering plants, and tidying grounds
- Cleaning up after a congregational social event
- Assisting adults with the care of younger children during a congregational meeting.

The children will find their service most meaningful if they do a job which really needs to be done.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What connections did we make with the children? What connections did the children make with each other? How was this evident? How could we improve a sense of community within this group?

Approach your religious educator for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

The central task of the religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. — Mark Morrison-Reed

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we explored what service means in the context of our congregation. We heard an adaptation of Aesop's fable about the ants and the grasshopper, and how, in the end, the grasshopper who had chosen not to work for the community was able to serve in his own special way. In a "treasure hunt" we identified people in our congregation who serve our community in various capacities. We made woven bookmarks to give to some of these people as "thank you" gifts.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Tell your child(ren) about ways you volunteer on behalf of your congregation and why you have chosen the particular tasks you have taken on. What do you get out of volunteering? How does serving your community make you feel? Why does it matter that you do it?

A Family Adventure. Volunteer, as a family, to serve your congregation. Can you make music for a worship service? Serve as greeters for worship? Bring snacks to share for a social hour? Tidy or restock the religious

education program's supply closet? Together, choose a task you would feel good about volunteering to do. Seek out the person responsible for that aspect of congregational life and arrange the service opportunity. Afterward, discuss how the experience made you feel. Perhaps you will decide as a family to volunteer again.

A Family Game. The children had a treasure hunt to discover the names of the people who perform various volunteer services for the congregation. As a family, see how many congregational tasks you can think of and for which you can identify who does them. Write them down so you can see how many jobs there are and how well you know the membership of your congregation and the services various people do. You may wish to do this game in competition with another family which has a child in this group.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: MAKE BEADED BOOKMARKS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, [Beaded Bookmarks](#) (included in this document)
- Colorful [hemp cord](#) (at www.hempjewelryshop.com/index.asp?PageAction=VIEWCATS&Category=26), [embroidery floss](#) (at store.quilting-warehouse.com/201161.html), or yarn
- Beads of a size appropriate to the thickness of your cord, floss, or yarn; wide, shallow containers to hold beads
- Sewing needles appropriate to the size of your cord or floss
- Books of different sizes to serve as measuring guides
- Optional: Glue

Preparation for Activity

- Read the instructions (Leader Resource 3), obtain the materials, and make a sample bookmark to show participants.
- Set out materials at work tables. Provide beads in shallow containers to keep them from rolling away and to facilitate sharing.

Description of Activity

Beaded bookmarks make excellent gifts to give congregational volunteers, and the children will be able to make them more quickly and easily than the straw loom bookmarks (Activity 3). If each child wants to give

several gifts, the beaded bookmarks may be a better choice.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEARN THE SONG "FROM YOU I RECEIVE" (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook

Preparation for Activity

- Learn "From You I Receive, To You I Give," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, so you can teach it. You can hear the tune on the Unitarian Universalist [Church of the Larger Fellowship](http://clf.uua.org/music/) (at clf.uua.org/music/) website. Or, if you would be more comfortable, invite a musical adult to teach the song.

Description of Activity

The song "From You I Receive, To You I Give" is a beautiful articulation of how we serve one another in community. Teach the song line by line. Then, lead the children to sing it several times through. To lead this song as a round, have the second group enter when the first group completes the line "From you I receive... "

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 6: STORY: THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER

Adapted from an Aesop's fable.

One summer's day, a Grasshopper was hopping about in a field, chirping and singing to his heart's content. Hard-Working Ant passed by, struggling with the weight of a kernel of corn she was taking to the nest. "Why not come and sing with me?" said Grasshopper. "You are working much too hard."

"I am helping to store food for the winter," said Hard-Working Ant. "You should be doing this too, since there won't be anything to eat once it gets cold and the snow falls."

"Why worry about winter?" said Grasshopper. "There is plenty of food around here!" Hard-Working Ant shook her head and continued on her way carrying the heavy kernel of corn.

Day after day, Hard-Working Ant trudged back and forth from the cornfield to the ant nest, struggling to carry kernel after kernel to store for the winter.

Day after day, Grasshopper danced merrily across the fields, teasing Hard-Working Ant.

"Forget about work! Listen up! Enjoy the summer!" Grasshopper sang.

When the cold winds of winter began to blow and the puffy flakes of snow began to fall, food did indeed become very scarce. Grasshopper soon found himself hungry and cold. But the ants were toasty warm, sharing all the food they had collected during the summer.

Poor Grasshopper came one day to the door of the ants' house, shivering so badly he could hardly knock. Welcoming Ant answered the door and looked at poor, hungry Grasshopper. "Please," Grasshopper begged. "It is so cold out here and I am starving. There is no food anymore."

Welcoming Ant stepped aside to let Grasshopper in, but another ant stepped forward. It was Hard-Working Ant who had watched Grasshopper sing and dance all summer while she worked hard to gather food. "Don't let him in," Hard-Working Ant protested. "He wasted his summer singing and dancing while we worked hard to store our food. He does not deserve to reap the benefits of our hard work."

Welcoming Ant, the one who had been about to let Grasshopper in, shook his head. "That may be so," said Welcoming Ant. "But we cannot allow him to starve. He is a creature like us. Just because he made a foolish choice, it does not mean we can condemn him to death." Welcoming Ant waved one of his six arms and invited Grasshopper inside.

Grasshopper eagerly walked into the ants' house and sat right down at the table filled with food. He stuffed himself until he was full, while Hard-Working Ant stared resentfully at him. Then Grasshopper pushed himself away from the table and began to sing. It was a catchy tune, a happy one and soon all the ants found themselves laughing and dancing, even Hard-Working Ant.

And all through that cold, long winter, the ants shared with Grasshopper their food, and Grasshopper shared with them his songs and his joy. They all had a wonderful time together—even Hard-Working Ant. She had to admit the winter time was more pleasant with Grasshopper and his songs around.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 6:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: VOLUNTEER TREASURE HUNT

Who in this congregation...

Plays music for services or sings in the choir?

Makes coffee, tea, or snacks?

Teaches religious education?

Greets people as they come in?

Helps plan special events?

Serves on the board of trustees/board of directors?

Helps new people learn about the congregation?

Helps maintain or improve the building?

Helps maintain or improve the grounds?

Helps plan or lead teenagers' meetings and events?

Helps clean up after coffee hour?

Helps clean up after special events?

Pays the congregation's bills/writes checks?

Works on social justice projects?

Helps lead worship services?

Brings food to potlucks?

Helps people who need transportation to get to and from the congregation?

Makes sure the congregation has flowers/decorations for worship/special events?

Visits people who are sick or in the hospital?

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 6:

LEADER RESOURCE 2: STRAW LOOM BOOKMARK INSTRUCTIONS

1. A two- to six-straw "loom" will work best. Decide how many straws to use; the more straws, the wider a bookmark you will weave.
2. Cut as many pieces of yarn as you have straws, each piece about five inches longer than the straws.
3. Thread a needle with a piece of yarn, draw the yarn through a straw, and lay down the straw with yarn showing at both ends. Repeat, to draw a piece of yarn through each straw.
4. Tie the tops of all the yarn pieces together in a single knot, without letting the straws slip off the yarn. Lay the straws on the table, side by side, and push all the straws up until they touch the knot.
5. Tear off a length of masking tape and tape the straws together. Tape across all the straws, just below the knot, and then wrap the tape around the back side, too, to hold the row of straws flat.
6. Cut a piece of yarn about six feet long. Tie one end of the yarn to a straw on the end of the row of straws, just below the tape. Weave the yarn across the straws—over one straw and under the next. When you reach the last straw, wrap the yarn around it and go back in the other direction.
7. Keep weaving until the whole length of the straws is wrapped in yarn. If you wish to change colors, cut the yarn, leaving a tail to tie to a new piece of yarn in your next color.
8. When you finish weaving, tie the yarn to one of the end straws and trim it.
9. Take off the masking tape. Hold the knot at the top of the weaving with one hand, and use your other hand to slide the straws out of the weaving, one by one.
10. Push the weaving up to the knot. Then, tie the ends of loose yarn together at the bottom of the weaving, with an overhand knot.
11. If you like, tie beads onto the yarn that remains at the bottom of the weaving before trimming the loose yarn.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 6:

LEADER RESOURCE 3: BEADED BOOKMARKS

- Have children cut cord, embroidery floss, or 1/4-inch ribbon into 24-inch lengths.
- Knot one end of the cord, to keep beads from slipping off. The knot will be more secure if it is not at the very end of the cord—it can always be trimmed when the bookmark is done.
- Thread a needle with the cord. Use the needle to string beads onto three to five inches of the cord.
- Tie a knot at the end of the beads to keep them in place.
- Leaving eight to 12 inches of the cord bare—enough to accommodate the length of a page in a book—tie another knot to hold more beads. String more beads onto another three to five inches of cord.
- Tie a fourth knot at the end of the second row of beads, to hold them in place.
- You may wish to dot some glue on the two end knots before trimming the ends of the bookmark.

FIND OUT MORE

Read the original Aesop's fable of the [Ant and the Grasshopper](http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Aesop/Aesops_Fables/The_Ant_and_the_Grasshopper_p1.html) (at www.pagebypagebooks.com/Aesop/Aesops_Fables/The_Ant_and_the_Grasshopper_p1.html).

Use the UUA's online [Leader's Library](http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/index.php) (at www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/index.php) to find articles on a wide variety of topics related to congregational service.

Learn more about [soda straw loom weaving](http://www.kid-at-art.com/htdoc/lesson9.html) (at www.kid-at-art.com/htdoc/lesson9.html).

SESSION 7: ONE PERSON MAKES A DIFFERENCE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Children cannot eat rhetoric, and they cannot be sheltered by commissions. I don't want to see another commission that studies the needs of kids. We need to help them. — Marion Wright Edelman in Brian Lanker, I Dream A World

Each of us, at any age, can serve as well as inspire others to act in service. This session prepares children to find their own point of entry into service and leadership. They hear the story of Craig Keilburger, who began working to make a difference at age 12. To help child laborers in Pakistan he founded Free the Children, a service organization which now involves thousands of child and youth activists around the world.

The children explore the nature of leadership in a game related to Follow the Leader. They incorporate the "tied together" theme of the program by making canvas rugs with fringed edges in the style of rugs child laborers knot in Pakistan and other countries.

GOALS

This session will:

- Explore the power of each individual to make a difference in the world through service
- Consider the nature of leadership and how our actions can encourage others to act for good
- Empower participants to think of themselves as leaders who can make a difference
- Promote empathy with child laborers and others around the world whose lives our service could change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Share examples of how they do or could embody UU faith through acts of service
- Learn about Craig Keilburger, a youth who founded an international service organization of young people helping other young people
- Practice leading, following, and identifying leaders in a game and reflect on their own experiences leading and following

- Develop empathy with child rug-makers and embody the "tied together" theme of the program by making their own knotted rug.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Craig Keilburger and Free the Children	10
Activity 2: Find the Leader Game	10
Activity 3: Make Fringed Fabric Rugs	25
Faith in Action: Hold Benefit for Free the Children	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: "I Made a Difference" Mural	20
Alternate Activity 2: Sharing Joys and Concerns	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- In what ways are you of service to the world?
- In what ways do you act as a leader?
- How do you feel about thinking of yourself as a role model?
- Who inspires you to act in service to the larger good?
- Your self-image as a person who is of service to the world, and as someone with the capacity to lead others toward caring will help the children develop self-images as compassionate leaders.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils or markers

Preparation for Activity

- Create a sample hand ornament: Trace your own hand on card stock, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the hand can be hung.
- Set out sample and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to trace the shape of their hand on card stock, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, and pass a piece of yarn through the hole to create a hand-shaped ornament. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the group wall hanging.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with small motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold their hand in place while another person traces the shape. Then cut out the hand shape, punch the hole, and string the yarn for them.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Hand ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Pens, pencils, or markers

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:
Love is the spirit of this church,

and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants create hand-shaped ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set hand-shaped ornaments, and pens, pencils, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Suggest participants begin thinking about what is meant by "spirit of love." Continue by saying something like:

The covenant we said together speaks about service. What kinds of service do you think kids can do, to help the world around them, or even the world far from where we live? Can you think of ways that you do, or could, serve the larger world? We will write ways on our hand ornaments.

Ask a volunteer to start. Invite them to select a hand ornament, share verbally an example of how someone might be of service, and briefly write the words or a symbol for the words on the hand ornament. Or, model this by selecting a hand ornament yourself. Allow anyone who would like to write on a hand ornament to do so, whether they choose to share verbally or not. Remind participants that anyone who does not wish to participate may pass.

Ask participants to attach their finished hand ornaments to the group wall hanging. Show them how to tie the yarn which is looped through the ornament onto the wall hanging.

After everyone who wants to write on an ornament and attach it to the wall hanging has had a chance to do so, if your chalice contains an actual candle flame, gather around the chalice and blow it out together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who may be unable to write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group,

let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways we show love to another person. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time; they can also pass if they choose.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — CRAIG KEILBURGER AND FREE THE CHILDREN (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Craig Keilburger and Free the Children](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to share it with the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those you think will best help the children share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

Invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion with these questions:

- Many people imagine making a big difference in the world, but Craig Keilburger went all out to really do so. What do you think made that possible for him?
- How do you feel hearing Craig's story? Inspired? Overwhelmed? What parts of his story seem relevant to you, and things you have done or want to do?
- Of the people you know personally—your friends, family, teachers, other people you know—who do you think has made an especially big difference in the world? Why?

ACTIVITY 2: FIND THE LEADER GAME (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have an open space large enough for the group to sit in a circle in chairs or on the floor.

- Learn the rules of the game so you can easily and smoothly explain it to the group.

Description of Activity

Craig Keilburger is just one example of a wide variety of people who have inspired others through their leadership. This game is a fun way for participants to try leading and following, and to see how easy or difficult it is to identify leaders.

Invite the group to sit in a circle to play a seated version of Follow the Leader. Explain that one person will be the leader, and that the rest of the group will imitate them repeating the actions of the leader. Another person will be the guesser; they will leave the room (or close their eyes), while the leader is chosen. The leader begins actions for the others in the circle to follow, and the guesser returns (or opens their eyes) and tries to determine who in the group is the leader.

Tell the group:

In order to hide the leader from the guesser, the leader will need to change their actions while they think the guesser is looking at someone else, and the group will need to be as prompt as possible in following the leader.

Once the guesser has correctly identified the leader, choose a new guesser and repeat the game until everyone has had a turn at the various roles. In choosing leaders, consider that this game can provide a safe way for some children to try a leadership role who do not ordinarily seek one.

Play a few rounds of the game. Leave time to ask children to reflect on their experience:

- What role was most difficult: leading, following, or guessing?
- Which role was the most fun?
- Was it easy or hard to tell who was a leader and who was a follower? Why?
- When you see a group of kids interacting on the playground, can you usually tell who is leading and who is following? How do you know?
- Have you seen the leaders in groups of kids use their leadership in good ways? How about hurtful ways? Why do you think other kids follow?

If the mood of the group seems suitable, you might invite participants to take a moment to silently consider these questions:

- Do you think of yourself as a leader, a follower, both, or neither?

- Do you take different roles in different situations? Why do you think that is?

Including All Participants

If a child in your group cannot see well enough to follow the actions of a leader or observe clues as to who the leader might be, ask all leaders to use actions that make noise, such as clapping their hands, stomping their feet, clicking their tongue. This might be a fun way for any group to play the game if identifying the leader turns out to be too easy.

ACTIVITY 3: MAKE FRINGED FABRIC RUGS (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A piece of light-colored fabric, approximately 2x3 feet, for each participant
- Pencils for all participants
- Colorful permanent markers and scissors (including left-handed scissors) to share
- Yarn, fine hemp cord, or embroidery floss; and sewing needles for all participants
- Newspaper to protect work surfaces

Preparation for Activity

- Cut a rectangle of solid-colored fabric for each person. Two by three feet is large enough to suggest a rug; to save time and materials, you could make the rectangles smaller. Canvas is the ideal weight for a rug, but any light-colored fabric without a print will do. Sheets from a thrift store are an excellent, affordable source for fabric.
- Obtain yarn, fine hemp cord, or embroidery floss to make fringe for the rugs, and sewing needles—one for each participant—with eyes large enough to accommodate the yarn.
- Make a sample rug to show the group, using the directions below.
- Anticipate that some children may not complete their rugs during this session. Make a plan for where you can store this project and when the children can work on the rugs again.
- Lay out newspaper to protect work surfaces from permanent marker.
- Set out materials.

Description of Activity

Participants make fringed rugs in the style of the knotted rugs made by the child laborers who inspired Craig Keilburger to work for children's rights.

Using the sample you have made, explain and demonstrate how children will make the rugs. Invite them to get started.

Encourage children to complete their pattern using marker dots. Tell them each dot represents a knot a child laborer might tie in an actual carpet. They may tire of making dots and choose to draw lines or blocks of color. This is fine, but point out that people making the actual rugs do not have this option.

As they work, suggest the children imagine creating their rug pattern with thousands of tiny knots, rather than simply drawing. Engage discussion with these questions:

- What effect do you think such taxing work would have on a child's mind and body over the course of several years?
- Why might manufacturers want to use children for this labor? Why don't manufacturers make these rugs another way?
- What would kids need in order to have a better life?

Watch the time. Give children a heads up when you think they ought to be switching to the fringe-making part of this activity in order to complete the rug in the time allotted.

Note: This activity intentionally offers children a taste of the work some children are compelled to do in parts of the world. A bit of frustration can enhance a child's learning experience, but do not allow any particular child to become personally discouraged. If an aspect of this project appears difficult for a child, quickly offer help.

Children may indeed need and want more time to finish their rugs. When it is time to stop this activity, let the group know where they may leave uncompleted rugs and when they will have the opportunity to finish them.

Optional: You may wish to invite a volunteer to attach their rug to the group's Rainbow Wall hanging, now or during the Closing.

Directions for Patterned, Fringed Rugs

- Lay a square of fabric over newspaper.
- Draw a pattern on the fabric with pencil.
- Color the pattern by making dots with permanent markers.

- Create fringe on the two shorter edges of the rug.
 - Thread yarn on a large needle. Pull enough yarn through the needle's eye to give you a good length of doubled yarn.
 - Insert the needle approximately half an inch from the edge you plan to fringe. Pull the yarn almost all the way through the fabric, leaving just enough for the desired length of fringe (approximately two inches).
 - Then, double over the yarn and cut the front to match the length you have left behind.
 - Tie the front two strands of yarn to the back two with a single knot.
 - To make the next piece of fringe, insert the needle approximately half an inch from the knot you have just tied, and repeat the process.
 - Continue along the edge of the fabric until that side of the rug is completely fringed. Repeat on the opposite edge.

Including All Participants

Be ready to help children with manual dexterity limitations, especially with tying the knots of the fringe.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home
- Optional: A rug made by a participant in Activity 3

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Explain that the session is almost over and the group will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space. Ask everyone to first clean up their own area and the materials they were using, and then clean another area or help someone else. Make sure participants know where to put unfinished rugs and project materials. If you wish, invite a volunteer to hang their rug on the Rainbow Wall Hanging. They might attach the rug to the hanging with a few strands of its fringe or with an extra length of yarn.

When the entire meeting space is clean, bring the group back to the circle. Ask them to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together in the spirit of service when we..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase.

When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: HOLD BENEFIT FOR FREE THE CHILDREN

Description of Activity

Fundraising with a talent show or benefit concert can give children a fun and empowering way to join the tens of thousands of children and adults worldwide supporting Free the Children. You may wish to make and sell baked goods, a soup lunch, or other snacks as part of your fundraiser. Invite children of other ages from your religious education program, and even adults, to share a special talent: singing, instrumental music, gymnastics, martial arts, dance, sleight of hand, or whatever others gifts people have to share. Or, borrow a karaoke machine and have a karaoke competition—UU Idol. As part of your show, make sure children explain what [Free the Children](http://www.freethechildren.com/) (at www.freethechildren.com/) is and does, and why they are asking for help in supporting it.

Including All Participants

Children who do not wish to be on stage can help make posters for publicity, make and photocopy an event program, prepare and/or sell snacks, or collect money.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What connections did we make with the children? What connections did the children make with each other? How was this evident?

How could we improve a sense of community within this group?

Approach your religious educator for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of [humanity]. — Rabindranath Tagore, Indian poet and (1913) Nobel Prize winner

Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire. It was given to us to learn at the outset that life is a profound and passionate thing. — Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we explored the power of one person to make a difference, both with their own service and by inspiring others to join them in working for a better world. We heard about Craig Keilburger, who at the age of 12 became an advocate for child laborers. He founded the organization Free the Children, which helps young people around the world organize on behalf of education for children. We played a game where one person tried to guess who was leading as the others all performed the same actions. The children made created fringed rugs in the style of rugs made by the child laborers Craig Keilburger chose to help.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. How do you make a difference in the world? Discuss with your family what things each of you choose to do to act in service to the larger world. In what ways are you leaders? Invite family members to share stories of times when other people have followed their lead in doing service.

A Family Adventure. Visit a local rug or carpet shop. Observe not only the patterns and colors, but also how the rugs are constructed. Look closely at the individual knots on handmade rugs. What would it be like to tie all those knots? Ask the proprietor of the store whether the Rugmark Foundation has certified that the rugs they sell were made without child labor. You can read a [story about RUGMARK](#) (at clf.uua.org/uume/1204/feelings.html) in the online archives of the Unitarian Universalist magazine for children, [uu&me!](#) (at clf.uua.org/uume/0309/index.html)

A Family Game. The children played a game in which one person left the room or hid their eyes while another person in the circle was chosen as leader. The others in the circle tried to follow the actions of the leader as closely as possible, while the designated guesser tried to determine who in the circle was the leader. If you have enough people at home, try this game. You can always invite friends to play, or simply play Follow the Leader without the added challenge of guessing. How

often do children in your family feel like they are the leaders? After you play the game, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being a leader.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: "I MADE A DIFFERENCE" MURAL (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large roll of plain paper
- Pencils and color markers
- Masking tape or painter's tape
- String and scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Determine a hallway or meeting room in your congregation that gets significant traffic and get permission to place the mural there.
- Ask your minister, religious educator, or lay leaders to invite congregational members of all ages, including other religious education participants, to look for and add to the mural. You might ask for an announcement to be made during worship service.
- Tear off a long sheet of paper and secure it with tape to a table or floor work surface.
- Set out pencils and markers.

Description of Activity

The "I Made a Difference" mural invites children and adults of the wider congregation to share about the ways they act in service, empowering the whole community to think of themselves as agents for positive change and encouraging multigenerational connections.

Explain that you will make a mural to display in the congregation, and the mural will offer a place for everyone to share the ways they act in service. Invite the children to sketch the words "I Made a Difference" in large, penciled letters across the top of the mural, and then, in somewhat smaller letters: "Please tell us how...". Invite them to color the letters with markers and decorate the mural with pictures of people making a positive difference. Make sure they leave plenty of space for congregants to share their responses.

Display the mural in the place you have chosen. Tape a few pencils and markers to long pieces of string and tape the strings to the wall next to the mural so people can write their responses.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn
- Optional: Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Description of Activity

In addition to building community through sharing information about important events in participants' lives, this version of sharing joys and concerns uses a ritual activity based on the metaphor of knots, allowing children to experience being literally "tied together."

Gather participants in a seated circle. Say:

We are all tied together by the bonds of community. What affects any one of us affects us all. We take time now to share our greatest joys and deepest concerns, events that have happened since last time we met which we hold in our hearts.

Invite a volunteer to go first and give them the ball of yarn. Ask them to share their joy or concern and then, holding the end of the yarn, throw the ball of yarn to another child in the circle. This child may either share a joy or concern or choose to pass, but in either case they keep hold of the strand of yarn as they throw the ball of yarn to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a chance to share or pass, and the whole group is connected by a web of yarn.

At the end of the sharing, you may invite participants to take turns winding the yarn back onto the ball. Or, pass around scissors and invite the children to cut a short piece of the yarn and tie it around their wrist as a sign of the covenant of caring which the group shares.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 7: STORY: CRAIG KEILBURGER AND FREE THE CHILDREN

Adapted by Lynn Ungar from a story by Jerrilyn Jacobs on the [My Hero project website](#) and information on the [Free the Children](#) website.

You could say it all started with a little thing. Craig Keilburger watched his older brother Marc get excited about a science project when Marc was 12 years old. Marc's project was more than science; it was also service. Craig was impressed when his brother collected signatures for a petition to ban products harmful to the environment. Craig says: "I remember watching him and thinking how amazing it was [that] he's changing the world...and I wanted to follow in his footsteps."

This little bit of inspiration went a long way. When Craig himself was 12, he read an article about another 12-year-old boy—this one in Pakistan. Iqbal Masih was murdered for calling the world's attention to the terrible conditions endured by children working in the carpet-making industry. "I saw him as a hero for speaking out about child labor," says Keilburger. "I suddenly understood that a young person can make a difference."

Craig decided to educate himself about human rights. He became so passionate about it that his parents—reluctantly—allowed him to leave his home in Canada to travel through South Asia with a human rights worker. There Craig saw, first-hand, the personal horrors behind child labor issues. He came home to Canada determined to find a way to help the children he had met.

Craig managed to get six of his friends excited about how kids could help other kids across the world, and the seven of them founded a group called Kids Can Free the Children. Craig and his friends worked to make it possible for children to get education instead of jobs. Free the Children created Friendship Schools, a program that connected schools in North America, Europe, and other wealthier, industrialized countries with schools in developing countries. More and more kids joined in on the effort, raising money with bake sales and car washes and learning about human rights and the needs of other kids around the world.

Craig Keilburger founded Free the Children in 1995. Since then, the organization has accomplished a lot:

- Built more than 500 schools in developing countries, providing education to more than 50,000 children every day

- Established Youth in Action groups in more than 1,000 schools in Canada and the United States, engaging more than 20,000 young people
- Distributed more than 207,500 school and health kits to children in need
- Shipped medical supplies worth more than \$15 million and built health care centers to help improve the lives of more than 512,500
- Equipped 23,500 women to be economically self-sufficient
- Improved access to clean water and sanitation for 138,500 people

One boy who wanted to help the world turned into two brothers who believed they could make a difference. One brother who wanted to make life better for child laborers on the other side of the world got six friends involved. Now the organization they started has tens of thousands of kids and adults making change around the world.

"Of all the well-known people I've met, the person who inspired me the most would be Mother Teresa," says Craig Keilburger. "She had this incredible power about her...because she had such a big heart. I asked her how she kept her hope in the face of so much poverty and she said 'We must always realize that we can do no great things, only small things with great love.'"

"You have the spirit of Mother Teresa or Nelson Mandela inside you. No matter what your gifts, no matter what your talents, kids can help change the world." Craig Keilburger's life is proof that his words are true.

FIND OUT MORE

Learn about [Free the Children](http://www.freethechildren.com/) (at www.freethechildren.com/) and how you can get involved. Read more about [Craig Kielburger](http://www.peaceheroes.com/CraigKielburger/craigkielburgerbio.htm) (at www.peaceheroes.com/CraigKielburger/craigkielburgerbio.htm) on the Peace Heroes website.

The online Awesome Library of the Evaluation and Development Institute gives links to a [wide variety of](#)

[stories](#) (at www.awesomelibrary.org/Classroom/Social_Studies/World_Peace/Heroes_and_Heroism/Child_Heroes.html) about child activists and information about encouraging heroism in children.

Learn more about the [Rugmark Foundation](http://www.rugmark.org/home.php) (at www.rugmark.org/home.php) and its GoodWeave certification of rugs made without child labor.

SESSION 8: THE POWER OF PEACE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice. — Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

This session begins the program's exploration of the Blake covenant phrase "to dwell together in peace". The story spotlights Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., two prophetic leaders who worked tirelessly for justice and change through nonviolence, and traces their inspiration back to Henry David Thoreau, a prophetic voice from our own Unitarian Universalist heritage. A Unitarian and a Transcendentalist, Thoreau demonstrated and wrote about the power of civil disobedience. His example has led generations to seek change through peaceful means. Participants will explore ways they might act on the examples of Thoreau, Gandhi, and King.

Henry David Thoreau belonged to the Transcendentalist movement, a generation of people struggling to define spirituality and religion in the decades prior to the Civil War. Affirming each individual's ability and right to commune directly with God or the Divine, they favored intuitive and experiential expressions of the spiritual. Transcendentalism also affirmed our responsibility for social reform, embodied by Thoreau's concept of civil disobedience.

GOALS

This session will:

- Examine the phrase "dwell together in peace" as one expression of how Unitarian Universalists can be tied together in beloved community
- Demonstrate how the concept of civil disobedience links Henry David Thoreau, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Demonstrate how prophetic love can span generations, geographies, and social justice issues
- Teach that promoting nonviolent communication and seeking social justice and political change through use of peaceful means are part of our Unitarian Universalist heritage.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Enact "dwell together in peace" in a community-building game, Tug of Friendship, which inverts the competitiveness of Tug of War
- Understand the connection between the Unitarian Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau and two, great, nonviolent activists of modern history, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Practice nonviolent communication
- Explore how nonviolence and civil disobedience exemplify Unitarian Universalist values.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Tug of Friendship	15
Activity 2: Story — The Power of Peace: Thoreau, Gandhi, and King	10
Activity 3: Chain Links — Sources of Inspiration	10
Activity 4: Motivating Speeches	10
Faith in Action: Peace Vigil	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Peace Songs	10
Alternate Activity 2: Musical Chairs Remix	10
Alternate Activity 3: Peace Candles	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, think about the prophetic minds who have inspired you. What are some sources you turn to when you need inspiration or are faced with a difficult decision? How do these sources inspire you? In what ways do your choices reflect your Unitarian Universalist faith?

Keep these thoughts in mind as you lead this session
and explore of using peace to seek peace, the heritage

that which Henry David Thoreau and the
Transcendentalists passed to us and the wider world.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils and color markers

Preparation for Activity

- Create a peace sign template with card stock. Use it to make a sample ornament: Trace the peace sign, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the peace sign can be hung.
- Set out sample and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to make peace sign ornaments. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the Rainbow Wall Hanging. If time allows, participants can use the markers or pencils to decorate the peace sign ornaments; make sure they leave room to write comments later.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with small motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold the template on it for another child to trace a peace sign shape. Invite other participants to cut out extra peace signs, punch holes in them, and string them with yarn to make extra ornaments. Children who have trouble tracing and cutting may be able to decorate ornaments with markers.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Peace sign ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Markers, pens, and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:
Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another. — James Vila Blake
- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants make peace sign ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set peace sign ornaments, and pencils, pens, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

Today we will explore the idea in our covenant which says we covenant "to dwell together in peace".

Invite everyone to select a peace sign ornament and a marker, pen, or pencil. Encourage them to write on their ornament a way in which people can dwell together in peace. Allow participants a few minutes to write. Then, invite them, one at a time, to tie their peace sign ornaments to the wall hanging, and as they do so, if they feel like sharing what they have written, read or say it aloud to the group.

After everyone has had a chance to attach an ornament, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who may be unable to write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways we show love to another person. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time; they can also pass if they choose.

ACTIVITY 1: TUG OF FRIENDSHIP (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A long rope and (optional) a utility knife

Preparation for Activity

- Identify an open floor space large enough to accommodate all members of the group seated in a circle on the floor. If you need to, arrange for an alternate space for this activity.

Description of Activity

Ask the group to sit on the floor in a circle, without touching. Lay the rope down inside the group's circle and knot it securely to make a loop a foot or two smaller than the circle itself. You may wish to trim the rope.

Ask if anyone is familiar with the game Tug of War. Invite a volunteer to explain that game. Then tell the group they will not play Tug of War but a different game called Tug of Friendship, since we are exploring peaceful ways of interacting with others.

Ask all participants to take hold of the rope with both hands and, by pulling and tugging on the rope, get everyone in the group to their feet.

When all are standing, invite them to use the same process to lower everyone back to the floor.

After much laughing and tugging, the group will manage this task. If time allows, let them repeat it.

Then, invite reflection with questions such as:

How is this game different from Tug of War?

Did it feel like everyone was participating equally? Why or why not?

How did it feel to have everyone working together instead of two teams opposing each other?

How were you "dwelling together in peace" while you played this game? What was peaceful about it?

Including All Participants

If any participant has mobility limitations which would make this game impossible or unsafe, use an alternate activity. Alternative Activity 2, Musical Chairs Remix, offers a similar experience and at least one sedentary role.

If a participant with limited mobility has upper body strength and flexibility, they may be able to join in tugging everyone to their feet but need support to stand in the circle and/or help tug the group back down. Explain this game to the individual ahead of time. Figure

out together how they can safely and meaningfully participate; for example, you might suggest a leader or peer stand behind them, outside the rope circle, to give physical support.

You can omit the final task of returning the group to a sitting position, if that part would exclude a participant.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE POWER OF PEACE: THOREAU, GANDHI, AND KING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[The Power of Peace: Thoreau, Gandhi, and King](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to share it with the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the children share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- Do you think it is ever right to protest a war? Why or why not? What if your protest involves breaking a law?
- How did Henry David Thoreau protest what he saw as an unjust war? What resulted from his action?
- How was Mohandas Gandhi influenced by the writings of Thoreau? Why do you think Thoreau's example spoke to Gandhi?
- How was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. influenced by Gandhi and Thoreau? Why do you think their examples spoke to Dr. King?
- Who are the people who have influenced you? How? Why?

Including All Participants

Provide a hard copy of the story for hearing impaired participants so they can read along as you tell the story.

ACTIVITY 3: CHAIN LINKS — SOURCES OF INSPIRATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Construction paper in a variety of colors
- Markers, pens, or pencils
- Staplers and/or tape

Preparation for Activity

- Cut construction paper into approximately one-inch strips.
- Make a sample chain. On individual strips of construction paper, briefly note four to six of your own sources for inspiration or encouragement. Link the strips together. You might note the titles of books whose messages have stayed with you, websites you regularly turn to, role models whose examples inspire you to act for the good of others, documentary films which influenced you, or other sources helpful or inspiring to you.

Description of Activity

Tell the group that just as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. drew on the ideas and example of Thoreau's civil disobedience to make change and advance justice, we also draw upon the inspiration of others to support our positions and help us make important decisions. Remind the group that, as Unitarian Universalists, we seek inspiration from many sources including wisdom from religious traditions and sacred texts, our own truth-seeking inquiry, and our own direct experience of awe and wonder. Tell the group the inspiration we may find in Gandhi, King, and Thoreau comes from our second Source, "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."

Distribute construction paper, writing implements, and staplers/tape on work tables. Invite each participant to take four to six strips of construction paper and, on each strip, briefly note a source they look to for inspiration. Suggest:

- a book whose message has stayed with you and helped you

- a website you regularly visit for inspiration or guidance
- a person—who you know or have never met—whose example inspires you to act in good and right ways
- a film which has influenced your values or beliefs
- a song that inspires you.

When they are done writing, tell them to link their strips of paper together to make a paper chain using the stapler or tape provided.

Then, link all the chains together by adding a blank link in between segments. As you do this, remind the group that we also draw inspiration from each other in our religious community. You might read aloud some of the notations on the links without designating whose is whose.

Display the paper chain on a wall in your meeting space or attach it to the Rainbow Wall Hanging. Invite participants to reflect on the experience with questions such as:

- How easy or challenging was it to think about the places you look for inspiration?
- Did people think of different sources of inspiration?
- How might your different sources of inspiration contribute to different ideas you hold?

If someone in our beloved community looks to a particular source of inspiration, how might their choice affect you? How could your sources of inspiration have an affect on others?

Including All Participants

If any participants are unable to write on paper strips or make a chain on their own, form pairs or triads for this activity. Then, a participant can contribute their ideas verbally while another writes the words on a strip of paper and fastens the links together.

ACTIVITY 4: MOTIVATING SPEECHES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A podium
- Leader Resource 1, [Prophets of Nonviolence — Quotations from Thoreau, Gandhi, and King](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a tabletop podium or a large cardboard box to serve as a podium.
- Decide how to structure this activity. Base your choice on your knowledge of the children in the group.
 - Impromptu speeches by individual volunteers. Consider the likelihood of children in this group volunteering to make an impromptu speech. Some participants might volunteer if you ask well ahead of time. Identify and approach likely candidates at least a week before this session. Give them the Thoreau, Gandhi, and King quotes (Leader Resource 1). Invite them to be ready to use these quotes or similar ideas in a speech urging peaceful methods to change something that is unjust today.
 - Small groups. You may prefer to have participants work quickly in three groups (Thoreau, Gandhi, King) to draft and deliver three speeches urging peaceful protest against a contemporary injustice of their choosing.
- Use Leader Resource 1 to provide Thoreau, Gandhi, and/or King quotations to the individuals or groups who will need them.

Description of Activity

Invite some participants to bring the voice and ideas of Thoreau, Gandhi, and/or King to an impromptu podium speech.

Ask participants to think of a social or political injustice we face today—a situation where laws are unjust. How could we protest the situation and demand change, using peaceful means? Invite them to imagine what kind of speech a nonviolent activist would make about the contemporary issue. Challenge them to convince one another that nonviolent protest is the way to accomplish the goal.

You can structure this activity in a variety of ways. Individual volunteers could take a few minutes on their own or with a group to select a contemporary justice issue to address and choose quotations from Thoreau, Gandhi, or King to include in a speech. You might work as a group to choose a contemporary issue, provide quotations to everyone, and then ask for volunteers to make a brief, impromptu speech. If the group includes strong writers, you could invite everyone to work quietly

on their own for five minutes, each choosing an issue and drafting a speech; then invite volunteers to read or have another person read their speech aloud from the podium. Choose any way that will engage this specific group, but be sure you ask for volunteers to give speeches. Do not pressure any child to speak to the entire group.

After the participants give their speeches, reflect. Use these questions, as appropriate:

- Was this speech convincing? Why or why not?
- How could you tell who the speaker was?
- Can all justice problems be fixed by nonviolent means? Why or why not?
- How can we as Unitarian Universalists motivate others to join us in advancing social change through nonviolent actions?

Including All Participants

Do not put any participant on the spot by asking them to quickly create a speech or to speak in front of the group.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy it as a handout for all participants (or email it to all parents later).

Description of Activity

Gather all participants to form a circle for the closing ritual. Ask everyone to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together by the spirit of peace when we ..." and ask anyone who wishes to participate to fill in a word or phrase. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: PEACE VIGIL

Materials for Activity

- Tapered candles, paper cups or plates, lighter and extinguisher
- Poster board or card stock and thick, bold markers
- Handout 1, [Peace Vigil Permission Form](#) (included in this document)
- Hymnbooks or lyrics to songs to be sung at the peace vigil

Preparation for Activity

- Decide when and where to hold the peace vigil. Reserve the space you want to use and apply for permits, if necessary.
- If the peace vigil will take place off your congregation's property:
 - Distribute permission slips to participants' parents and guardians well ahead of time. Ask your religious educator for a permission form, or adapt Handout 1.
 - Arrange for transportation; you might ask parents/guardians to bring their children directly to the vigil site and either join the vigil or return at a designated time to pick children up.
- Send detailed reminder postcards or emails to parents and participants a week before the vigil.
- Invite some participants to create a speech or poem that they can offer during the peace vigil or invite some guests to do so.
- Prepare to lead the group in singing peace songs. If you are not comfortable as a song leader, invite a musical adult volunteer to take that role.

Description of Activity

Punch a hole through the paper cups or plates and slip the tapered candles through. Encourage participants to make signs to show what the peace vigil is about. At the designated time, light the tapers and ask the speakers to present their words or their poems. Then, lead some songs about peace such as Hymn 95, "There is More Love Somewhere" and Hymn 100, "I've Got Peace Like a River" in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You might create a display of the lit candles and the signs (make sure candles will be monitored throughout the vigil). End the vigil by blowing out the candles.

After the peace vigil, invite group reflection with questions such as:

- While we were together, did it feel like we were "dwelling together in peace"? Why?
- What message did the songs we sang have for us about "dwelling together in peace"?
- What places that need peace do the songs make you think about? It might be a place where war is happening someplace in the world. It might be a place you know personally that needs peace. Are these messages meaningful to you personally? Why or why not?
- Were these messages realistic? Why or why not?

Including All Participants

Have an extinguisher handy as well as a first aid kit whenever you are using an open flame.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it better?
- How did participants respond to the Tug of Friendship game?
- How did the participants respond to the story? Did they "get" it?
- How did the approach you chose work in the speech-making activity? How might you modify this approach next time?
- How did the chain links activity go? Did participants struggle with generating ideas for sources, or did they readily come up with ideas?

Approach your religious educator for guidance as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice. — Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

IN TODAY'S SESSION... the participants began their exploration of the words "to dwell together in peace" in the Blake covenant by discovering how the concepts of civil disobedience and nonviolent protest link Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The heritage of seeking peace with nonviolent communication treasured by Unitarian Universalists

comes to us through the words and examples of early Unitarians and Transcendentalists, including Thoreau. The children used the words of Thoreau, Gandhi, and King in impromptu speeches urging peaceful protest against contemporary injustices. The group played Tug of Friendship, a cooperative version of Tug of War.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... a time you have worked for social change using nonviolence. If you have participated in any peace vigils, protests, or social action projects that may be relevant, share these experiences with your child.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. As a family, participate in a peace rally, vigil, or peaceful protest with the aim of creating social change or raising awareness.

Family Discovery. Visit the King Center in Atlanta, Georgia where you can discover the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his work for social change through non-violence. The museum describes how Dr. King was inspired by the ideas of Gandhi and Thoreau.

A Family Game. Play Tug of Friendship, Musical Chairs Remix, and other non-competitive versions of competitive games. Find directions for this session's games in the Love Connects Us program on the UUA Tapestry of Faith website. Almost any game that promotes competing over cooperation can be adapted so everyone works together instead of against one another.

A Family Ritual. As part of a leaving ritual—for example, at bedtime or as family members go off in different directions—wish one another peace by saying "Go now in peace," "May you go in peace," or "Peace be with you as you go," to one another. "Shalom" means peace in Hebrew. "Salaam" means peace in Arabic, and "Shanti" is peace in Sanskrit. These words (or others meaningful to your own family's particular heritage) could be shared in a family parting ritual.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: PEACE SONGS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Songs with a message of peace, music player(s), and copies of lyrics

Preparation for Activity

- Choose a few songs with messages of peace to play for the group. For example:
 - Give Peace a Chance (John Lennon)
 - Imagine (John Lennon)
 - From a Distance (Bette Midler)

- A Voice for Peace (Dan Fogelberg)
- Peace on Earth (U2)
- Peace (Third Day)
- Peace (Cat Stevens)
- Celtic Sonant (Moody Blues)
- Pipes of Peace (Paul McCartney)
- Make Your Peace (INXS)
- We Shall Overcome (Peter, Paul and Mary)
- One Tribe (Wasp)
- Dancing on the Jetty (INXS)
- Peace, Love and Understanding (Elvis Costello)
- Border Song (Elton John)
- Why? (Tracy Chapman)
- Aquarius (Fifth Dimension)
- Conversation Peace (Stevie Wonder)
- Please Send Someone to Love Me (Sade)
- Farewell to Arms (Emerson, Lake and Palmer)
- Heaven's Here on Earth (Tracy Chapman)
- Turn, Turn, Turn (The Byrds)
- I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing (The New Seekers)
- Peace, Salaam, Shalom (Emma's Revolution)
- Piece O'Peace (Michael Franti and Spearhead)
- Piece by Piece (Safam)

- Obtain the lyrics for the songs you will use. Lyrics for many songs are online. Try the [Poem Hunter](#) (at www.poemhunter.com/songs/peace/page-1/), [Anti War Songs. A la Carte](#) (at www.lacarte.org/songs/anti-war/), and [Any Song Lyrics](#) (at www.anysonglyrics.com/) websites, or search the song's title.

Description of Activity

Play songs you have selected, handing out the lyrics for each song before you play it. Encourage participants to

listen to each song without talking or sharing thoughts. Then, after each song, take a few minutes to reflect as a group. Consider:

- What message did this song have for us about "dwelling together in peace"?
- Do you think the song sounds as if the singers believe nonviolence will work? Why?
- Is this message meaningful to you personally? What does it make you think of?

Including All Participants

Hard copies of song lyrics will allow any participants with limited hearing to follow along, get the message of the songs, and engage with the activity.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: MUSICAL CHAIRS REMIX (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Music and player, or a chime, a gong, or bells
- Chairs for all participants; or, large sheets of newsprint or poster board and (optional) scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a large, open space where you can arrange chairs in a circle or oval, leaving plenty of room around the chairs. If you need to use an alternate meeting space, arrange with the religious educator, minister, or administrator.
- If you will play music, make sure the sound will not disturb others who might be worshipping or meeting near your meeting space.
- To start the game, you will need one chair for each participant.
- Optional: Use sheets of newsprint instead of chairs. You might cut the sheets of newsprint into large shapes.

Description of Activity

In this adaptation of the classic game Musical Chairs, no one is ever "out". As in the original game, start with one chair (or sheet of newsprint) for every participant and then remove one after each round. However, instead of eliminating people as chairs are removed, this game challenges the entire group to gather on fewer and fewer chairs, and eventually on one chair.

Gather the group in a seated circle. Tell them they must get off their chair when the music starts and find a place to sit when the music stops. Remove a chair with each round until only one remains and the whole group needs

to find a way to be in physical contact with each other and the chair.

After the game, invite reflection with questions such as:

- How did the new rules for this version of Musical Chairs create a whole new dynamic for this game?
- How does this version promote cooperation instead of competition?
- How fun was the game with every chance of winning taken out of it?
- How might this version encourage people to "dwell together in peace"? How does the game reward the players for "dwelling together in peace"?

Including All Participants

Individuals with limited mobility could start and stop the music or ring the gong, chime, or bell to mark the rounds. Use sheets of newsprint rather than chairs to accommodate a child who uses a wheelchair; when the music stops, they can touch a sheet of newsprint with the wheel of their chair or touch someone who is touching a sheet of newsprint.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: PEACE CANDLES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Candles (votives or tea lights), lighter, extinguisher, and a bowl or plate of sand to hold the candles
- Chalice, candle, lighter, and extinguisher
- Optional: A basket of stones and a bowl of water

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether to use candles or stones.
- Set up the candles, the bowl or plate of sand, and a lighter and extinguisher near the chalice; or, set a bowl of water and a basket of stones near the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to come forward, one at a time, and light a candle (or select a stone and drop it in the bowl of water).

Gather the group and light the chalice. Ask participants to light their candles from the chalice flame, one at a time, and as they light their candle to share a few brief words about how and when they feel peace—for example, "I feel peace when I am out walking in the

woods." Remind them it is always okay to pass and that it is important to respect the person who is sharing by listening to their words without interruption, comment, or judgment.

To conclude the ritual, light one final candle for "all the affirmations of peace we will receive or give until we gather again in community."

Including All Participants

Make it clear that coming forward is voluntary and any participant may pass.

To include participants with mobility challenges or who use wheelchairs, place the chalice and candles or stones in the center of an open circle at a height all participants can reach. If any participants would be unable to move forward and light a candle or drop a stone in the bowl, invite one volunteer to light all the candles or drop the stones as individuals say their thoughts.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 8: STORY: THE POWER OF PEACE: THOREAU, GANDHI, AND KING

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a frenzy of support for the Mexican-American War swept across the United States. But a small minority were unhappy. They saw the war as an act of violent aggression against a weak, neighboring country. Who were the people in this minority? Mostly ministers, scholars, abolitionists, and a few people in the government, such as Abraham Lincoln. He was not the president yet, but a freshman congressman from Illinois. He called the war immoral, a serious threat to our new nation's values of freedom and liberty.

A man named Henry David Thoreau (pronounced THOR-oh) also thought the war was wrong. He refused to pay taxes to the American government because of it. However, it was illegal to refuse to pay taxes which are owed to the government. Thoreau was arrested and thrown in jail.

Thoreau sat in a jail cell, rather than pay the taxes and a fine to get out. He did this to make a public statement: "I refuse to support the war." Thoreau's friend, the Unitarian minister Ralph Waldo Emerson, came to visit him in jail. Emerson asked why Thoreau was allowing himself to waste away in jail when he had the money to pay the taxes. Thoreau responded with a challenge to his friend. He said, "The question is not what am I doing in *here*, but what are you doing out *there*?"

To Thoreau's frustration, his tax was paid by a relative who also could not tolerate his imprisonment, and he was promptly released from captivity. However, the experience led him to write his ground-breaking essay, "Civil Disobedience," which eloquently explained why it is necessary to disobey a law when the law is unjust.

Sixty years later, on the other side of the world, in South Africa, a British-educated lawyer named Mohandas Gandhi (pronounced mo-HAHN-dus GON-dee) got a

job. Although allowed to work as a lawyer, Gandhi discovered that he lacked full rights in South Africa, whose laws treated all Indians as second-class people and black Africans, the majority of the population, much worse. Gandhi, like Thoreau, was arrested for nonviolent protest against unjust laws. Gandhi read Thoreau's essay, "Civil Disobedience". It inspired him to not give up, even when the challenges seemed much too high to overcome.

Gandhi dedicated his entire life to the principles of nonviolence and civil disobedience for social change. In India, his peaceful leadership encouraged the Indian people to protest and persist until their country won its independence from British rule.

Near the time of Gandhi's death in 1948, back in the United States, a young minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. began his own nonviolent fight. America's government was supposed to protect our citizens' rights and opportunities, but in many places, in many ways, governments specifically denied rights and opportunities to African Americans. Laws needed to change.

Many people were angry. Some wanted to seek change through violence. Dr. King spoke passionately about making change by peaceful means. He joined nonviolent marches and demonstrations to show others how. People listened and watched. The more people followed Dr. King's words and his example, the more powerful grew the peaceful demand. Just like Gandhi, Dr. King led peaceful, persistent protest for change.

Where did Martin Luther King, Jr. find inspiration? A Christian, he had learned the Bible's guidance to love his enemies. But he learned about civil disobedience from the writings of the Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. And, he believed he could achieve change peacefully, because of the ideas and example of Gandhi.

Thoreau, Gandhi, and King. Three prophetic leaders, in different times, in different places, who found the power of peace. May their words and deeds, in turn, inspire us.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 8:

HANDOUT 1: PEACE VIGIL PERMISSION FORM

Parental Consent and Emergency Medical Release Form

Date(s) of event: Location or destination:

Start time/place: End time/place:

Organization sponsoring the event:

Adult chaperones for the event:

[name(s) and contact information]

I give consent for my child:

to participate in the above mentioned event.

I understand that [name of UU congregation] does not accept responsibility for any property loss or bodily injury incurred during this event.

I give permission for an adult chaperone designated above to secure any needed medical care and treatment required in my absence.

I agree to be responsible for any expenses not covered by my insurance which may be incurred as a result of an accident or medical emergency involving my child.

Parent or guardian name:

Phone # in case of emergency:

Alternate emergency contact:

Name: Phone:

Child's physician:

Name: Phone:

My child has the following allergies and/or dietary restrictions:

My child has the following medical conditions:

My child takes the following prescription medicines:

Parent or guardian signature:

Date:

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 8:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: PROPHETS OF NONVIOLENCE — QUOTATIONS FROM THOREAU, GANDHI, AND KING

Henry David Thoreau

I think that we should be... [people] first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. — *Civil Disobedience* [1849]

A wise... [person] will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority. — *Civil Disobedience* [1849]

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just... [person] is also a prison—the only house in a slave State in which a free... [person] can abide with honor. — *Civil Disobedience* [1849]

The fate of the country... does not depend on what kind of paper you drop into the ballot box once a year, but on what kind of... [person] you drop from your chamber into the street every morning. — *Slavery in Massachusetts* [1854]

I hear many condemn these men because they were so few. When were the good and the brave ever a majority? — *A Plea for Captain John Brown* [1859]

Mahatma Gandhi

Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. — *Defense against charge of sedition* [March 23, 1922]

The term *Satyagraha* was coined by me... Its root meaning is "holding on to truth," hence "force of righteousness." I have also called it love force or soul force. In the application of *Satyagraha*, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not permit violence being inflicted on one's opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth, not by the infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's self. — *Defense against charge of sedition* [March 23, 1922]

Nonviolence and truth (*Satya*) are inseparable and presuppose one another. There is no god higher than truth. — *True Patriotism: Some Sayings of Mahatma Gandhi* [1939]

I am here to... submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen.

Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.

In matters of conscience, the law of majority has no place.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. — "*I Have a Dream*" speech, given August 28, 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC

Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for... [us] to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. — *Speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize* [December 11, 1964]

[Humankind]... must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. — *Speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize* [December 11, 1964]

The Negro was willing to risk martyrdom in order to move and stir the social conscience of his community and the nation... he would force his oppressor to commit his brutality openly, with the rest of the world looking on... Nonviolent resistance paralyzed and confused the power structure against which it was directed. — *Why We Can't Wait* [1964]

FIND OUT MORE

Henry David Thoreau

Discover more about the Unitarian and Transcendentalist best known for his experiment in simple living at Walden Pond. Read his writings about civil disobedience and his arguments for ending slavery at [The Thoreau Reader](http://thoreau.eserver.org/) (at thoreau.eserver.org/), a Thoreau Society project that posts annotated works of Thoreau online. Also visit the informative [Transcendentalists website](http://www.transcendentalists.com/1thorea.html) (at www.transcendentalists.com/1thorea.html) of Jone Johnson Lewis.

[*Thoreau as Spiritual Guide: A Companion to Walden for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=637) by Barry M. Andrews (Boston, MA: Skinner House Books, 2000).

[*Walden: Lessons for a New Millennium*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=234) by Henry David Thoreau (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998).

Thoreau, Gandhi, and King

Explore the Thoreau/Gandhi/King connection and find more quotations from nonviolence speeches online in a [2006 article by Nick Gier](#) (at www.class.uidaho.edu/ngier/civil.htm), a University of Idaho professor emeritus. Learn more from a prize-winning [high school essay about Thoreau](#) (at [www.umsl.edu/~umslhistory/PsiPsi/Spring_08/5Swofford on Thoreau.pdf](http://www.umsl.edu/~umslhistory/PsiPsi/Spring_08/5Swofford%20on%20Thoreau.pdf)) ("The Noble Doubter") and the [civil disobedience and nonviolent action page](#) (at www.kids-right.org/civil.htm) on the Kid's Right organization website.

"I Have a Dream"

See and hear the power of peace in Dr. King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, available in many video documentaries and online. The [American Rhetoric: Top 100 Speeches](#) (at www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihadream.htm) website posts the full text and audio and video recordings.

SESSION 9: KINDNESS IS THE KEY

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

You cannot shake hands with a closed fist. — Indira Ghandi

Love is not a doctrine. Peace is not an international agreement. Love and Peace are beings who live as possibilities in us. — Mary Caroline Richards, poet, potter, and philosopher

Our sixth Unitarian Universalist Principle affirms "the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all." This session shows how we can act to promote this goal in our relationships and communities. The story "The Christmas Truce" describes how soldiers on opposite sides in World War I created a ceasefire on the Christmas of 1914, meeting for a moment of shared humanity in the midst of bloody conflict. By playing a cooperative game and dramatizing solutions to conflict situations, participants explore what it means to choose peaceful relationships.

GOALS

This session will:

- Emphasize the power of individuals to create peace
- Teach that conflict situations offer a wide range of options for action
- Empower participants to think of themselves as peace-builders and peace-makers
- Encourage creative thinking and clear communication as pathways to peace.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Give examples of how they embody their faith through acts of peace-building
- Learn the true story of "The Christmas Truce," about opposing soldiers who chose to create a brief time of peace on a World War I battlefield
- Embody the "tied together" theme of the curriculum in a multi-legged race
- Consider their full range of options for action in conflict situations

- Practice creative conflict-resolution skills by acting out different solutions to a conflict.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — The Christmas Truce	10
Activity 2: Multi-Legged Race Game	15
Activity 3: Conflict Resolution Skits with Alternate Endings	20
Faith in Action: Congregational Peace Crane Mobile	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Making Peace Signs	10
Alternate Activity 2: Sharing Joys and Concerns	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- In what kinds of situations do you most often experience conflict?
- In what ways do you typically respond to conflict?
- Think of a time when you felt you successfully resolved a conflict. What actions did you take? What were your feelings and attitude toward someone with whom you were in conflict?
- Who are your role models for peacemaking, and why?

This session focuses on peacemaking. The way you model peaceful interaction and help participants interact peacefully can serve as powerful lessons.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils and color markers

Preparation for Activity

- Create a peace sign template with card stock. Use it to make a sample ornament: Trace the peace sign, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the peace sign can be hung.
- Set out sample and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to make peace sign ornaments. Tell them they will hang the ornaments on the Rainbow Wall Hanging later. If time allows, participants can decorate the peace sign ornaments, leaving room to write comments later.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with small motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold the template on it for another child to trace a peace sign shape. Invite other participants to cut out extra peace signs, punch holes in them, and string them with yarn to make extra ornaments. Children who have trouble tracing and cutting may still be able to decorate ornaments.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Peace sign ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Markers, pens, and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.

- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants make peace sign ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set peace sign ornaments, and pencils, pens, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

The covenant we said together talks about "dwell[ing] together in peace." What do you think it means to "dwell in peace"? Can you think of ways that kids can create peace? What have you done to build peace in your family, at school, or in other groups you are part of? We will write ways we make peace on our peace sign ornaments.

Invite everyone to select a peace sign ornament and a marker, pen, or pencil. Encourage them to write on their ornament a way in which people can dwell together in peace. Allow participants a few minutes to write. Then, invite them, one at a time, to tie their ornaments to the wall hanging, and as they do so, if they feel like sharing what they have written, read or say it aloud to the group.

After everyone has had a chance to attach an ornament, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who cannot write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways we act to build peace. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time; they can also pass if they choose.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

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

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to share it with the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the participants share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

Invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking the participants to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- What do you think made the first person step out into No Man's Land? What do you think he was feeling?
- What do you think happened on that battlefield after the Christmas truce? Why?
- Have you ever stepped up to stop a fight or argument? How did you feel?
- In the story, the soldiers were able, at least for a little while, to think of the other side as human beings, rather than as "the enemy." Do you ever hear friends or adults talk about other people as if they were "the enemy," or not fully human? What do you do in a situation like that? What could you do? What might be frightening about that? What might feel good?

ACTIVITY 2: MULTI-LEGGED RACE GAME (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Lengths of rope, about two- to three feet each—one for each pair of participants

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have an open space long enough for a race, wide enough for the whole group to stand abreast, preferably with a soft

surface—i.e., carpet or grass instead of concrete or asphalt. If possible, do this activity outdoors.

Description of Activity

This game "ties together" participants a literal way and provides a fun way for them to experience competition and cooperation. The general idea is that of a three-legged race, in which two people stand side by side, tie their adjacent legs together, and race against other pairs. In this game, however, participants will race several times: first on their own, then tied to one other person, and then tied together with more people, and finally, tied together as an entire group.

Mark a start line and a finish line. The lines need to be long enough for the entire group to stand abreast.

Line up the participants at the start line and have everyone run the race.

Then, return everyone to the start line. Form pairs. Give each pair a length of rope and have them stand side by side and tie their adjacent inner legs together. Have another race, this time with all the pairs competing against each other. Then, return everyone to the start line and form two teams. (If the group is four or fewer, skip the team race.) Distribute more lengths of rope and have each team stand in a row and tie their legs to the adjacent legs of the people standing next to them. Have the two teams race to the finish line.

Finally, have the whole group stand in one row along the starting line and tie their legs so everyone but the two end participants has both legs tied to a person next to them. Ask participants to think about how they can complete the race in the fastest possible way without anyone falling over. When they are ready, run the race one final time.

Ask participants to reflect on their experience:

- How did they feel when they won a race?
- How did they feel when they lost?
- Which version of the race was the most fun? Why?
- What strategies worked best for the groups that were tied together?

Including All Participants

If any participant uses a wheelchair or has accessibility or mobility limitations, use an alternate activity.

ACTIVITY 3: CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKITS WITH ALTERNATE ENDINGS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Conflict Resolution Scenarios](#) (included in this document)
- Timepiece (minutes)
- Optional: Simple props

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1 and cut the two scenarios apart

Description of Activity

Participants create a skit to portray a conflict and then re-create the skit to show different possible solutions.

Form two groups. Give each group a scenario from Leader Resource 1. Tell them they have five minutes to create a skit based on their scenario.

When time is up, have Group A to perform their skit. Then, give both groups a few minutes to create new skits based on Group A's scenario but with alternative endings that show a different resolution to the conflict. Invite Group B to present and Group A to describe their alternatives.

Then, ask Group B to perform the skit they created based on the other scenario. Again, give both groups a few minutes to create new skits with alternative endings to Group B's scenario. Invite Group A to present and Group B to describe their alternatives.

Leave a few minutes for participants to reflect:

- Which skit(s) were realistic? Which were not? Why?
- What observations can you make about the kinds of actions or statements that help make peace?
- In the story "A Christmas Truce," the soldiers created peace by doing something surprising. They acted in ways no one expected soldiers to act. In your skits, did you choose any solutions that involved anyone doing something surprising to create a new mood?

Variation

Note: If you do not have enough participants to form two groups, have the entire group work together on alternative endings for both scenarios. Or, allow participants to use leaders as actors.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Explain that the session is almost over and that we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space. Ask everyone to clean up their own area and the materials they were using first, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

Then bring the group back to the circle. Ask them to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together in the spirit of peace when we..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about how we are tied together in peace. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out, and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body.

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: CONGREGATIONAL PEACE CRANE MOBILE

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [How to Fold a Paper Crane](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 3, [Make a Paper Crane Mobile](#) (included in this document)
- Origami paper in a variety of colors
- Pens and/or markers
- Four wooden chopsticks (or dowels, for a larger mobile)
- Sewing needle and thread
- Table and chairs

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange to present this activity as a congregational event, in a well-attended location in your congregation, such as a fellowship hall.

- Identify a place to display the completed mobile in your congregation and ask permission if needed.
- Work with your religious educator to publicize the event to the entire congregation.
- Print out Leader Resource 2. Practice making paper cranes so you can demonstrate and help others. You can watch a video demonstration of [folding paper cranes](http://www.metacafe.com/watch/387698/how_to_fold_an_origami_paper_crane_orizuru/) (at www.metacafe.com/watch/387698/how_to_fold_an_origami_paper_crane_orizuru/) on the Metacafe website. You may wish to print out a few copies of Leader Resource 2 for participants and others to use.
- Print out Leader Resource 3 and obtain the materials for hanging paper cranes on a mobile. See [photos of a completed paper crane mobile](http://www.craftster.org/forum/index.php?topic=23825.6.0) (at www.craftster.org/forum/index.php?topic=23825.6.0) on the Craftster website.
- Set up table(s) and chairs, and set out origami paper and pens.

Description of Activity

Use this is an opportunity for a multigenerational peace project. Invite your whole congregation to join you in creating paper cranes, a symbol of peace, and displaying them as a mobile.

Teach the group to make paper cranes using the directions on Leader Resource 2. Before folding their origami paper, invite participants to write a message of peace on the paper, and to share aloud with others at the table their message of peace.

When the cranes are completed, use the directions on Leader Resource 3 to make a paper crane mobile to hang in a public area of the congregation. You might hold a dedication ceremony when you hang the complete mobile; share peace songs from the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition* and/or readings about peace from the hymnbook (Readings 573-589).

Including All Participants

Participants who are not physically able to fold paper cranes can recruit adults and other participants to participate in the project.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What connections did we make with the participants? What connections did the participants make with each other? How was this evident? How could we improve a sense of community within this group?

Approach your director of religious education for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

You cannot shake hands with a closed fist. — Indira Ghandi

Love is not a doctrine. Peace is not an international agreement. Love and Peace are beings who live as possibilities in us. — Mary Caroline Richards, poet, potter, and philosopher

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we explored peacemaking, and how each of us can find creative solutions to solve conflict and work cooperatively. We heard the true story of The Christmas Truce, in which, during World War I, soldiers from both sides crossed into the No Man's Land between enemy lines to share Christmas gifts and songs in the spirit of shared humanity. We held a different kind of race, in which increasing numbers of people were tied together, and we created skits in which we had to come up with various solutions to a conflict.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. How do you experience conflict in your family? How do you make peace? When arguments or fights arise between participants or between participants and adults, how do you work toward a solution? What sorts of things happen when your family is at peace?

A Family Ritual. In both Jewish and Muslim traditions it is customary to greet people or say good-bye using a word which means "peace." *Shalom* is the Hebrew form of the word, while *salaam* is the Arabic form. You can remind your family and others whom you greet of your desire for peace by creating the ritual of welcoming and/or taking leave of people with the greeting "Shalom" or "Salaam."

A Family Game. During this session the participants played a game in which we ran a series of races. We began by running the race individually, but the next time we did it as a three-legged race, with two people running as a team tied together. Then we kept going, tying together increasing numbers of people, until we ran one final "human race." You can play this game with your family—but beware, size differences add to the challenge!

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: MAKING PEACE SIGNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Fine-point washable markers
- Construction paper in a variety of colors

Preparation for Activity

- Set out markers and paper on work tables.
- Plan how you will form pairs. Be ready to make a triad if needed.
- Decide where you want the children's peace messages displayed, and seek permission if needed.

Description of Activity

Invite all participants to think about how they could create a message of peace using symbols, simple drawings, or a few words. Then invite them to work in pairs to make symbols or messages of peace to display in the congregation.

Variation

If you feel comfortable providing this option, invite children to draw simple messages of peace with washable marker on one another's skin. The back of the hand and the inside of the forearm are good places. Keep in mind that some children, and some parents, may object for a variety of reasons, including potential allergies. Also, consider the likelihood of children this age drawing on more surfaces than you asked them to, once this option is opened.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn
- Optional: Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Description of Activity

In addition to building community through sharing information about important events in participants' lives, this version of sharing joys and concerns uses a ritual activity based on the metaphor of knots, allowing children to experience being literally "tied together."

Gather participants in a seated circle. Say:

We are all tied together by the bonds of community. What affects any one of us affects

us all. We take time now to share our greatest joys and deepest concerns, events that have happened since last time we met which we hold in our hearts.

Invite a volunteer to go first, and give them the ball of yarn. Ask them to share their joy or concern and then, holding the end of the yarn, throw the ball of yarn to another child in the circle. This child may either share a joy or concern or choose to pass, but in either case they keep hold of the strand of yarn as they throw the ball of yarn to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a chance to share or pass, and the whole group is connected by a web of yarn.

At the end of the sharing you may invite participants to take turns winding the yarn back onto the ball. Or, pass around scissors and invite the children to cut a short piece of the yarn and tie it around their wrist as a sign of the covenant of caring which the group shares.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 9: STORY: THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE

By Gail Forsyth-Vail.

When the Great War, which we now call World War I, started in Europe, many young men were eager to fight. Just out of school, they joined up with their schoolmates to go off on an exciting adventure. War seemed glorious in the fall of 1914 when young men from the British Empire went to France to fight against young men from the German Empire.

It did not take long for the new soldiers to discover the realities of war. Both sides dug trenches in the ground a few hundred feet from each other in France and in Belgium. Between the trenches was a flat open space called No Man's Land. Young men hid in the trenches day after day as gunfire came from snipers or artillery on one side or the other. To lift your head up out of a trench was to risk getting shot. Many soldiers were killed or wounded. When it rained, soldiers were trapped in muddy, wet trenches, with the task of endless digging, as they tried to keep ahead of the floodwaters. When winter approached, there was more and more rain, and the trenches of both the German army and the British army were wet, cold, miserable mud holes.

As the soldiers huddled in their miserable trenches, they began to wonder about the enemy soldiers so close by. Bored soldiers shouted at each other back and forth between the trenches, calling names and taunting one another. Each side sang patriotic songs and folk songs to remind them of home. The two armies were close enough to hear one another's music. Always, there were the rifles and the machine guns, firing at any sign of movement outside the trench.

Back home, people in Germany and Britain thought often of their soldiers. German families sent their soldiers packages of gifts, letters, and photos. They also sent Christmas trees to the soldiers, who put them on top of the sandbags protecting the fronts of the trenches.

The British saw all the Christmas trees and wondered if some kind of surprise attack was being planned. They watched and waited. The British people also sent letters, candies, and gifts to their soldiers. Each one received a small brass box embossed with a profile of Princess Mary of England. The box was full of cigarettes and had a card inside saying: "With best wishes for a happy Christmas and a victorious New Year from the Princess Mary and friends at home."

Christmas Eve arrived in 1914 and soldiers on both sides opened their packages in the muddy trenches and wished with all their hearts to be home again. They began singing carols and making merry—as merry as one can be in a trench—when something extraordinary happened.

Someone began to sing "Silent Night" in German, or perhaps "O Come All Ye Faithful" in English. In any event, the soldiers on the other side joined in the singing. The songs of the two armies, sung in two different languages, blended together in the starry night. Soon, a German soldier emerged from his trench. Everyone held his breath, but no one fired. He had a sign that said, "Merry Christmas! We not shoot. You not shoot." It wasn't long before a British soldier made his way into No Man's Land, then another, and another. Soon all the soldiers had climbed out of the trenches and were greeting one another, enemy greeting enemy, in the middle of No Man's Land. Officers tried in vain to forbid this from happening. Embodying the Christmas spirit of peace and good will, the men traded candies, swapped buttons from their uniforms, and showed one another pictures of families back home. Someone even started a soccer game, using an old ball and helmets to mark the goal posts.

The unplanned Christmas truce happened all along the five-hundred-mile battlefront. Whether it lasted a few hours or a few days, it gave each man pause as he learned that the enemy was a human being like himself. It was a time when the spirit of love and joy reigned supreme even in the midst of the battlefield.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 9:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: CONFLICT RESOLUTION SCENARIOS

Scenario A

Christopher comes to school wearing a bright pink hat. Jesse tells him he looks like a queer and should take off the hat. Christopher wants to wear his new hat, and resists. If you have more than two people, include friends who take sides in the argument and/or teachers or other grown-ups at the school.

Scenario B

Fifth-graders traditionally sit under the tree at lunch, while fourth-graders eat at a table outside the cafeteria. Jamie, a fourth-grader, sits down to eat under the tree, and Sami, a fifth-grader, objects. If you have more than two people, include friends who take sides in the argument and/ or teachers or other grown-ups at the school.

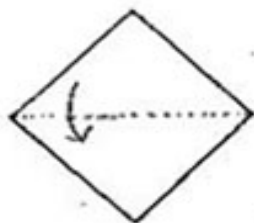
LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 9:

LEADER RESOURCE 2: HOW TO FOLD A PAPER CRANE

Dr. Aaron Quigley, Professor, University College Dublin. Used with permission.

- 1: Fold along the diagonal.*
- 2: Fold along the perpendicular.*
- 3: Open the left side to form a pocket.*
- 4: The paper looks like this now.*
- 5: Turn over and repeat the process.*
- 6: The paper looks like this now.*
- 7: Fold the left and right sides into the middle. Also fold the top in.*
- 8: Turn over and repeat the process.*
- 9: Open up so it looks like the paper in 7.*
- 10: Pull up the bottom point.*
- 11: The paper now looks like this.*
- 12: Turn over and repeat the process.*
- 13: The paper should look like this.*
- 14: Fold the bottom left and right edges into the middle.*
- 15: Turn over and repeat the process.*
- 16: Fold up the left side.*
- 17: Fold down the top to form a tail.*
- 18: Fold up the right side to form a tail.*
- 19: Viola! The final product!!*

INSTRUCTIONS



1: Fold along the diagonal.



2: Fold along the perpendicular.



3: Open the left side to form a pocket.



4: The paper looks like this now.



5: Turn over and repeat the process.



6: The paper looks like this now.



7: Fold the left and right sides into the middle. Also fold the top in.



8: Turn over and repeat the process.



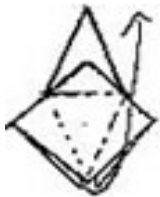
9: Open up so it looks like the paper in 7.



10: Pull up the bottom point.



11: The paper now looks like this.



12: Turn over and repeat the process.



13: The paper should look like this.



14: Fold the bottom left and right edges into the middle.



15: Turn over and repeat the process.



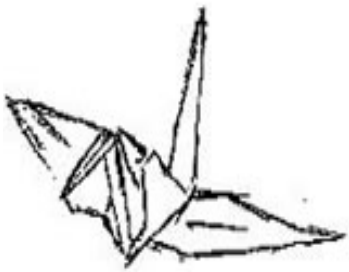
16: Fold up the left side.



17: Fold down the top to form a tail.



18: Fold up the right side to form a tail.



19: Viola! The final product!!

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 9:

LEADER RESOURCE 3: MAKE A PAPER CRANE MOBILE

You will need:

- A large number of paper cranes (see Leader Resource 2)
- Four chopsticks (or wooden dowels)
- Approximately three yards of 1/4-inch ribbon
- A spool of thread, and a needle
- Scissors
- Optional: Hot glue gun

Directions

1. Tie the chopsticks into the shape of a square, using short pieces of ribbon. You may wish to also glue the corners where they join. Hot glue will set quickly.
2. Tie approximately 18 inches of ribbon to each corner of the square, and tie these ribbons together at the top to make a knot for hanging your mobile. Make the ribbons of equal length from the top knot to the chopsticks, so the mobile will not be lopsided.
3. Choose a few paper cranes for the mobile. Cut a length of thread approximately three feet long, thread it through a needle, and use the needle to carefully pierce the center of a paper crane, at the top. Pass the needle and thread through the paper, leaving about eight inches of thread behind. Tie a knot at the bottom of the crane; this will keep the crane from sliding down the thread once you hang the thread on the mobile.
4. Continue threading cranes on your thread, spacing them as far apart as you wish (about four inches is good), and securing each with a knot below.
5. Repeat this process with more threads, to make more strings of paper cranes for the mobile—eight is ideal.
6. Tie each strand of cranes to one of the chopsticks in your frame.

Note: For a balanced mobile, place the same number of paper cranes on each strand of thread, and the same number of strands on each chopstick.

FIND OUT MORE

Talking about Conflict and War

The University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching offers guidance for [talking about the Iraq War](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/wariniraqdiscussion.php) (at www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/wariniraqdiscussion.php) with college students. The ideas and suggestions can be adapted to help you lead discussion with participants in this session.

Peace Activities

The [Do Something for Peace website](http://www.dosomethingforpeace.org/kids.html) (at www.dosomethingforpeace.org/kids.html) offers project and activity ideas you might use with this group, a wider religious education group, or a multigenerational gathering.

Cooperative Games

Find more cooperative and community-building [games](http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/deepfun/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/deepfun/index.shtml) from the UUA Youth and Young Adult Ministry Office.

SESSION 10: PEACE INSIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

[God] grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. — Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), theologian, The Serenity Prayer

If we are not happy, if we are not peaceful, we can't share peace and happiness with others, even those we love, those who live under the same roof. If we are peaceful, if we are happy, we can smile and blossom like a flower, and everyone in our family, our entire society, will benefit from our peace. — Thich Nhat Hanh, Being Peace

In order to "dwell together in peace," we must learn to find peace in our own hearts. In the story, "Serenity, Courage, and Wisdom," a girl struggling with a friendship gains a new perspective and peace of heart through learning about the Serenity Prayer. Through meditation, a meditation bead activity, and some real-life scenarios, participants practice techniques to discern situations they can or cannot change and to find the serenity and courage they need in their own lives.

GOALS

This session will:

- Encourage participants to find peace within themselves as a means to bring peace to their relationships, communities, and the wider world
- Build participants' ability to discern, in difficult situations, what calls for courage to seek change and what calls for acceptance so that they might find serenity
- Empower participants to feel in control of their own well being
- Introduce the well known, nondenominational Serenity Prayer written by Reinhold Niebuhr
- Explore techniques for centering and finding inner peace.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Give examples of how they embody their faith covenant through acts of peacemaking
- Understand, through the story "Serenity, Courage and Wisdom," how finding peace within

themselves can be a means to bring peace to their relationships, communities, and the wider world

- Practice "the wisdom to know the difference" between difficult circumstances they might be able to change and those they might need to accept with serenity
- Practice finding inner peace in sitting and walking meditations
- Embody the "tied-together" theme of the curriculum through creating knotted strands of meditation beads.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Serenity, Courage, and Wisdom	10
Activity 2: "Wisdom to Know the Difference" Scenarios	10
Activity 3: Walking Meditation	5
Activity 4: Guided Meditation	5
Activity 5: Make Knotted Meditation Beads	15
Faith in Action: Teach Centering Exercises	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Make Serenity Prayer Bracelets	10
Alternate Activity 2: Sharing Joys and Concerns	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- What connections do you have with the Serenity Prayer? When has it helped you to decide to accept with serenity something you cannot

change? When have you sought and found the courage to change a bad situation?

- How do you find inner peace? Do you practice any form of meditation?
- What do you find helpful in a stressful situation? What do you find unhelpful, although you might do it anyway?

- When you can find peace within yourself, does it help you create peace with those around you?

Approaching difficult situations from a calm, centered place can be a challenge for children as well as for adults. Your ability to model seeking peace within and with others is a gift to the children in the group as they engage in a lifelong process of learning to live peacefully.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils and color markers

Preparation for Activity

- Create a peace sign template with card stock. Use it to make a sample ornament: Trace the peace sign, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the peace sign can be hung.
- Set out sample and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to make peace sign ornaments. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the Rainbow Wall Hanging. If time allows, participants can use the markers or pencils to decorate the peace sign ornaments; make sure they leave room to write comments later.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with small motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold the template on it for another child to trace a peace sign shape. Invite other participants to cut out extra peace signs, punch holes in them, and string them with yarn to make extra ornaments. Children who have trouble tracing and cutting may be able to decorate ornaments with markers.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Peace sign ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Markers, pens, and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another. — James Vila Blake
- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants make peace sign ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set peace sign ornaments, and pencils, pens, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

The covenant we said together talks about "dwell[ing] together in peace." The starting place for creating peace around us is creating peace inside ourselves. It can be hard to feel peaceful if we think someone is being unfair or telling us to do something we don't want to do. Do you have ways you manage to find peace inside yourself? Have you ever had a time when feeling peaceful inside helps you act peacefully in a difficult situation?

Invite everyone to select a peace sign ornament and a marker, pen, or pencil. Encourage them to write on their ornament a way they find or use a peaceful feeling inside to help dwell together in peace. Allow participants a few minutes to write. Then, invite them, one at a time, to tie their ornaments to the wall hanging, and as they do so, if they feel like sharing what they have written, read or say it aloud to the group.

After everyone has had a chance to attach an ornament, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who cannot write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as

"scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways we act to build peace. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time; they can also pass.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — SERENITY, COURAGE, AND WISDOM (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Serenity, Courage, and Wisdom](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to share it with the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the participants share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

Invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking the participants to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- How does it feel when you have a fight with a friend?
- How do you usually respond if you feel a friend or family member is being unfair to you?
- Have you ever tried to calm down and accept a situation you cannot change? If so, how did you find serenity (a sense of peace inside)? If you were angry, how did you let go of that?
- What are some things we might try, to help us find serenity in difficult situations?
- When and where is it easiest for you to find serenity — peace inside yourself?

ACTIVITY 2: "WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE" SCENARIOS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Wisdom to Know the Difference Scenarios](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the three scenarios so you will be able to discuss them without continually referring to the page.

Description of Activity

Participants explore how the Serenity Prayer might help them find inner peace and choose right action in their own lives. They view three scenarios through the lens of "the serenity to accept the things I can't change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Read each scenario out loud. After each scenario, ask the group:

- What in this situation would you simply have to accept?
- What in this situation might you be able to change?
- What would be likely outcomes if you had the wisdom to know the difference, and acted accordingly?
- What would be likely outcomes if you tried to change what wasn't changeable? What if you did not try to change the things you could?

Including All Participants

Make sure that participants who are less vocal, or who take more time to process their thoughts, have the opportunity to share if they wish.

ACTIVITY 3: WALKING MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Locate a space, preferably outdoors, where participants can walk briskly and safely, in a loose cluster, without touching one another.

Description of Activity

Begin the meditation in a space where there is room for the participants to move briskly without running into each other. Make it clear to everyone that this will be a

meditation. Everyone will need to participate silently, and focus inside themselves. If the group tends to be rowdy, establish that, for everyone's safety, anyone who collides with another person will sit out the exercise. Say, in these words or your own:

Many kinds of meditation work well to help us relax and develop a sense of inner peace. We will begin with a walking meditation.

Start by having participants walk in place. Set a steady rhythm, neither very slow nor very fast, where participants swing their arms in opposition to their legs (so the right arm moves forward as the left leg comes forward).

Now invite the group to begin walking at a deliberate pace, any place they wish without touching anyone else. When the walkers have established a comfortable rhythm, ask them to match their breathing to their walking. Lead the group to breathe in for two steps (left, right) and out for two steps. Ask them to try to keep their concentration only on their breathing. It may help to count "one" as they breathe in and "two" as they breathe out.

After a minute or so, ask them to slow their breathing. Demonstrate breathing in for four steps and out for four. When they have tried this rhythm for a minute or so, ask them to choose the rhythm that feels most comfortable to them and continue the walking meditation on their own.

Allow the group to walk silently for a minute or so more. Then, regather the group. Ask participants to share their observations on the exercise:

- How did it feel?
- Was it difficult to match your walking and breathing?
- Was it difficult to stay focused on the meditation, or did your thoughts ramble?
- Do you feel any different for having done the meditation? Might this kind of meditation be helpful if you needed to find inner peace to handle a difficult situation?

Including All Participants

If any participants are not able to walk, re-label this a "moving meditation". A participant who uses a wheelchair can match their breathing to the rhythm of rolling their wheels; if they use a motorized chair, they can simply breathe to a regular count as they move forward.

ACTIVITY 4: GUIDED MEDITATION (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the meditation below so you understand the timing and will be ready to leave sufficient pauses for participants to fully experience meditation.
- Arrange to use a space that has a clean, preferably carpeted, floor where everyone can lie down without touching anyone else. A space where everyone can sit comfortably on a cushion or mat will also work.

Description of Activity

This guided meditation follows a simple format which participants can recreate on their own to practice relaxation and seek inner peace.

Invite participants to get comfortable lying on the floor or sitting cross-legged on a cushion or mat. Tell them it is important that everyone keep an internal focus, and not interfere with the experience of those around them.

Ask participants to close their eyes, if they are comfortable doing so, and listen to a guided meditation. Read the meditation aloud, in a calm, clear voice. Pause after each sentence so participants can fully experience the meditation.

Imagine you are lying on the sand at the beach.

It is a warm day, and you are very relaxed.

Feel the sun's rays, which have been traveling through space to reach you, being absorbed into your skin.

You are getting warm, but also very relaxed.

As you get warmer, and more relaxed, you feel yourself start to melt into the earth.

Just let go. Imagine your fingers and toes warming and melting, melting into the earth.

Slowly, starting from the edges and moving in, like a popsicle left out in the sun, you are melting, turning into a puddle, and slowly being absorbed into the earth.

The process is very gentle, very relaxing, being welcomed in as a part of the earth that holds you.

You are no longer separate from the earth, but part of it, part of what nourishes the plants, part of the whole wide planet.

Enjoy the sensation of belonging to the earth, spreading out through roots and up through the veins of plants to take in the sun again.

Then, when you are ready, imagine you are collecting yourself up again.

Pull your melted, spread-out self back together, back to the surface where you are lying, back into your own familiar self, solid once again, yet relaxed and warm.

Now, come back to the group.

When everyone is re-gathered, invite participants to reflect on their experience with this meditation:

- Was it difficult to remain still?
- How did you feel during the meditation? Do you feel any different now than when we started?
- Might an imaginative meditation like this be helpful in finding inner peace during a difficult time?

Including All Participants

Participants who have a very difficult time staying still may benefit from having a soft, quiet object, such as clay, to manipulate with their fingers during the meditation.

ACTIVITY 5: MAKE KNOTTED MEDITATION BEADS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Hemp or silk cord
- Beads, large enough to string on hemp or silk cord
- Shallow containers for all participants to contain their beads
- Scissors
- Optional: Quiet music, and music player

Preparation for Activity

- Cut hemp or silk cord into 18-inch strands—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Calculate how many beads you will need. Get enough for each participant to string about eight inches of cord. Choose beads so each participant's knotted strand can include a single bead distinct from the others in size, shape, or texture.
- Set out strands of cord, a selection of beads, and a shallow container for each participant.

(You may wish to pre-select groups of beads and fill all the shallow containers in advance.)

- Optional: Set up music player and queue the music you want to play.
- Optional: Make a strand of knotted beads beforehand, to show the group.

Description of Activity

People have used beads for centuries to facilitate meditation and prayer. Catholics may handle rosary beads to mark repeated prayers; Buddhists may use *malas*, strings of 108 beads, to aid meditation. The children make knotted strands of beads and try using them in a meditation to find inner peace—an activity that reinforces the "tied-together" theme of the curriculum.

To create the strand, knot one end of the cord. Make a knot large enough to prevent a bead from slipping off. String the first bead—it should be one with a texture, size, or shape distinct from the other beads that will follow. Then, tie another knot as close as possible to the bead.

Continue adding beads, each followed by a knot, until the strand reaches the desired length. You may leave the beads in a knotted strand, or tie the two ends of cord together to form a circle of beads. Trim excess cord.

When all have completed a knotted strand of beads, show them a way to use the beads in meditation: Have participants begin with the unique bead—the one they placed first on the strand. Instruct them to take the bead between two fingers and inhale, then turn the bead as they exhale. Repeat the process of inhaling while taking the bead between two fingers and exhaling as they turn the bead with each bead on the strand. Or, invite them to repeat a mantra, such as the word "peace," each time they turn a bead.

After participants have had the opportunity to meditate using the beads, invite them to reflect on how the beads might be useful to them in finding inner peace.

Variation

Depending on the makeup of the group, stringing the beads can be a meditative experience in itself. You may wish to play quiet music or encourage quiet focus in another way while children make their knotted strands.

Including All Participants

Participants who lack manual dexterity may need larger beads and stiffer cord. Be ready to help a participant; invite them to choose the beads they want on their strand, and string and knot the strand for them.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Explain that the session is almost over and that we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space. Ask everyone to clean up their own area and the materials they were using first, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

Then bring the group to the circle. Ask them to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together in the spirit of peace when we..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about how we are tied together in peace. When everyone who wants to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body.

Distribute copies of Taking It Home you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: TEACH CENTERING EXERCISES

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for the group to share meditation/centering exercises with another religious education group at your congregation, a children's chapel or other worship gathering at your congregation, or people at a family shelter or child care center outside the congregation.
- Select exercises for the group to share. Plan ahead so you will be teaching the exercises in an appropriate space and obtain materials you may need for everyone to participate in the exercises.
- Decide who will lead the exercises; you may wish to designate co-leader(s) for each exercise.

Description of Activity

Meditation/centering exercises can be helpful for both adults and participants, particularly in times of stress.

This group can share their experience of meditation with your congregation by leading one or more exercises for another group in the religious education program or during a worship service. If your congregation has a relationship with a shelter for homeless families or survivors of domestic abuse, the children might bring a meditation experience to people open to new techniques for seeking calm and peace.

In addition to the walking and guided meditations presented in this session, you may wish to teach other simple exercises, such as listening intently for the sound of a chime as it dies away to complete silence, focusing on the flame of a candle or lighted chalice, or doing simple yoga poses.

Including All Participants

While some participants will likely volunteer to teach or lead a meditation exercise, joining the group of learners and modeling how to do the exercises is an equally valuable way to participate in this Faith in Action activity.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What connections did we make with the participants? What connections did the participants make with each other? How was this evident? How could we improve a sense of community in this group?

Approach your religious educator for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

[God] grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. — Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), theologian, The Serenity Prayer

If we are not happy, if we are not peaceful, we can't share peace and happiness with others, even those we love, those who live under the same roof. If we are peaceful, if we are happy, we can smile and blossom like a flower, and everyone in our family, our entire society, will benefit from our peace. — Thich Nhat Hanh, Being Peace

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we explored ways to find peace inside. We made a connection between our own

inner peace and our capacity to bring peace to the world around us, even in difficult situations. In the story "Serenity, Courage, and Wisdom" a girl learns how the well known, nondenominational Serenity Prayer can give her perspective on a conflict with a friend. We practiced using "the wisdom to know the difference" between things we can change and things we cannot in true-to-life situations. We experienced both a walking and a guided meditation and made our own strands of knotted meditation beads.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Share your strategies for finding inner calm in difficult situations. Do you have a meditation practice or another form of spiritual discipline you use to seek inner peace? What situations tend to arise in your family in which it would be helpful for everyone to practice "the serenity to accept the things [they] cannot change, the courage to change the things [they] can, and the wisdom to know the difference"?

A Family Ritual. Conflict in a family is a natural occurrence. When individuals approach a conflict from a place of inner peace and calm, they can facilitate the conflict's resolution. Consider adopting a ritual to use when conflict gets heated in your family. Call a halt to the strife and have everyone involved in the conflict close their eyes, breathe deeply, and picture in their mind something or someone that makes them feel happy or loved: a pet, a dear friend or relative, a tree, a lake, a football stadium, a television program—anything that has strong enough positive associations to help restore a sense of peace and balance. Give yourselves a good minute; then, tell one another what you pictured.

Family Adventure. One of the easiest ways to find inner peace is to envision a favorite location in nature. But, of course, this kind of reflection is only possible when you have had experiences in nature that are familiar enough to call to mind. Plan a family outing to a location everyone agrees can be a "peaceful place": a beach, a campsite in the forest, a cabin in the snow, a nearby park with beautiful trees, a lake—whatever works for your family, location, and circumstances. While there, ask everyone to take some time to be quiet and really observe their surroundings. Paying attention to the sights, smells, sounds, and textures of this "peaceful place" will make it all the more vivid as a meditative refuge.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: SERENITY PRAYER BRACELETS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Beads in silver, purple, and gold colors, one of each color for each participant

- Elastic thread, preferably black or silver; scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Set out materials at work tables.

Description of Activity

Participants create bracelets to serve as reminders to accept with serenity the things one cannot change, to courageously change the things one can, and to find the wisdom to know the difference. Each bracelet will have three beads: one silver, one purple, and one gold.

For each participant, cut a length of elastic thread a few inches longer than the circumference of their wrist. Have each participant begin by stringing a silver bead onto the elastic thread to symbolize serenity. As they string the silver bead, invite participants to reflect silently or to share aloud when in their lives they have experienced the deepest serenity. Have participants tie a knot on either side of the bead.

The second bead is purple, for courage. As they string the purple bead, invite participants to reflect silently or to share aloud a memory of some time when they had the courage to change something (or simply a time when they felt courageous). Have participants tie a knot next to this purple bead.

The third bead is gold, for wisdom. As they string the gold bead, invite participants to reflect silently or to share aloud a memory of some time when they made a wise choice, or the name of someone they admire for their wisdom. Have participants tie a knot next to the gold bead. Then invite participants to help each other tie the elastic threads around one another's wrists to form a bracelet, and trim the ends.

Including All Participants

Participants lacking the manual dexterity to string beads and/or knot the elastic string can share their thoughts or reflect silently on each of the three topics while a co-leader or another participant strings and ties their beads.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn
- Optional: Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Description of Activity

In addition to building community through sharing information about important events in participants' lives, this version of sharing joys and concerns uses a ritual activity based on the metaphor of knots, allowing children to experience being literally "tied together."

Gather participants in a seated circle. Say:

We are all tied together by the bonds of community. What affects any one of us affects us all. We take time now to share our greatest joys and deepest concerns, events that have happened since last time we met which we hold in our hearts.

Invite a volunteer to go first, and give them the ball of yarn. Ask them to share their joy or concern and then, holding the end of the yarn, throw the ball of yarn to another child in the circle. This child may either share a joy or concern or choose to pass, but in either case they keep hold of the strand of yarn as they throw the ball of yarn to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a chance to share or pass, and the whole group is connected by a web of yarn.

At the end of the sharing you may invite participants to take turns winding the yarn back onto the ball. Or, pass around scissors and invite the children to cut a short piece of the yarn and tie it around their wrist as a sign of the covenant of caring which the group shares.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 10: STORY: SERENITY, COURAGE, AND WISDOM

Marissa's mom could tell there was something wrong the minute Marissa slunk in the door after school.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"Come on," her mother coaxed, "I know you better than that. Sometimes it helps to talk about things."

"I'll tell you what the problem is," blurted out Marissa.

"The problem is that Jordan is a crazy, nasty, lying little..." Marissa caught her mother's raised eyebrow and finished the sentence, "... witch."

"Wow," said her mother. "I thought you two were BFFs (best friends forever)."

"Yeah, well that's what I thought, until she started yelling at me for no reason at all. Honestly, I just asked her about her weekend, and before you know it she's yelling about why am I so nosy and why do I keep poking in her business and I'm always in her face... which is just plain not true!"

"Sounds like she really lost her temper with you."

"Lost it is right!" yelled Marissa. "I'm done with her. I don't need to be treated like that. She can just find herself a different best friend, because I'm never speaking to her again."

"Well, that's one solution." Marissa's mom's voice was calm.

"Don't tell me you think I'm supposed to go back to her and apologize or something. I didn't do anything!"

"No, I don't mean that. I just wonder why she would go off like that."

"I dunno. I guess she's not the only one yelling these days. Last week she told me her parents are always fighting. She thinks they might be getting a divorce."

"So maybe you weren't really the one she was mad at."

"Maybe. But that doesn't give her the right to yell at me like that."

"No, it doesn't. But it might give you a different kind of perspective."

"Perspective?" Marissa was confused.

"You know, a different point of view."

"You mean that I should try to see things the way she sees them."

"That's one way to get a different perspective. But really what I meant was that you might be able to shift your way of seeing. If you look at the situation differently, you might find a good way to handle it."

"Like what? Stand there and get yelled at? Or am I supposed to fix her parents' marriage, so she's not all whacked out?"

Marissa's mother smiled. "I don't think either you or Marissa could do that. But you reminded me of a famous prayer which might help you try another perspective. The prayer goes: 'Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.'"

"I think I saw that on a bumper sticker before." Marissa was intrigued. "But what exactly is 'serenity'?"

"Basically, serenity is like peace. When you feel serene you feel calm and centered. You feel okay about how things are, or at least that you, yourself, are okay and will be okay."

"Huh. Say the whole thing again."

Marissa's mom repeated: "Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

Marissa thought about those words. Then she said, "So with Jordan, I cannot change the way she yelled at me, and I cannot fix her problem with her parents. But I could try to be calm about how she acted. Maybe let her know I am still her friend, and give her a chance to talk about things if she wants to."

"Exactly!"

Marissa felt less upset already. But she wasn't sure what to do. "Jordan was really acting like a freak," she said. "I'm a little scared to talk to her."

"I'm sure," Marissa's mom said sympathetically. Then she said, "Let me tell you about the man who wrote that prayer, Reinhold Niebuhr. He was a Christian minister, and a pacifist. He believed Jesus' teachings meant participating in wars was flat out wrong."

"But then the Nazis came to power in Germany. Niebuhr was born and raised in the U.S., but his heritage was German. He felt shocked and saddened by what the Nazis were doing. As the U.S. got ready to go to war against the Nazis, he really struggled with what to preach."

"What did he do?"

"I guess he found the courage to try to change things. One thing he changed was his own thinking about war. He preached that it was important to go to war to stop

the Nazis. I'm sure it took courage to let go of his pacifism, but he did it."

"Do you think he felt serenity about the terrible things the Nazis did? The things he couldn't change?" Marissa wondered.

"Serenity doesn't mean you stop caring. It means you stop wasting your energy being angry about things that have already happened or tackling problems that are not yours to solve," said her mother. "You have to practice serenity. Try to find your calm center when little things do not go your way—like not getting to watch the movie you want. Serenity calms you down, so you can find the courage for the changes you *can* make."

"Yeah, sometimes even the little things don't feel that little."

"True. And a fight with your best friend is always a big thing. But if you can work on the serenity to accept the things you can't change, the courage to change the things you can, and the wisdom to know the difference, you'll have gone a long way."

"I guess so. Can I call Jordan before I start my homework?"

"Sounds like wisdom to me," Marissa's mom smiled.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 10:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE SCENARIOS

Scenario A: You really want to play with a friend, who is only available for the next two hours. Your house rules are that you have to finish your homework before you are allowed to play.

Scenario B: Two of your good friends are arguing. Each expects you to take their side, and says they will only be your friend if you side with them. But you want to remain friends with both of them.

Scenario C: For a whole year, you have been looking forward to joining the traveling soccer team. You just found out that, although two of your friends made the team, you did not.

FIND OUT MORE

The Serenity Prayer

Hear an [NPR interview](#) (at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4284976) with Elizabeth Sifton, the daughter of Reinhold Niebuhr, about the circumstances which led to Niebuhr's creation of the Serenity Prayer.

In July/August 2008, the Yale Alumni Magazine published an article, "[Who Wrote the Serenity Prayer?](#)" (at www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2008_07/serenity.html) by Fred R. Shapiro. The article explores the possibility that older formulations of the Serenity Prayer's sentiment influenced Niebuhr's articulation of the prayer. An editorial sidebar gives a brief biography of Niebuhr.

The E-zine website has a brief article about [the history of the Serenity Prayer](#) (at ezinearticles.com/?The-History-of-the-Serenity-Prayer&id=552531).

Meditation

Lisa Erickson's Mommy Mystic website offers a list of [books and other resources](#) (at mommymystic.wordpress.com/2008/11/10/meditation-for-kids-books-articles-and-other-resources/) about meditation for children, youth, and families.

The Article Doctor, a health and fitness website, has an article about mala, [Buddhist meditation beads](#) (at www.articledoctor.com/meditation/buddhist-meditation-beads-2361). Also find related topics including [open-eye mediation](#) (at www.articledoctor.com/meditation/benefits-of-open-eye-meditation-935) and music in [African meditation](#) (at www.articledoctor.com/meditation/african-meditation-music-2125).

SESSION 11: SCIENCE AND RELIGION

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Pleasure lies not in discovering truth, but in seeking it. — Leo Tolstoy

This session explores the Blake covenant phrase to "seek the truth in love." Through the story of Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), participants discover our Unitarian heritage of seeking truth and our calling to act on our understanding of what is true and right.

Priestley, a scientist and a Unitarian minister, actively combined his theological beliefs with scientific inquiry. He made scientific breakthroughs we recognize today, such as proving the existence of oxygen. Yet, Priestley was ostracized during his time for his freethinking ideas and determined inquiry. Priestley refused to back down from his discoveries even when he and his family were threatened with bodily harm. His story reminds us of the dual importance of seeking the truth in love and following our conscience in standing up for our beliefs.

GOALS

This session will:

- Explore our Unitarian heritage of seeking truth in love through the story of 18th-century scientist and minister Joseph Priestley
- Demonstrate the interconnectedness of scientific inquiry and religious beliefs
- Affirm an inherent human need to seek answers to our questions
- Demonstrate how our Unitarian Universalist faith supports us to seek truth in love.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Consider the example of Unitarian minister and scientist Joseph Priestley, who refused to give up his search for truth even when threatened with bodily harm
- Identify and ponder their own wondering questions in a guided meditation
- Experience how science can help us search for truth by conducting simple science experiments.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
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Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Wondering Ritual and Meditation	10
Activity 2: Story — Joseph Priestley: Discovering Truth through Science and Religion	15
Activity 3: Potato Puncture	5
Activity 4: Incredible Marshmallow	5
Activity 5: Religion or Science?	10
Faith in Action: Planting a Tree	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Blowing It Out	5
Alternate Activity 2: Yarn Scavenger Hunt	15
Alternate Activity 3: Graffiti Wall of Wonder	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, think about a time when you made a discovery which caused you to question previously held assumptions. Reflect:

- How easy was it for you to accept the new information? How did you incorporate your discovery into your understanding of the world? Did it lead to a new search for truth?
- Did you share your discovery with others? How? Were they receptive to your discovery, or resistant?
- How did others' reactions affect your confidence in your discovery? Did others' affirmation encourage you to keep seeking truth? Did others' resistance cause you to pull back?

Keep your own experiences and feelings in your mind as you lead participants to explore our heritage of seeking truth in love.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils
- Optional: Markers

Preparation for Activity

- Draw a question mark on card stock and cut it out to make a template. Then, make a sample ornament: Trace the template on another piece of card stock, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the question mark can be hung.
- You may wish to make a few question mark templates.
- Set out sample and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to make question mark ornaments. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the Rainbow Wall Hanging.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with small motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold a template on it for another child to trace a question mark. Children who have trouble tracing and cutting may be able to decorate ornaments with markers. Make sure they leave room on the ornament to write.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Question mark ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Markers, pens, and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another. — James Vila Blake
- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants make question mark ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set ornaments and pencils, pens, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

Today we will explore the part of our covenant that talks about "seek[ing] the truth in love".

Invite everyone to select a question mark ornament and a marker, pen, or pencil. Encourage them to write on their ornament a way in which people can seek truth. Allow participants a few minutes to write. Then, invite them, one at a time, to tie their ornaments to the wall hanging, and as they do so, if they feel like sharing what they have written, read or say it aloud to the group.

After everyone has had a chance to attach an ornament, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who may be unable to write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways people can seek truth. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time; they can also pass if they choose.

ACTIVITY 1: WONDERING RITUAL AND MEDITATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A gong, bell, or other musical noisemaker

Preparation for Activity

- Read the guided meditation aloud several times so you become comfortable with the words and the pauses.

Description of Activity

A brief guided meditation sparks participants' thoughts about big questions and establishes an atmosphere conducive to the sharing ritual which follows.

Gather the group and ask them to sit comfortably, not touching anyone else, for a guided meditation. Ring the gong or bell. Then, read aloud in a calm, clear voice: I invite you to close your eyes if you feel comfortable. Or, find a space on the wall or a special object to focus upon.

Now take a deep breath in, (pause) now let it out. Deep breath in(pause), deep breath out.

As you continue to breathe slowly in and out, imagine you are growing larger and larger so your whole being fills this room. (Pause) Growing larger still, you are now part of this whole building, with all its people and furniture and carpet and walls. (Pause) Growing even larger, you expand even more to include all the surrounding area, this neighborhood, the city, and as you grow and grow and grow, you are now as large as our state and country and now as big as the entire planet. (Pause) But still you grow and grow until you expand outward throughout the entire universe, growing larger and larger forever. (Long pause) Now feel yourself shrinking, slowly getting smaller ... smaller ... smaller ... smaller ... so small you are once again back in this building, here in this room with us.

Ring the gong or bell to invite participants to slowly exit the meditation. Then tell them, in these words, or your own:

The meditation you just experienced was similar to what our universe experienced during the Big Bang, a cosmic event some scientists believe started our existence. But no one knows for sure. Much of science is exploring truth starting with the unknown we wonder about.

Invite participants to call out "popcorn" style some things they wonder about. Sound the gong after each person offers a wonder statement.

Ring the gong to signal the end of sharing their wonderings. Invite reflection with questions such as:

- Do you have some of the same wonderings others called out?
- Could wondering about the meaning of life and the universe be a way of "seeking truth in love"?
- Do you think science or faith can better help you find answers to these questions? Why?

Including All Participants

Some participants will be more eager than others to share their wonderings in the group. Using the meditation to set a mood before the sharing time may encourage some participants who might otherwise hold back. Mention before the meditation that after the meditation the group will be sharing some of the amazing things we wonder about. This gives participants more time to consider what they will say. You might also remind the group that sharing is voluntary.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — DISCOVERING TRUTH THROUGH SCIENCE AND RELIGION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Discovering Truth through Science and Religion](#)" (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times so you will be comfortable sharing it.

Description of Activity

Tell or read the story to participants.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about it.

Begin a discussion by asking the children to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using questions such as:

- Why do you think Joseph Priestley continued his search for truth even after he lost everything and had to flee to another country?
- Why didn't Joseph Priestley see a conflict between religion and science when others did?
- What is the difference between religion and science?

- What is similar between religion and science?
- How do you use religion and science to help you search for the truth?
- How does our Unitarian Universalist faith encourage us to use both faith and science to discover answers to our questions?

Including All Participants

Provide a hard copy of the story for hearing impaired participants so they can read along as you tell the story.

ACTIVITY 3: POTATO PUNCTURE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Raw potatoes (one for each team of two or three participants)
- Plastic drinking straws (one for each participant)

Preparation for Activity

- Try this experiment to become familiar with the process.

Description of Activity

Form teams of two or three participants at work tables. Give each team a raw potato. Ask a participant on each team to select a straw and try to stab the potato with it. (The straw should buckle and bend, barely piercing the potato skin.)

Then, encourage another participant on the team to take a straw, hold it so their thumb seals the top hole, and try to stab the other end into the potato.

Participants will probably find it fun to try the experiment a few more times.

Ask participants to reflect with questions such as:

- Why did covering the hole at the top of the straw drive it deeper into the potato? (The air trapped in the straw gives it enough strength to penetrate the potato; as the straw pierces the potato, the air in the straw compresses, strengthening the straw even more.)
- How does this experiment prove the existence of something (air) which cannot be seen?

Including All Participants

Instead of stabbing the potato with a straw, an individual with limited motor coordination may be able to hold the potato still while a teammate stabs it with the straw.

ACTIVITY 4: INCREDIBLE MARSHMALLOW (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Clear glass jar with metal lid
- A hammer and a nail, and modeling clay
- A large marshmallow and a plastic straw, for each participant who will try the experiment
- (Optional: Kitchen vacuum sealer may be used instead)

Preparation for Activity

- Using the hammer and nail, make a straw-sized hole in the center of the clear glass jar's metal lid.
- Place the straw through the hole in the lid and push it in about an inch. Use modeling clay to secure the straw where it passes through the lid; make sure you form an air-tight seal.
- Place a marshmallow in the jar and screw the lid tightly shut.

Description of Activity

Ask for a volunteer to draw all of the air out of the jar using the straw. Under normal conditions, molecules of air from the atmosphere (called atmospheric pressure) are pushing on the outside of the marshmallow. When the air that was once pushing on the outside of the marshmallow is removed, the air trapped inside the marshmallow pushes out (expands) causing it to get larger. The marshmallows shrink when the vacuum seal is broken and air rushes back into the container.

Then invite the participant to blow into the straw. As the air in the jar increases, the marshmallow will shrink.

If you have time, allow others to try the experiment. Use a new straw and a new marshmallow each time.

Process observations with questions such as:

- What happened to the marshmallow? Why?
- How does this experiment prove the existence of something (air) which cannot be seen?
- What does the experiment show us about seeking truth that may not be easily seen?

Including All Participants

If any participants are unable to see the experiment, have a co-leader or a participant verbally describe the activity as it happens.

ACTIVITY 5: RELIGION OR SCIENCE? (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A roll of cellophane tape
- Leader Resource 1, [Science, Religion, or Both?](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the leader resource and cut it into strips as indicated.
- Make three signs on sheets of newsprint: "SCIENCE," "RELIGION," and "BOTH." Post them in the meeting space where everyone can reach.

Description of Activity

Indicate the newsprint signs that say "SCIENCE," "RELIGION," and "BOTH." Tell the group you have a series of statements that some or all people consider to be true. Say they will decide which way can better test each statement: science, or religion, or both. Tell them some statements might be matters that both science and religion can test.

Invite a participant to select a slip of paper from Leader Resource 1. Read the statement aloud or invite a volunteer to do it. Lead the group to decide where the statement belongs and encourage a participant to use tape to post the statement on the sheet of newsprint the group selects.

Classify all the statements. Then, invite reflection with questions such as:

- Which statements were easy to place on a sheet of newsprint? Which were harder? Why?
- Why do some people insist that there is a large difference between science and religious issues?
- Think back to some of the wondering questions we came up with earlier today (Activity 1, Wondering Ritual and Meditation). Which ones were strictly matters for science? Which ones were strictly questions of faith?
- How do Unitarian Universalists use both science and religious thought to help us seek truth?

Including All Participants

Do not put any participants on the spot to read a statement aloud. Separate the task of choosing a statement from the task of reading it to the group. You

may wish to ask for one or two volunteers to share what is written on the slips of paper.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Bring the group to the circle. Ask everyone to cross their arms in front of their body and then take the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together by seeking the truth in love when we..." Ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about how we are tied together in a search for truth, in love. When everyone who wants to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body.

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: PLANTING A TREE

Materials for Activity

- A tree seedling for planting
- Several shovels (ideally, one for each participant)
- Planting soil/fertilizer
- Garden hose and/or watering can(s)

Preparation for Activity

- Talk to your congregation's minister, religious educator, building and grounds committee, and/or building staff about where your group could plant a tree on the congregation's grounds. If the grounds cannot accommodate a tree planting, arrange an offsite location or consider contributing a potted tree to an indoor space in your building.
- If you will travel off-site, arrange for travel to and from the site where the tree will be planted, secure adequate adult supervision, and provide the details on field trip permission forms for all participants.

- Obtain a tree seedling appropriate for the location you have chosen. If you are unsure what type of tree to plant and what special care may be required, ask at a local nursery which sells plants and tree starters.
- Prepare the outdoor place for your seedling by digging a large hole, enriching the soil with fertilizer, and taking any additional steps recommended for your particular tree.
- If your congregation includes any proficient gardeners, consider enlisting their help. They might assist you in selecting a seedling, determining an ideal location for planting, advise you on soil preparation and post-planting care, and help lead the planting activity.
- You may wish to prepare a few words for a brief ritual once the tree is planted.

Description of Activity

Gather the group around the hole (or large pot) where the tree will be planted. Enlist their aid in transferring the seedling to the hole in the ground and removing any temporary pot or protective coverings from the seedling and its roots.

Holding the plant steady in the hole, invite each participant to shovel at least one portion of dirt or soil into the hole. Pass shovels around the group as necessary.

Once the tree is firmly planted, share any brief ritual you have prepared. Invite the participants to reflect on and share their hopes and wishes for the tree they just planted. You might model or prompt with suggestions such as "adding more oxygen to our atmosphere" or "offering a place for the younger children to play once it grows larger."

Including All Participants

Pair a participant who cannot grasp and manipulate a shovel with someone who can help them as needed to fill the shovel with dirt and add the dirt to the hole.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it better?
- How did the participants respond to the story? Did they "get" it?

- How did participants respond to the science experiments with air pressure? Was one more successful than the other one? Why?

Approach your religious educator for guidance as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

Pleasure lies not in discovering truth, but in seeking it. — Leo Tolstoy

IN TODAY'S SESSION... the participants learned about Unitarian minister and scientist Joseph Priestley whose story embodies our Unitarian heritage of "seeking the truth in love." We shared some of the things we wonder about and did simple experiments with air pressure to explore Priestley's discovery of the existence of oxygen.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

science facts you find amazing. You might share how exciting it was when you discovered that all matter is made out of atoms so tiny they cannot be seen by the eye, or how the light we see from the stars comes from billions of years ago. Let your children know how your ideas about theology and spirituality are tied to your understandings of science, not opposed to them.

Family Discovery. Visit a science museum that has hands-on exhibits and immersive activities for children, and explore the wonders of discovery. Conduct some scientific experiments of your own at home. Many websites suggest easy projects that foster curiosity and promote learning. Try [Children's Science Experiment Ideas](http://www.kids-science-experiments.com/cat_pressure.html) (at www.kids-science-experiments.com/cat_pressure.html), [Steve Spangler Science](http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiments/) (at www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiments/), [Captain Curiosity Science Experiments](http://www.captaincuriosity.net/science-experiments-air/science-experiments-air-02/air-science-experiment-A02.htm) (at www.captaincuriosity.net/science-experiments-air/science-experiments-air-02/air-science-experiment-A02.htm), and the [How Stuff Works](http://home.howstuffworks.com/science-projects-for-kids-air-pressure.htm) (at home.howstuffworks.com/science-projects-for-kids-air-pressure.htm) website.

Family Games. Games such as I Spy and Twenty Questions encourage questioning and wonder. To play I Spy, someone starts by saying "I spy with my little eye..." and describes an object visible to all by just its color. They may name a large object (such as a house, a tree, or a sofa) or a small one (an envelope, a pencil, or an earring), as long as everyone playing can see it. The player who guesses the object goes next. In Twenty Questions, one player thinks of a noun/object and the others ask yes/no questions to determine what that object is. Again, the player who guesses correctly goes next. Because they need no game boards, cards, or

other paraphernalia, these games are great to play on the road, in an airport, or on a nature hike.

Find a crossword puzzle, word search, and other quizzes on Joseph Priestley on the [State of Pennsylvania's history website](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_history/4276) (at www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_history/4276).

A Family Ritual. Bedtime is a natural time to share our wonder about the mysteries of the world. Consider creating a night-time ritual of asking "wonder" questions: "I wonder how old the light from those stars is" or "I wonder what people are doing on the other side of the Earth where it is daytime already." Your questions need not be answerable; in fact, it is probably best if they are not. Speaking them out loud in the darkness as you cuddle together or just before climbing into bed as you gaze out at the night can elevate wonder questions to a spiritual practice.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: BLOWING IT OUT (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A tea light candle and a tall, cylindrical container (such as an empty salt or oatmeal container) for each team of three or four participants
- A lighter or matches, and extinguisher

Preparation for Activity

- Try the experiment on your own so you are familiar with the process.
- Since this activity uses lit candles, make sure you have a flat, uncluttered surface for each team to set their candles on; enough adult supervision; and a fire extinguisher nearby.

Description of Activity

Form teams of three or four participants. Give each team a tea light candle and a round container. Tell the teams to place the candle directly behind the container. Light the tea light candles. Then, ask the teams to have someone hold the container securely to the work table and then blow out their candle by blowing on the round container instead of the candle.

Use these questions to reflect:

- Were you surprised by what happened? Why or why not?
- Why were you able to blow the candle out by blowing on the container? (The blown air flows around the container and meets in the back to blow out the candle.)

- How does this experiment prove the existence of something (air) which cannot be seen?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: YARN SCAVENGER HUNT (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Yarn in at least five colors

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange to use a large space that offers many places to hide yarn—ideally, an unfamiliar meeting place or an outdoor location.
- Calculate the maximum number of two- or three-person teams you will have. For each team, cut a six-inch length of yarn in every color.
- Bundle the matching strands—i.e., make one bundle of all the blue strands of yarn, another bundle of all the red strands, etc. Tie each bundle loosely with another piece of yarn the same color.
- Hide the bundles.

Description of Activity

Form teams of two or three.

Tell the group they will work in teams to look for bundles of yarn you have hidden. Tell them each bundle is a different color; tell them how many bundles there are. Show them the parameters within which they should search.

Tell them each time they find a bundle of yarn, they should take just one strand of that color yarn for their team, replace the bundle where they found it. As they go, they should tie their strands of yarn together to make one, long chain.

When every team has completed their chain, invite participants to reflect with questions such as:

- Was it helpful to have others seeking the yarn with you?
- Were any of the yarn bundles harder to find than others?
- Did you need to be creative in some of the places where you were seeking? Why or why not?
- How did it feel when you had found all the yarn and completed your chain?
- In real life, how do you seek answers to questions you have? Is it different for different kinds of questions?

Including All Participants

If any participant has limited mobility, consider having them hide with a yarn bundle. If able, the participant might tie a strand of the yarn to the chain of each team that finds them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: GRAFFITI WALL OF WONDER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large poster board or art paper, and tape
- Color markers

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a place to post a Graffiti Wall of Wonder.
- If you have a wall space everyone can reach easily, tape blank poster board or art paper to the wall. Or, tape it to a work table or a clean floor surface.

Description of Activity

The group creates a Graffiti Wall of Wondering Questions.

Distribute markers and encourage participants to write their wondering questions on the blank paper. Invite them to forego neat lists and instead arrange their questions haphazardly.

Remind them that a "wondering question" is one that inspires investigation and discovery—"seeking truth in love". Such questions may not be readily answerable, and certainly not with a simple "yes" or "no".

If needed, prompt with questions of your own, questions you heard from the group in Activity 1, or some of these:

- I wonder how the universe began?
- I wonder why we are here?
- I wonder if there is a guiding force to the universe?

As the graffiti wall fills, invite reflection with questions such as:

- How are these wonder questions similar to what came up after our meditation (Activity 1)?
- What does wondering about these questions tell us about what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist?
- Are these questions answerable by science or religion? Both? Neither?
- If a question seems unanswerable, what is the point of seeking an answer? Why?

- Our fourth Unitarian Universalist Principle affirms us to make, "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning". How does the fourth Principle help us know what to do with our wondering questions?

Post the graffiti wall. If there is space left on it and participants can easily reach it, invite them to add more wondering questions as long as the graffiti wall remains posted.

Including All Participants

If any participants are physically unable to write their own questions on the graffiti wall, have some or all participants work in pairs: One generates questions, the other writes.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 11: STORY: DISCOVERING TRUTH THROUGH SCIENCE AND RELIGION

We often hear that science and religion are two things that just do not go together. One relies on facts which can be proven. The other relies on faith and intuition. However, science and religion have a lot in common. They both inspire wonder, questioning, and seeking truth.

To at least one man about 250 years ago, the Unitarian Joseph Priestley, religion and science were two ways of exploring the world and seeking truth. To him, they were not polar opposites in conflict with one another but two complementary avenues of discovery.

Joseph Priestley is best known as the scientist who “discovered” the presence of oxygen. He discovered that plants and trees generate oxygen, and he determined that living creatures need oxygen to breathe. Today we take this idea for granted, and maybe you have already learned it in school. But back in his day, trying to prove the existence of something you could not see, smell, hear, touch, or taste was difficult indeed.

In those days, the Unitarian religion already was a home for people who believed we each can discover our own faith truth. And Joseph Priestley was a Unitarian

minister. He saw no contradiction between seeking truth through faith and intuition and seeking truth using the methods of science. During the years he was using science to explore air, gases, electricity, and other physical matters in our world, Joseph Priestley also wrote about religious matters. In one, he proposed that the soul was a Divine substance, incomprehensible to human beings. He even taught the two subjects together at prestigious universities in England.

But lots of people disagreed with his ideas—particularly his religious beliefs. In 1791, an angry mob destroyed his family’s home, along with two places Joseph Priestley sought truth: his laboratory and his church. The buildings burned to the ground, along with many important papers, books, and experiment notes.

Joseph and his wife had no choice but to flee England and seek refuge across the ocean in the newly established United States of America. You might think having lost everything and being forced to start over in a new country would make Joseph less interested in pursuing his freethinking ideas. You would be wrong. Even as his family resettled, he continued his experiments in science and his explorations in faith. He discovered the poisonous gas carbon monoxide in 1799, and for this he is known as the father of modern chemistry. And, he continued to pursue his love of religion. The first Unitarian minister in the United States, he helped found the Unitarian Church in Philadelphia.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 11:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: SCIENCE, RELIGION, OR BOTH?

- The Earth spins at 900 miles per hour while coursing through space at 68,400 miles per hour.
- Human nature is basically good, but sometimes good people do bad things.
- The nature of the Divine is beyond our understanding.
- The continents are moving under our feet, about 3 to 6 inches a year.
- A complete blueprint of a person exists in each and every cell of the body.
- After death, the human soul lives on in another existence.
- If you condense the entire history of life on planet Earth to a single year on a calendar, humans would appear on December 31st, at 10:30 pm.
- Matter can take on different states or forms such as liquid, solid, or gas.
- Life on Earth is possible because of the oxygen generated by trees and other plants.
- There is a Divine plan for the universe and us in it.
- We are all part of the Divine.

FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about Joseph Priestley online at [The Joseph Priestley House website](http://www.josephpriestleyhouse.org/index.php?page=about-joseph-priestley) (at www.josephpriestleyhouse.org/index.php?page=about-joseph-priestley), the [History Guide](http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/priestley.html) (at www.historyguide.org/intellect/priestley.html) website, or the State of [Pennsylvania's history website](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_history/4276) (at www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pennsylvania_history/4276).

Discover more about oxygen and the other gases Joseph Priestley identified at the [Scientific American website](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=10-climate-experiments) (at www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=10-climate-experiments) or the [Jefferson Lab website](http://education.jlab.org/itselemental/ele008.html) (at education.jlab.org/itselemental/ele008.html).

Julian Rubin's website, [Following the Path of Discovery](http://www.juliantrubin.com/fairencyclopedia.html) (at www.juliantrubin.com/fairencyclopedia.html), explains how to replicate many famous science experiments, including some of [Priestley's](http://www.juliantrubin.com/bigten/oxygenexperiments.html) (at www.juliantrubin.com/bigten/oxygenexperiments.html).

SESSION 12: SEEING TRUTH/TRUE SEEING

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Truth, like surgery, may hurt, but it cures. — Han Suyin, writer, A Many Splendored Thing

The Blake covenant asserts that we "seek the truth in love." This session offers the story of Unitarian Universalist minister David Pettee, who sought the truth about his family's history of owning slaves. In finding truth, he found pain, but also joy and healing. The children discern truth from lies in a game, and express the "tied together" theme of this program by weaving a God's Eye, an emblem of true seeing.

GOALS

This session will:

- Demonstrate the risks and opportunities inherent in a search for truth
- Engage participants in discerning truth from lies
- Empower participants as truth-tellers and truth-seekers
- Promote both rational inquiry and thoughtful intuition as tools for determining what is true.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Articulate ways their own acts of truth-telling and truth-seeking embody a faith covenant
- Reflect on the capacity of "hard truths" to bring discomfort and pain yet also healing and joy, through the Rev. David Pettee's personal story of researching his family's history of slave ownership
- Practice discerning truth, by playing the game Two Truths and a Lie
- Embody the "tied together" theme of the curriculum by weaving their own God's Eyes, an emblem of true seeing.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Hard Truths	10
Activity 2: Two Truths and a Lie Game	20
Activity 3: Weaving God's Eyes	15
Faith in Action: Political Issues Research	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Interview about Hard Congregational Truths	15
Alternate Activity 2: Sharing Joys and Concerns	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- Have you ever discovered a truth which was painful for you to know?
- What did you do with that knowledge?
- Think about what truth-seeking means for you as a spiritual path. What theological conclusions have you come to through "seeking the truth in love"?
- In general, have people important to you been supportive of or threatened by your efforts to seek the truth? How has their response affected you?

Religious education is, at its heart, an ongoing process of seeking the truth. The loving framework you provide in leading this session sets the stage for participants to pursue the truth, wherever it may lead them.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils
- Optional: Markers

Preparation for Activity

- Draw a question mark on card stock and cut it out to make a template. Then, make a sample ornament: Trace the template on another piece of card stock, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the question mark can be hung.
- You may wish to make a few question mark templates.
- Set out sample and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to make question mark ornaments. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the Rainbow Wall Hanging.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with fine motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold a template on it for another child to trace a question mark. Children who have trouble tracing and cutting may be able to decorate ornaments with markers. Make sure they leave room on ornaments to write.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Question mark ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Markers, pens, and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.

- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants make question mark ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set ornaments and pencils, pens, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

The covenant we said together talks about our covenant to "seek the truth in love." What happens when discovering the truth is something that is painful or uncomfortable for you? Can you think of some truths we might discover which could be hurtful to us? What would be an example of your seeking the truth—or telling the truth when it was difficult to do so? On our question mark ornaments, we will write ways we are truth seekers even when it is hard to do.

Invite everyone to select a question mark ornament and a marker, pen, or pencil. Encourage them to write on their ornament an example of seeking or telling the truth which was uncomfortable to do or had a painful result. Allow participants a few minutes to write. Then, invite them, one at a time, to tie their ornaments to the wall hanging, and as they do so, if they feel like sharing what they have written, read or say it aloud to the group.

After everyone has had a chance to attach an ornament, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who cannot write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share

about ways people can seek truth. This may help them prepare an idea before the sharing time; they can also pass.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — HARD TRUTHS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

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

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to share it with the group.
- Review the discussion questions. Choose those that will best help the participants share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

Invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking participants to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion with these questions:

- How do you think Rev. Pettee felt when he found out his ancestors had owned slaves? Do you think he was sorry he learned that information?
- How do you think Pat felt when Rev. Pettee approached her with the information he had discovered about their families?
- Do you think Rev. Pettee felt love for his slave-owning ancestors? Do you think he felt love for the descendants of the slaves his ancestors owned? Do you think that knowing the truth about his ancestors made it harder for Rev. Pettee to love himself? Or, did it make loving himself easier? Why?
- Do you think it is always better to know the truth, or is it sometimes better to not know?

ACTIVITY 2: TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE GAME (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper and a pencil for each participant

Description of Activity

Distribute paper and pencils. Invite the group to play Two Truths and a Lie. Explain:

Each participant writes down two things about themselves that are true, but which others might not know about them, or might find surprising. They also write down one lie—something that is not true about them.

Give them a minute to write. Then, invite each participant, in turn, to read their three statements aloud; encourage the children to mix up the order of true and false statements. Once a participant has read all three statements, invite the others raise hands to vote for the statement they think is a lie. After everyone has voted, the reader tells the group which statement was the lie.

Process with these questions:

- Was it difficult to think of things the group does not know about you?
- How hard was it to come up with a lie? Was it fun?
- What interesting or surprising truths did you learn about each other?
- Whose lies seemed the most believable? Why?

Including All Participants

Ask volunteers to read their three statements to the group, rather than going around in a circle. If a child wishes to pass, that is fine.

ACTIVITY 3: WEAVING GOD'S EYES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Craft sticks (popsicle sticks), two for each participant; a variety of colors of yarn
- Scissors
- Optional: Toothpicks, two for each participant; a variety of colors of embroidery floss

Preparation for Activity

- Consider the manual dexterity of the children in the group. Decide whether to provide craft sticks and yarn for large-size God's Eyes, toothpicks and embroidery floss for smaller God's Eyes, or both sets of materials so participants can choose which size to make. Obtain the supplies.
- Make a sample God's Eye to show the group.
- Set out materials.

Description of Activity

Show the group the sample God's Eye you have made. Tell them:

God's Eyes, or "ojos de dios", are a traditional craft of the Huichol Indians of Mexico and the Aymara Indians of Bolivia. This depiction of Divine sight can be an emblem of seeing the truth in all situations, and of ever-present love, even in the face of difficult truths.

Invite the children to make their own God's Eyes:

1. Cross two sticks, one over the other, in the shape of a plus sign. Tie them together by wrapping yarn around the plus sign, making an X.
2. Secure one end of the yarn with a knot on the back of the sticks.
3. Continue wrapping the yarn around the X, weaving over and under the crossed sticks. You will start to see a pattern—a series of diamond shapes, all tight up against each other, with no gaps between.
4. To switch colors, cut the yarn, tie a new color of yarn to the end, and continue weaving.
5. Keep weaving, over and under, changing colors as you wish. Stop as you approach the ends of the sticks, so the woven yarn will not slip off the edges.
6. To finish, wrap the yarn several times around the top stick, and then tie a loop of yarn which you can use to hang the God's Eye. Wrap the end of the yarn around the top stick a few more times, and then tie a knot in the back.

Allow participants to make more than one God's Eye if there is time.

You may wish to invite volunteers to hang a God's Eye on the Rainbow Wall Hanging, now or during your Closing. Or, encourage participants to display their God's Eyes in their rooms when they get home, as a reminder to look on their own actions with both honesty and self-love.

As children finish, ask them to reflect on what a God's Eye could mean. Ask:

- What would it feel like to have all your actions seen by someone who always knows the truth, and who always regards you with love, whether you tell the truth or not?

Including All Participants

Some participants will have the dexterity to create a God's Eye with toothpicks and embroidery floss, while participants who have more difficulty with fine motor skills can weave a God's Eye using craft sticks and yarn.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home
- Optional: God's Eyes made in Activity 3

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Explain that the session is almost over and that we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space. Ask everyone to clean up their own area and the materials they were using first, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

If you have not done so during Activity 3, invite volunteers to tie God's Eyes they have woven to the group's Rainbow Wall Hanging.

When the group is gathered, ask them to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together in the spirit of truth when we..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about how we are tied together in truth. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: POLITICAL ISSUES RESEARCH

Materials for Activity

- Newspaper, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Post a few sheets of blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Find out as much as possible about a significant and controversial issue, and present your findings as a letter to the editor and/or a letter to a relevant political figure.

This will work best in two meetings, with time for research in between. Do this as a group, or prepare the

group to lead the activity with others in the congregation (e.g., older children, teens, and/or adults). Having the children and their parents work together could be ideal.

To save time, choose the topic yourself; write it on the newsprint. Or, lead the group to brainstorm topics (write suggestions on newsprint) and then choose one by voting. Possible topics are health care reform, mandatory testing in public schools, bans on particular breeds of dogs, the legal age for driving or voting, or an issue particular to your community, such as decisions about the use of public spaces.

Once you have a topic, have participants brainstorm questions they could use to pursue information; write the questions on newsprint. Be ready to suggest some leading questions to model participation.

Once the group has generated a rich set of questions, assign volunteers to research each question. Share ideas about how and where they might find information. Ask that their reports be brief—a few sentences or bullet points.

Time and technology constraints will probably mean that volunteers will need to go home to do their research, and then report back at a later gathering. At the second meeting, compile the information participants have gathered in the form of a Letter to the Editor or a report to a public official or committee.

If you cannot hold a second meeting, have participant/researchers email or mail their findings to a designated co-leader who can turn the findings into a report or a Letter to the Editor. Make sure you send all the researchers a copy of the report or letter, and inform the whole group about any response you receive.

Including All Participants

If any participants lack Internet access, assign researchers to work in pairs or small groups. If possible, arrange for participants to do their research using computers and the Internet at your congregation.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What connections did we make with the participants? What connections did the participants make with each other? How was this evident? How could we improve a sense of community within this group?

Approach your religious educator for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

Truth, like surgery, may hurt, but it cures. — Han Suyin, writer, A Many Splendored Thing

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we explored what it means to "seek the truth in love" through a true story of the Rev. David Pettee's research to learn about his slave-holding ancestors. Rev. Pettee's "hard truth" brought pain, but also joy, after he sought a connection with a descendant of a slave owned by his ancestor. We played a game in which we had to determine which personal statements people shared were true and which were lies. We wove God's Eyes, a traditional craft of indigenous people of the Americas, to embody the "tied together" theme of this program with an emblem of true seeing.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. How do we seek the truth at school? Among friends? In our family? In our congregation? Talk about how you feel when you learn someone has lied to you. How do you feel when you lie, or hold back parts of the truth? How is seeking the truth in love different from seeking the truth without worrying about the love part?

A Family Adventure. You may want to explore your family ancestry as Rev. Pettee did, seeking the good, the bad, and the ugly about your own ancestors. You can find a great deal of information available online, often for free, at sites such as [the Ancestor Hunt website](http://www.ancestorhunt.com) (at www.ancestorhunt.com). If you have ancestors who lived and died locally, you might take a trip to the place they were buried. What you can learn from their graves and the graves of those around them?

A Family Game. During this session the children played a game in which we tried to distinguish true statements from false ones. "Two Truths and a Lie" may be harder to play in your family, since you know one another so well, but give it a try! Each participant writes down two things about themselves that are true, but which others might not know or might find surprising. They also write down one lie—a statement that they have done or experienced something they really haven't. Encourage everyone to mix up the order of the truths and the lie. Each person then has a turn to read their statements aloud once, and then a second time so the others can vote for the statement they think is a lie. After everyone votes, the reader tells which statement was a lie.

Since parents are likely to know most of the things family members have done (or at least what the children have done), you may want to begin all three statements with "I wish... ." Invite each player to write two of their real wishes (preferably, wishes that would surprise other

family members), and one thing that they do not actually wish for.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: INTERVIEW ABOUT HARD CONGREGATIONAL TRUTHS (15 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Invite a long-time member of your congregation to come share recollections of the congregation's history. Explain the Rev. David Pettee's story of seeking his family's truth, and give them the story "Hard Truths" to read. Make sure the guest is willing to talk honestly about difficult or embarrassing times in the congregation's life as much as moments of which the congregation is proud.

Description of Activity

Congregations, like individuals, have family histories. Some stories of a congregation's past spark pride—congregational growth, involvement in important social issues, acts of caring. But congregations, like families, also have difficult or embarrassing episodes. Your group can "seek the truth in love" about your congregation's history in much the same way that Rev. Pettee did with his family history. Invite a long-term member or congregational historian to come speak with the group. Ask them to share, in particular, difficult or embarrassing times in the congregation's history. Prepare the children to ask follow-up questions. You might start the questions with these:

- Do you see ways this history continues to affect the congregation today?
- How, if at all, did people repair broken relationships?
- What were the best and the worst ways the congregation has handled destructive behavior?
- Is this story commonly told among the congregation's members, or is it largely hidden away?
- Are there many versions of the story? How have they changed over the years?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

- Optional: Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Description of Activity

In addition to building community through sharing information about important events in participants' lives, this version of sharing joys and concerns uses a ritual activity based on the metaphor of knots, allowing children to experience being literally "tied together".

Gather participants in a seated circle. Say:

We are all tied together by the bonds of community. What affects any one of us affects us all. We take time now to share our greatest joys and deepest concerns, events that have happened since last time we met which we hold in our hearts.

Invite a volunteer to go first, and give them the ball of yarn. Ask them to share their joy or concern and then, holding the end of the yarn, throw the ball of yarn to another child in the circle. This child may either share a joy or concern or choose to pass, but in either case they keep hold of the strand of yarn as they throw the ball of yarn to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a chance to share or pass, and the whole group is connected by a web of yarn.

At the end of the sharing you may invite participants to take turns winding the yarn back onto the ball. Or, pass around scissors and invite the children to cut a short piece of the yarn and tie it around their wrist as a sign of the covenant of caring which the group shares.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 12: STORY: HARD TRUTHS

By the Reverend David Pettee.

One of the more important things that Unitarian Universalists try to do is to "seek the truth in love." This might sound easy to do. "So, what's so hard about it?" you might ask. Well, what happens when you think you know one story, but while seeking the truth about it, an entirely different story comes out? This happened to me a few years ago.

In my family, I am the person who knows more than anyone else about our ancestors. My grandfather used to be this person, as was his father before him. Over time, lots of great stories about our family were collected and passed down. I was so proud of all that my ancestors had done that I decided to keep learning as much about them as I could.

The Internet has made the search for old records so much easier! While my grandfather needed to use his vacation time to go and do research, I can sit at my computer and find these same records at my fingertips. And one day, in 2006, I found that an old record from the 1770's was searchable online. I typed in an ancestor's name, and living in his house in Rhode Island were four enslaved Africans. This was a huge surprise! I think the story made my ancestors feel embarrassed, so they had stopped talking about it, and gradually it was forgotten.

That there had been slavery in New England was also a surprise. I had thought that slavery only existed in the South. But slavery was practiced in the North for two hundred years! The more I learned about the truth, the more I wanted to know what really had happened. And after a year of researching, I learned that not only did I have several family members who enslaved Africans, I also had an ancestor who was a captain of a ship that brought slaves from Africa. This news was hard to accept at first, and made me feel ashamed about my family.

But my decision to "seek the truth in love" did not stop there. Because I came to know so much about my ancestor who was a ship's captain, I decided to go to Africa. I wanted to see with my own eyes the places that he visited. Amazingly, some of the buildings were still standing. Walking in his footsteps made the history come alive even more. The most unexpected thing was that I began to feel different inside. While the story was about bondage, I began to feel liberated from feeling so ashamed... free to talk truthfully about a story that still is so uncomfortable for so many people.

When I got back home, there was even more work to be done! I wanted to locate a person whose ancestor had been enslaved by my ancestor. I wanted to share all that I had learned, hoping that this information might help this person better understand their own family history. I felt that our two families were already joined by our common history.

Even though the life stories of African Americans were often not recorded in official public records, I learned that African Americans kept their own records. They did the best they could to leave a trail behind for others to follow. One day, looking at records of my ancestor, I found mention of an African American with the same last name! I began researching him, and gradually, his life story began to emerge. It became clear that he was one of the enslaved Africans from my ancestor's home. I found out who his descendants were, who their descendants were... and traced that family all the way to the present day.

A year and a half after I first began seeking the truth, I called Pat, who lived in New York City. I was really afraid she would be mad at me because of what my ancestor had done to her ancestor. But she wasn't mad at all. She was grateful that I had made the effort to learn as much as I could, and that I was willing to share it all. Pat knew very little about her family history. My information filled in a lot of gaps of missing information.

Pat and I have become good friends. We refer to one another as cousins. We have since met other people, those with ancestors who were enslaved and those with ancestors who enslaved others—for important and truthful conversation. While the legacy of slavery still makes a lot of people unhappy, we are learning that by being willing to face the truth together, we can build a new legacy. What started out as something so embarrassing and shameful for me now feels very hopeful, and I've made a number of great new friends!

FIND OUT MORE

The Caron-Net website has illustrated instructions for [making God's Eyes](http://www.caron-net.com/kidfiles/kidsapr.html) (at www.caron-net.com/kidfiles/kidsapr.html).

Ancestor Hunt is a free website for [searching ancestry](http://www.ancestorhunt.com/) (at www.ancestorhunt.com/). The [Mormon church](http://www.familysearch.org/eng/default.asp) (at www.familysearch.org/eng/default.asp) also offers help with genealogy research.

A [UU World](http://www.uuworld.org/) (at www.uuworld.org/) article about the Unitarian Universalist Association's efforts at [truth and reconciliation](http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/112833.shtml) (at www.uuworld.org/news/articles/112833.shtml) regarding our own history also contains a link to a radio interview with David Pettee.

Read a [sermon](http://clf.uua.org/quest/2007/10/index.html#pettee) (at clf.uua.org/quest/2007/10/index.html#pettee) by David Pettee about searching for his slave-holding ancestors, in the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Larger Fellowship publication, [Quest](http://clf.uua.org/quest) (at clf.uua.org/quest).

SESSION 13: A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Say not 'I have found the truth,' but rather 'I have found a truth.' — Khalil Gibran, from The Prophet

Unitarian Universalism is a living tradition. We expect that what we find to be true may change over time as new life experiences shape our search. This session guides participants to "seek the truth in love" again and again as part of their own search for meaning. As they learn to anticipate a lifelong search for not one but many truths, they discover how the lens of our own experiences determines the truths we find.

Note: Some activities rely on participants' visual experience to teach the concepts of differing and changing perspectives. Assign a co-leader or another participant to describe what they see to any visually impaired participant, to enrich the activity for both. Also, look in the Including All Participants sections for specific activity adaptations to fully include a visually impaired child.

GOALS

This session will:

- Explores the individual's quest for truth and meaning, a Unitarian Universalist value stated in our fourth Principle
- Portray truth as rarely absolute, and always shaped by individuals' life experiences and perspectives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn, through responding to a story, how different people involved in the same event can perceive the event differently
- Experience literally (visually) how the viewer's perspective determines the appearance of an image or object
- Understand that an individual's experiences shape their unique perspective, which in turn informs their sense of what is true
- Recognize that others, bringing their own perspectives, can hold truths different from someone else's without being "wrong."

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Filling the House	15
Activity 2: Matter of Perspective	10
Activity 3: Alternative Story Perspectives	20
Faith in Action: Video Project	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Creating a Scavenger Hunt	20
Alternate Activity 2: Seeking Truth in Song	15
Alternate Activity 3: Solving and Making Mazes	15
Alternate Activity 4: Journaling	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, think about how you perceived the world when you were a young child. What was your "lens" like then?

Now try to recall yourself at the same age as the children in the group:

- How did you perceive the world when you were their age?
- How have your ideas changed since then? What experiences have led you to change your viewpoint?
- When did you realize that individuals each have their own perspectives, their own understandings of life? How did you realize it?
- How are you able now to use your understanding of others' different lenses and perspectives?

- Can you always use this understanding? In what kinds of situations might you fail to remember that everyone has their own truth?

Keep these thoughts in your mind as you lead this session and help participants explore our individual searches for truth in love.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Optical Illusions](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Additional optical illusions and images that change with a different perspective

Preparation for Activity

- Print the images provided in Leader Resource 1. You may wish to make a few copies of each image, so all participants can take their time examining them.
- Post the images on the wall of your gathering space and/or display them on a work table
- Optional: Obtain more images of optical illusions to share with the group. Look, also, for images that appear different when the viewer shifts their perspective. Online, try [1, 2, 3 Optical Illusions](#) (at www.123opticalillusions.com/), [Optillusions](#) (at www.optillusions.com/dp/1-30.htm), [Skytopia](#) (at www.skytopia.com/project/illusion/illusion.html), [Cool Optical Illusions](#) (at www.coolopticalillusions.com/), and other websites. Most libraries have illustrated books of optical illusions. You can purchase [Magic Eye books](#) (at www.magiceye.com/) online.

Description of Activity

Encourage early arriving participants to take a look at the optical illusions. Invite them to discover how changing their perspective can reveal a different image in the pictures.

Including All Participants

If the group includes visually impaired participants, take the time to plan a tactile experience of "changing perspective." Obtain some objects which can seem different, depending on what part of them you touch. Invite all participants to examine the objects using only touch.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

Today we will continue to explore how we covenant "to seek the truth in love."

Indicate the photos and pictures of optical illusions you have displayed. Ask volunteers to share their observations about the images and say which image is their favorite and explain why. Invite reflection with questions such as:

- Why does our brain automatically perceive one image in a picture that actually has two?
- Why can it be difficult to shift our perspective to see the other image in the pictures?
- Why does it become easier to shift our perspective once we have managed it the first time?
- What do these pictures reveal about the way our brain perceives information? (We can perceive differently at different times; our brain perceives automatically, but we can intentionally change our perception; when we know what to look for, it's easier to see.)

After everyone who wants to has shared, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share their responses to the optical illusions. This may help them prepare; they can also pass. You might also consider forming small groups for children to respond to the optical illusions.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — FILLING THE HOUSE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

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

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times so you are comfortable sharing it.

Description of Activity

Tell or read the story.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about it.

Begin a discussion by asking participants to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using questions such as:

- Why did the older brothers laugh when they saw the youngest brother bringing just a small sack?
- How did lighting the candle fill the house?
- How did the youngest brother show a different truth about what it means to "fill a house"?
- How did the youngest brother's different way of thinking reward him with success?

Including All Participants

Provide a hard copy of the story for any hearing impaired participants and encourage them to read along as you tell the story.

ACTIVITY 2: MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- An assortment of everyday items of different sizes and colors (for example: a set of keys, an aluminum can, a flashlight, a CD case, a bag of candy or chips)
- A large tray to hold the items
- A low table

Preparation for Activity

- Display the everyday objects on the tray.
- Set a low table where there is room the entire group to gather around in a circle. Place the tray of objects on a table.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to gather in a circle around the table so each person can see the tray of everyday objects. Encourage participants to call out, popcorn-style, the names of some of the objects.

Then ask participants to walk around the table, while staying in their circle, until each person is standing opposite the spot where they started. Ask them how their perspective has changed:

- What do you see now? How is your view different?
- In what ways do any particular objects appear different, now that you have a different viewpoint?
- Do the same objects stand out for you as when you were on the other side of the table?
- Are any smaller objects hidden by larger objects when seen from this angle?

Now encourage participants to bend down or sit on the floor where they are, so they need to look up to see the tray of objects. Ask them again what has changed about their perspective:

- How do the objects appear any different from this viewpoint?
- Do the same objects stand out for you as they did on the other side of the table?
- Are any objects hidden now, because you cannot see from this angle? If this was the only perspective you had of these objects, would you even know they were there?

Now encourage participants to lie down on the floor where they are. Invite them to consider this new perspective:

- How do the objects appear any different from this viewpoint?
- What, if any, objects are you still able to see from here?
- If this was the only perspective you had of the objects, would you even know some of them were there?

Now ask the participants to stand once again in a circle around the table. Remove the tray from the table and set it on the floor in the middle of the circle. Encourage participants to share their perceptions now from high above the tray:

- How do the objects appear any different from this viewpoint?

- Do the same objects stand out for you as they did before?
- How does this "big picture" perspective differ from how it looked when you were lying on the floor looking up at the tray?
- What might this "big picture" perspective mean for someone who is trying to figure out how many objects are on the tray? Is it the most "true" perspective? Why, or why not?

Including All Participants

If any participants have mobility restrictions, consider having them assist you by directing the others to stand up, sit, or lie down. They can also be the one to call on volunteers to respond to questions about each new perspective.

You can offer the gist of this activity to a person with limited mobility by holding the tray of objects directly in front of them, high above them, and on the ground below them, inviting them each time to consider the new perspective with the questions provided. Use a similar method with a participant who cannot see: Guide them to touch the tray first when it is right in front of them and they can feel all the objects, and then when you hold it a bit higher and they can feel only the bottom of the tray.

ACTIVITY 3: ALTERNATIVE STORY PERSPECTIVES (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Children's storybooks of well known tales such as *The Three Little Pigs* or *Little Red Riding Hood*
- Paper, and pens/pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a few well known children's tales—ideally, enough so each three- or four-person team can work with a different tale.

Description of Activity

Form teams of three or four. Give each small group a storybook and invite them to rewrite the story from another perspective (for instance, tell the story of the three little pigs from the perspective of the wolf).

When the teams have completed their stories or time is up, invite each team to present their story to the group. Invite reflection with questions such as:

- How did the story change when it was told from a different perspective?

- Are the events of the story still true even when told this way? Why or why not?
- How does this show us it is possible to tell a story from a different perspective and still tell the truth?
- What does this exercise reveal about us as Unitarian Universalists and our fourth Principle of "free and responsible search for truth and meaning?"

Including All Participants

Form teams with care. Allow for differences in writing ability, reading ability, learning style, and personality. Try to ensure that each team includes children who can generate ideas, some who can write ideas down, and some who can read the story aloud to the whole group.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Optical Illusions](#) (included in this document)
- One-hole punch, yarn or hemp, and scissors
- Taking it Home

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1 (or, gather the optical illusions you showed the group earlier in the session). Punch a single hole in each page, and thread a length of yarn through the hole, and fasten with a knot. Leave a few inches of yarn for someone to tie the page on to the Rainbow Wall Hanging.
- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy it as a handout for all participants (or email it to all parents later).

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle. Invite a few volunteers to attach the optical illusions (Leader Resource 1) to the Rainbow Wall Hanging. When they return to the circle, encourage the group to engage in the closing ritual: Ask everyone to cross their arms in front of their body and then take the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together by seeking the truth in love when we ... " Ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about how we are tied together in a search for truth, in love. When everyone who wants to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body.

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: VIDEO PROJECT

Materials for Activity

- A video camera, tripod, and blank tapes for each team of three or four participants
- Optional: Hand-held microphones

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange to use at least one video camera. If possible, assemble a video kit—camera, tripod, batteries, tapes, and (optional) hand-held microphone—for each small team.
- Identify congregational adults or older youth with video skills. Ask some to assist with the interviews, if the children will work in multiple teams. Ask someone to collect the teams' tapes and edit all the interviews together.
- Establish a place and time to conduct the interviews, such as outside the main gathering place during coffee hour or at a multigenerational event.
- Publicize the project, preferably before the day you will do the interviews. Inform would-be congregational interviewees when and where to make themselves available.

Description of Activity

Form teams of three or four participants. Give each team a video kit and the assignment to interview people in the congregation about their search for truth.

Make sure each team is comfortable using their video equipment. Instruct them to rotate the jobs of interviewer, camera operator, and producer/director. The interviewer asks questions of the people who want to participate and holds the microphone, if there is one. The camera operator positions the camera (and holds it steady, if there is no tripod) and starts and stops taping. A producer/director can write down the names of the people the team interviews, decide where the interviewer and subject can stand for the interview, and get the next subject ready to be interviewed.

Interviewers might ask:

- What does the phrase "seek the truth in love" mean to you?
- Where are some places that you seek truth?
- When did your search for truth begin? What truth have you found, so far?

- What does it mean when we say our fourth Principle is "the free and responsible search for truth and meaning?"

If an adult or youth in your congregation has the skill and equipment to edit the interviews together, ask them to do so. Show the finished project at a meeting of the group or the entire congregation. You might also post the interviews on your congregation's website, YouTube, or another website for others to see.

If a video project is not feasible, give the teams notepads and pens/pencils. After they conduct interviews and take notes, compile excerpts from the interviews into an article for a newspaper or your congregational newsletter or website.

Including All Participants

Some participants may be hesitant to approach members of the congregation and ask them questions; others may be nervous about using a camera. You could assign roles on each team instead of having the team members rotate. Or, suggest the children take on the technical responsibilities (shooting video, capturing sound) and an adult be the one to ask the interview questions—or vice versa, depending on the interests and comfort level of participants in the group.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it better?
- How did the participants respond to the story? Did they "get" it?
- How did children respond to the activity of looking at the tray of objects from multiple perspectives? Was there meaningful discussion about the different ways the object could be viewed?
- Did children come up with interesting twists on the stories when telling them from a different perspective?

TAKING IT HOME

Say not 'I have found the truth,' but rather 'I have found a truth.' — Khalil Gibran, from The Prophet

IN TODAY'S SESSION... the participants heard a story about three sons who were given the challenge of filling an entire house. The two older brothers brought in lots of large objects and were still unable to fill the house.

Then, the youngest brother brought in a candle, lit it, and filled the house with light. This story about considering different perspectives complemented the group's experiences viewing objects from different angles and rewriting a classic tale from a fresh viewpoint of one of the characters.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... how you used to think about things differently than you do now and what helped you gain a different perspective. Or, tell about a time when you and another person held conflicting perspectives about an issue or idea and how your different perspectives affected your interaction. Share what you think it means when we say our fourth Principle is "the free and responsible search for truth and meaning."

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... retelling a favorite or classic fairy tale from a different point of view (the novel and Broadway musical, *Wicked*, does this beautifully). Or, share a family story you all know, from multiple perspectives—each of your own, or those of made-up characters. Talk about how changing the perspective changes the story. Is the story still true? Why or why not?

Family Discovery. Explore optical illusions together by looking at images on [1, 2, 3 Optical Illusions](#) (at www.123opticalillusions.com/), [Optillusions](#) (at www.optillusions.com/dp/1-30.htm), [Skytopia](#) (at www.skytopia.com/project/illusion/illusion.html), [Cool Optical Illusions](#) (at www.coolopticalillusions.com/), and other websites. Most libraries have illustrated books of optical illusions; you can purchase [Magic Eye books](#) (at www.magiceye.com) online. If you have an old stereopticon or a modern, plastic stereo viewing toy, examine it together to figure out the perspective shift which reveals 3-D pictures. The [Eye Tricks](#) (at www.eyetricks.com/3dstereo.htm) and Magic Eye websites also show some stereograms.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CREATING A SCAVENGER HUNT (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Objects to hide (e.g., stickers, temporary tattoos, canned goods, etc.)
- Paper and pens/pencils

Preparation for Activity

- With your religious educator and other leaders, plan when and where the group can create a scavenger hunt for younger children in the religious education program.

Description of Activity

Invite participants, now that they have experienced searching, to send others on a quest. Indicate the objects for them to hide and explain rules for where they can hide them (e.g., at a younger child's eye level). Distribute paper and pencils/pens, and invite the children to hide the objects so they are concealed from view and write clues for the location of the objects. Clues should give hints such as "look up high toward the sky" or "something blue hides me from you."

Including All Participants

Participants who lack the mobility to physically hide objects can suggest hiding places and think of clues.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SEEKING TRUTH IN SONG (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Recordings of songs about seeking truth, and music player(s)
- Copies of song lyrics

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain recordings of songs with messages about seeking truth, such as:
 - "Seeking," performed by Daniel Franklin
 - "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," U2
 - "Losing My Religion," R.E.M.
 - "God Shuffled His Feet," Crash Test Dummies
 - "Counting Blue Cars," Dishwalla
 - "What if God Was One of Us?" Joan Osborne
 - "The Truth," India Arie
 - "The Truth," Prince
- Locate the lyrics for the songs you will use (Internet). Make copies for participants.

Description of Activity

Hand out the lyrics and play a song you have selected. Encourage participants to listen to the song silently. Then, invite the group to share their thoughts and reflections. Consider:

- What message does this song have for us about "seeking truth in love"?

- Is the message in this song realistic? Why or why not?
- Is this message meaningful to you personally? How? Or, why not?

Repeat the process for as many songs as you have time to hear and process.

Including All Participants

Having the song lyrics to read will help hearing impaired participants engage fully in the activity.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SOLVING AND MAKING MAZES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of mazes for all participants
- Pencils with erasers
- Blank paper

Preparation for Activity

- Download and print out some mazes for participants to complete. Try these websites: [Click Mazes](http://www.clickmazes.com/mazes2/ixmaze2.htm) (at www.clickmazes.com/mazes2/ixmaze2.htm), [ABC Teach](http://www.abcteach.com/directory/fun_activities/puzzle_fun/maze_fun/) (at www.abcteach.com/directory/fun_activities/puzzle_fun/maze_fun/), and the U.K. website, [Mazes](http://www.mazes.org.uk/) (at www.mazes.org.uk/).

Description of Activity

Distribute mazes and pencils. Encourage participants to solve their maze. After a few minutes, invite those who have solved a maze to help someone else. When all the mazes have been solved, distribute blank paper. Invite each participant to create a maze of their own for someone else to complete. Tell them the maze they create can be simple or complex, but should be solvable (that is, there must be a path, however convoluted, from the beginning to the end). If you have time, invite the children to exchange mazes or collect and re-distribute all the mazes so each child can solve one that another child created. If you do not have time, encourage children to invite someone at home to solve the maze they created.

Invite reflection by asking questions such as:

- Was it easier to solve the maze or create one? Why?
- How is a search for truth like solving a maze?

Including All Participants

If any participants may struggle with the small motor tasks this activity requires, have all participants work with a partner to solve and create a maze.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: JOURNALING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Blank paper
- Pens, pencils, or markers

Description of Activity

Distribute paper and pencils. Invite participants to write silently for several minutes about their own search for truth. If you will invite participants to share from their writing afterward, tell them so; also remind them sharing will be voluntary.

Use one or more questions to prompt journaling:

- What has my search for truth been like so far?
- What are some things I used to believe were true, but no longer do?
- Where are some of places I look for true information?
- Who do I seek out when I want to learn the truth?

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 13: STORY: FILLING THE HOUSE

A wisdom tale from the northern European countries of Lithuania and Latvia.

Once upon a time, a farming couple had three sons. As happens in many families, the two older boys often bragged to the youngest about how much stronger and smarter they were. When all the boys grew up and were ready to make their own ways in the world, their parents realized they only had enough resources to build one house, for one of their children. So they built a brand new house and told their three sons, "Whoever can fill the house will be the one to own it."

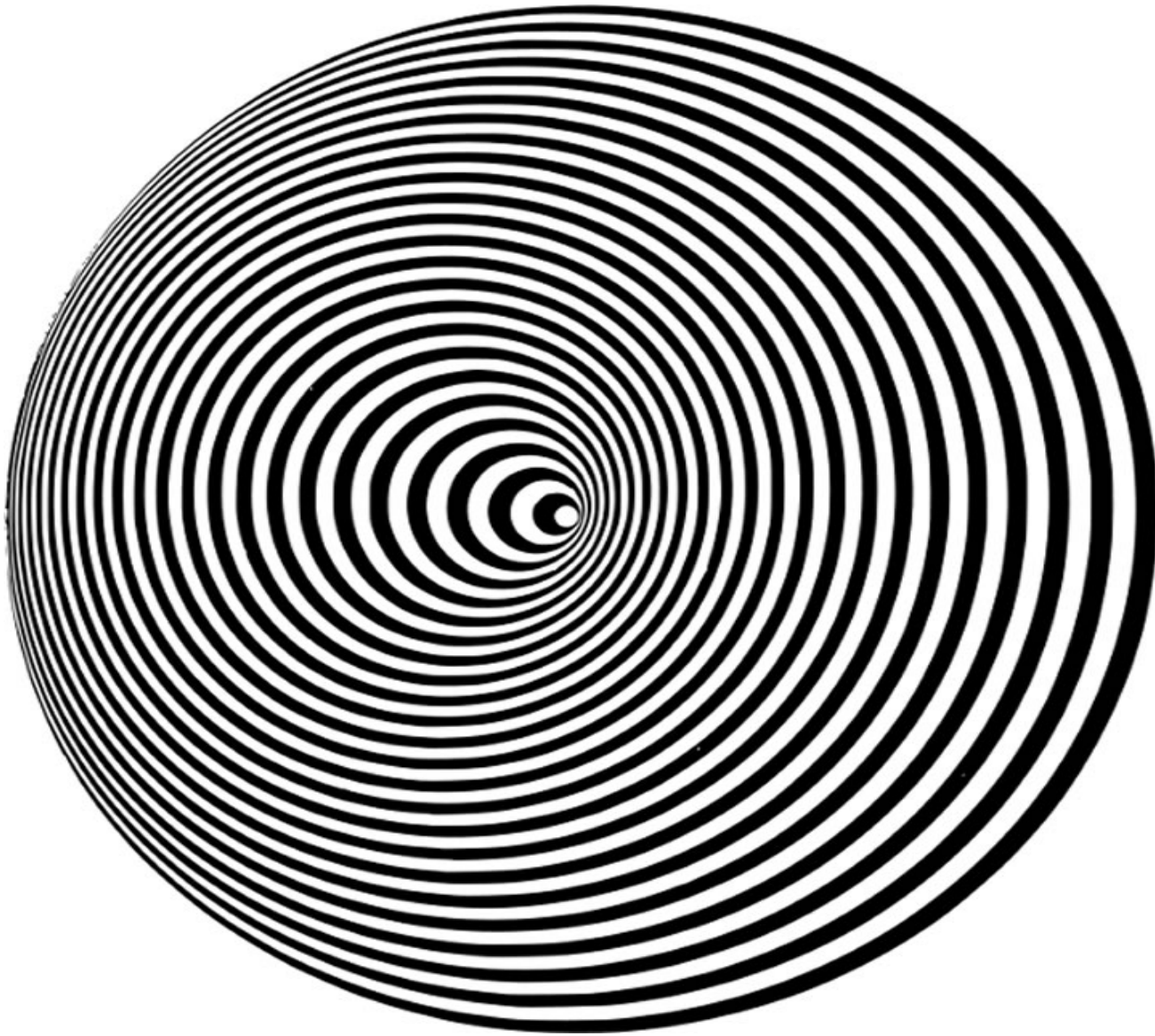
The oldest son was sure he could fill it up and claim it for his own. He brought in a horse, a cow, and a pig, but they only took up one corner of the house.

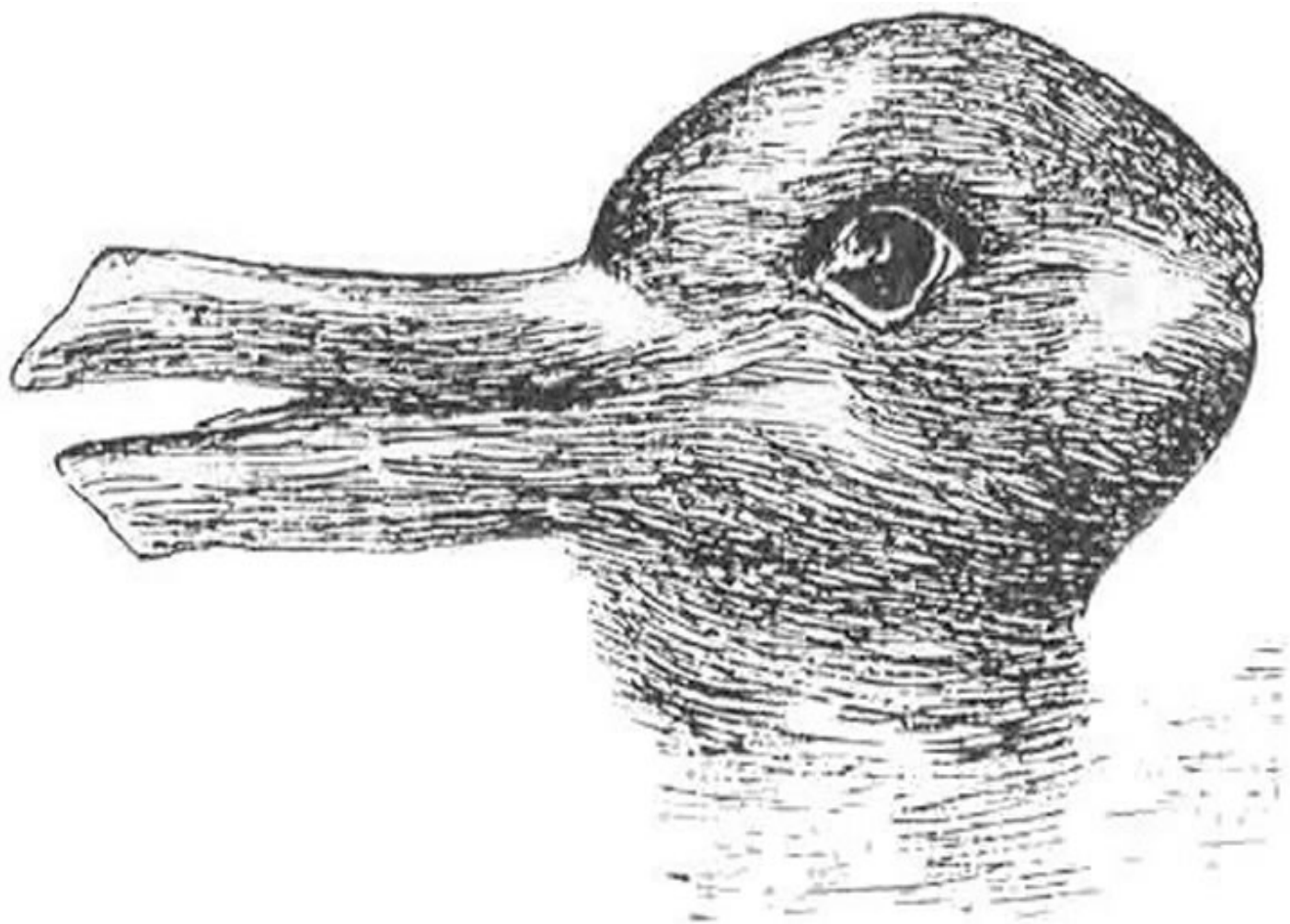
The second son smiled to himself, because he was sure that he would win the house when he filled it. He brought in bale after bale after bale of hay, but even with all the bales he could find on their farm, it only filled half the house.

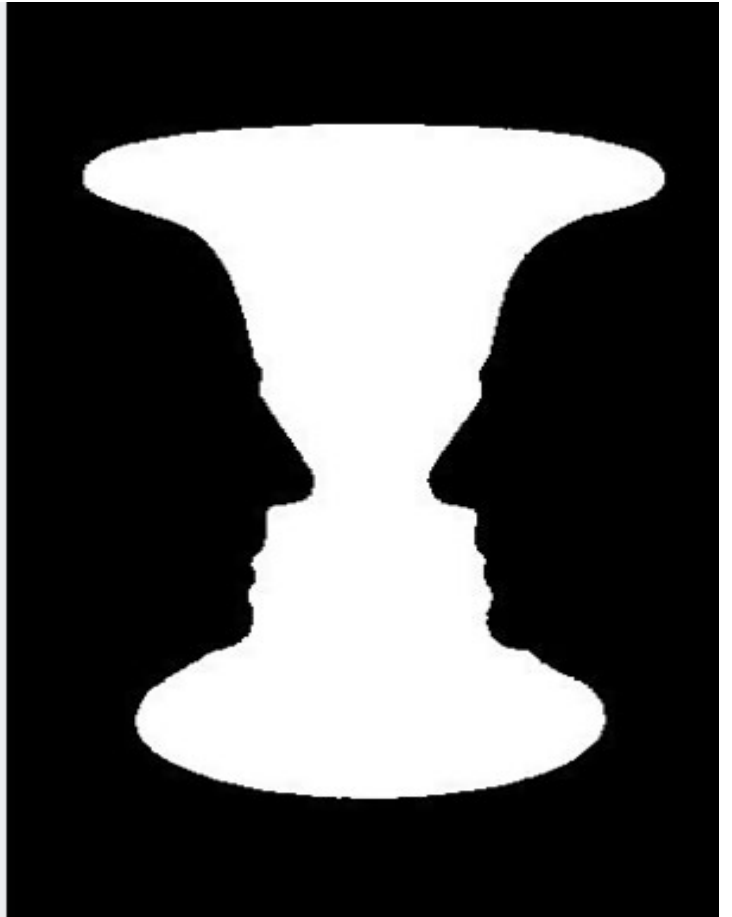
Then it was the youngest brother's turn. His brothers laughed as they watched him bring in just one small sack. But then the youngest brother took a candle out of the sack and lit it. Light shone brightly from the candle, filling the whole house.

So neither of the older brothers, who always thought they were stronger and smarter than the youngest, got the house. It was the youngest brother, who understood what it really took to fill a house.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 13:
LEADER RESOURCE 1: OPTICAL ILLUSIONS







FIND OUT MORE

One optical illusion that challenges our notion of truth is a [picture that looks like Albert Einstein close-up](http://www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/albert-einstein-marilyn-monroe.php) (at www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/albert-einstein-marilyn-monroe.php) but Marilyn Monroe from far away. See it on the [1, 2, 3 Optical Illusions website](http://www.123opticalillusions.com/) (at www.123opticalillusions.com/), along with the [Wavy Lines Illusion](http://www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/wavy.php) (at www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/wavy.php), the [Gradient Illusion](http://www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/gradient_illusion.php) (at www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/gradient_illusion.php) (two bars of the same color appear different, because of where they are placed), the famous image which is both [two faces and a vase](http://www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/Facevase.php) (at www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/Facevase.php), and the [Kanizsa Triangle](http://www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/kanizsa_triangle.php) (at www.123opticalillusions.com/pages/kanizsa_triangle.php).

On the [Optillusions website](http://www.optillusions.com/dp/1-30.htm) (at www.optillusions.com/dp/1-30.htm), find more ambiguous images such as a [musician/girl's face](http://www.optillusions.com/dp/1-9.htm) (at www.optillusions.com/dp/1-9.htm) and a [picture](http://www.optillusions.com/dp/1-30.htm) (at www.optillusions.com/dp/1-30.htm) which makes sense either right-side up or upside-down.

The artist M.C. Escher's symmetry drawings simultaneously show multiple, logically incompatible, perspectives; see some on a [website devoted to Escher](http://www.website%20devoted%20to%20Escher) (at [website%20devoted%20to%20Escher](http://www.website%20devoted%20to%20Escher)) or obtain books from a library.

The website [Discover UU](http://www.discoveruu.com/) (at www.discoveruu.com/) offers a broad and diverse set of links to blogs, podcasts, and more, collectively representing a search for truth and meaning under "the pluralistic spiritual umbrella of Unitarian Universalism."

SESSION 14: OUR HERITAGE'S CALLING

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it. — Margaret Fuller, 19th-century Unitarian theologian

In this session, we turn to the phrase in the Blake covenant which encourages us to "help one another." Through the story of 19th-century Unitarian Elizabeth Blackwell, who became a physician in order to help others heal, we discover our faith heritage of perseverance, hope, and giving. Blackwell became the first woman doctor in the United States—one of the pioneering Unitarians and Universalists who heeded a calling to help others despite societal obstacles and personal hardships.

GOALS

This session will:

- Highlight our Unitarian Universalist heritage of persisting through obstacles to help others when we are called to do so
- Demonstrate, through the story of Elizabeth Blackwell, how our faith heritage calls us to help others
- Demonstrate how working together cooperatively can produce better results than working alone.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn the example of 19th-century Unitarian Elizabeth Blackwell who overcame societal resistance and personal hardship to become the United States' first woman physician
- Experience cooperative games which encourage teamwork
- Explore their own calling to help others.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Filling Buckets Obstacle Course	15
Activity 2: Story — The Woman Who Wouldn't Give Up	15
Activity 3: Rope Ladder Helping Ritual	15
Faith in Action: Heeding Our Calling to Help Others	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Ropes Course	
Alternate Activity 2: Role Play on Helping Others	15
Alternate Activity 3: Create a Rap, Song, or Cheer about Helping Others	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, think about some of the people who have helped you or really made a difference in your life. Were those people who went out of their way to help you out?

Think about what drove these people to help you: Was it a sense of duty, or did they sense a need which they felt compelled to fill?

Now think about a time in your life when you felt the need to reach out to someone else and help them at a time when it was especially needed. What made you want to help them at that time? Would you have continued to help as eagerly if you had faced a series of obstacles along the way? What if anything might have discouraged you from pursuing this path? If you did face any obstacles, what encouraged you to keep going?

Keep these thoughts in your mind as you lead this session and help the participants to explore our heritage of helping one another.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils/markers

Preparation for Activity

- Draw a bucket on card stock and cut it out to make a template. Then, make a sample ornament: Trace the template on another piece of card stock, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the bucket shape can be hung.
- You may wish to make a few bucket templates.
- Set out template(s), sample(s), and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to make bucket ornaments. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the Rainbow Wall Hanging.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with small motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold a template on it for another child to trace a bucket. Children who have trouble tracing and cutting may be able to decorate ornaments with markers.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Bucket ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Markers, pens, and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.

- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants make bucket ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set ornaments and pencils, pens, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

Today we will explore the idea in our covenant which speaks of how we covenant "to help one another." When we help others with our actions and our deeds, we do a great thing. But when we help others with a loving gesture of kindness, we fill their buckets up so they have something to give to others.

Invite everyone to select a bucket ornament and write on it a way people can help one another with a loving gesture of kindness. Allow participants a few minutes to write. Then, invite them, one at a time, to tie their ornaments to the wall hanging, and, if they feel like sharing what they have written, read it aloud to the group.

After everyone has had a chance to attach an ornament, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants who may be unable to write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways people can offer someone a loving gesture of kindness. This may help them prepare for the sharing time. They can also pass if they choose.

ACTIVITY 1: FILLING BUCKETS OBSTACLE COURSE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Plastic buckets, two for each team
- Plastic cups, one for each team
- Cardboard boxes of different sizes and shapes, and items such as chairs, tables, brooms, and pillows
- Yardstick or ruler
- Whistle, bell, or gong
- Optional: Plastic tarps or other waterproof floor cover

Preparation for Activity

- Calculate how many teams of three or four you will have. For each team you will need two plastic buckets, a plastic cup, and a set of cardboard boxes and other objects to make the team's obstacle course.
- Decide where to do this activity. You will need a large, open space where it is okay to splash some water—ideally, outdoors.
 - If needed, secure permission to use an outdoor space and take the group outside.
 - If you are doing the activity indoors, spread plastic tarps to protect the floor and simplify clean-up.
- Set up the obstacle course: For each team, place a bucket at the start of the course and another bucket at the end. Arrange the cardboard boxes and other items so team members must climb through, around, under, and over them. Make the obstacle courses as similar as possible; for example, if one team must climb through a tire, then the other teams' obstacle courses should include tires to climb through or equivalent challenges.
- Fill the starting-line buckets with water.

Description of Activity

Form teams of three or four. Explain that one team member at a time will scoop up water from the starting bucket with the plastic cup, make their way through the obstacle course spilling as little water as possible, dump the remaining water into the bucket at the end, then return the cup to the next team member. The team will

win that collects the most water in their finish line bucket when time is up.

Give each team a plastic cup.

Tell them you will sound the whistle, bell, or gong to start the teams and when you sound it a second time, everyone must stop.

Allow enough time for every participant to have a turn at the obstacle course. (Some children will get more than one try.) Then sound the "stop" whistle.

Use a yardstick or ruler to measure the water in each bucket, and announce which team has won.

Take some time to reflect upon the experience with questions such as:

- How much of the water in the starting buckets actually made it into the finish line buckets?
- Which team collected the most water in its bucket? Was this the same team that moved fastest? Why do you think this particular team was the one to win?
- Did you find the obstacles difficult to maneuver around?
- In what ways do we have obstacles in our lives that prevent us from simply going from one point to another?

Take this opportunity to briefly make the point that in life, obstacles can give us opportunities to strengthen our persistence and think of new ways to get things done.

Including All Participants

If any children in the group have mobility restrictions, design the obstacle course so they can fully participate. For instance, if any children use a wheelchair, provide extra room for team members to maneuver around obstacles and omit obstacles that require team members to climb over or under items. You might invite all the participants to help you design an obstacle course which can accommodate the special needs of everyone in the group; you may be surprised at the creative solutions they can come up with to make sure everyone is included.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE WOMAN WHO WOULDN'T GIVE UP (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[The Woman Who Wouldn't Give Up](#)" (included in this document) "

- A copy of the [Unitarian Universalist Principles](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times so you are comfortable sharing it with the participants.

Description of Activity

Tell or read the story to the participants.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about it.

Begin a discussion by asking the participants to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using questions such as:

- What did the author mean when they story said at the end Elizabeth Blackwell was following her calling?
- What were some of the obstacles Elizabeth Blackwell faced?
- When do you think she might have felt discouraged?
- What might have encouraged her to keep going when obstacles got in her way? If you were Elizabeth, what might have kept you going?
- How did Elizabeth's desire to help people by becoming a doctor carry her through the challenges she faced?
- Ask the children to think about ways they could help other people, when they are grown and have had a chance to learn special skills. Ask volunteers for examples, or suggest that a carpenter could build homes for people, a scientist could seek cures for diseases, a firefighter could help people in emergencies. Then, invite them to think of obstacles that could get in their way—for example, needing to pay for special training, needing materials to build a home. Then ask: What does our heritage of persisting so we can help others encourage us to do?
- Do any of our Principles encourage us to follow this calling to help others? Which ones? How? (You may wish to share relevant phrases from the Principles. Use language the group has worked with before.)

Including All Participants

Provide a hard copy of the story for any hearing impaired participants and encourage them to read along as you tell the story.

ACTIVITY 3: ROPE LADDER HELPING RITUAL (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Two four-foot lengths of rope
- One-foot lengths of rope (all the same length)—one for each participant plus two extra
- Large basket to hold all the one-foot lengths of rope

Preparation for Activity

- Lay the two long pieces of rope parallel to each other on the floor. Make a long rectangle by tying a short rope across each open end.

Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle on the floor around the rectangle of rope. Pass the basket around the circle. Ask each person to take one piece of rope in their hands and pass the basket along.

Tell participants you will invite them each to share a time when they were helped by someone in their life. Ask them to think of a time when the help they received made a real difference in how things turned out. Invite them, as they share their story, to come forward and tie their rope to both of the long ropes, parallel to the short ropes on the ends. Soon, you will begin to see a rope ladder.

After each participant secures their rung of rope to the ladder, encourage the group to say in unison:

In helping others we grow stronger ourselves.

Once everyone who wishes to share verbally has done so, encourage the others to tie on their ropes in silence, while holding in their mind the name of someone who helped them. Then, invite the children to each take a part of the rope ladder in their hands and together raise it high above all their heads. As they lift the rope ladder, encourage them to join you in saying one last time:

In helping others we grow stronger ourselves.

Including All Participants

Respect that some children may not want to tell the group about a time they were helped. Make it clear they can fully participate either by verbally sharing as they tie a rung to the ladder or by mindfully holding someone's name in their consciousness as they tie their rope.

If any participants lack the mobility or dexterity to tie their rope to the ladder, have a few volunteers tie on the rope rungs for all the participants.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking it Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Explain that the session is almost over and that we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

When the group is gathered, ask them to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together in helping one another when we ..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about how we are tied together by helping. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body. (Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: HEEDING OUR CALLING TO HELP OTHERS

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Post blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Using the newsprint and markers, brainstorm ways we can be called to help others. Then, decide as a group which of the callings to help others interests the group the most (through a majority vote). Or, divide the group into two or three teams which can then select the calling most preferred by their members.

Once you determine the project(s) your group will do, brainstorm a list of steps the project requires. For example, to create a community garden, the group must

secure a plot of land as well as seeds and gardening tools.

Assign tasks. Follow up with any participants who offer to bring or make something, or volunteer to do a certain task.

After the project(s) is/are completed, be sure to re-gather the group for reflection. Use questions such as:

- Did this project fall under one of your callings to help others?
- How much did you involve yourself personally in this project?
- Did your personal involvement having anything to do with your calling to help others? Why or why not?
- What might have made your participation in this project more consuming for you?

Including All Participants

Some participants are reluctant to speak in a group; some may be daunted by a request to write their ideas on paper. Form teams thoughtfully, to create small groups whose members bring diverse personalities and abilities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it better?
- How did the participants respond to the story? Did they "get" it?
- How did the participants respond to the obstacle course? Did it appear challenging to them, or too easy?

TAKING IT HOME

If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it. — Margaret Fuller, 19th-century Unitarian theologian

IN TODAY'S SESSION... the participants experienced a challenging obstacle course and then heard a story about Elizabeth Blackwell who persisted in her quest to become a doctor even as she faced many obstacles to achieving her dream because she was a woman. Blackwell's Unitarian faith sustained her and her strong calling helped her persevere. Participants considered what they like doing best in order to gain insight about their personal callings to help others.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... a time in your life when you reached a goal despite many obstacles. Talk about how you handled the adversity and share what drove you to continue pursuing your goal.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... sharing others' stories of adversity and challenge by watching videos of movies such as [Willow](http://www.fast-rewind.com/willow.htm) (at www.fast-rewind.com/willow.htm), [Field of Dreams](http://www.fieldofdreamsmoviesite.com/) (at www.fieldofdreamsmoviesite.com/), [Rocky](http://www.rocky.com/) (at www.rocky.com/), or [Hoosiers](http://www.mgm.com/title_title.php?title_star=HOOSIERO) (at www.mgm.com/title_title.php?title_star=HOOSIERO). After the movie, talk about the obstacles the characters faced and how they were able to overcome them or work around them. Share ideas about what may have driven the characters to continue in the quest of their dream even when it seemed hopeless. Finally, talk about how the characters overcoming these obstacles helped other people (either directly, or indirectly—such as by example).

A Family Game. Create your own outdoor obstacle course. Include challenges such as walking across a two-by-four plank or climbing through a tire. If there is one near you, try a family ropes course or climbing wall activity together.

A Family Ritual. Pass a basket of stones around for each family member to select one. While they hold a stone in the palm of their hand, invite each person to share something (or someone) that makes them feel stronger or keeps them going when they need help or assistance.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: ROPES COURSE

Materials for Activity

- Permission forms for all participants, as needed

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange with your religious educator and/or congregational leadership to take the group on a field trip to a ropes course or climbing wall.
- Determine the cost of the activity and transportation. Plan how families can participate if they cannot afford the cost.
- Create, distribute, and gather (signed) field trip permission slips for all participants who will come on the trip.

Description of Activity

Ropes courses are engineered structures built for humans to engage our climbing instincts and practice

self-challenge and cooperative skills. They typically involve small groups of participants over an intense period of hours or days. Activities which increase in difficulty challenge participants' physical, emotional, social, and intellectual capabilities. Ropes courses inherently offer obstacles for participants to overcome and thus build participants' confidence. Likewise, the success of a group in meeting the challenge of a low ropes course depends on individuals' ability to work together and support one another, underscoring how working together helps us accomplish great things.

Including All Participants

While not every camp can meet every inclusion need, many low ropes course elements can be adapted to accommodate many different abilities by using additional spotters, making minor adjustments to the ropes structure, or using special equipment. Before booking a ropes course event, find out what accommodations they can provide for any participants with mobility or other limitations who might be part of your group.

Fear of heights is a very common phobia. A low ropes course, which relies primarily on group cooperation to achieve success, may be preferable to a more physically demanding, more challenging, and more individually thrilling high ropes course for a group experience safe and accessible for all.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: ROLE PLAY ON HELPING OTHERS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Pieces of fabric, hats, and/or scarves for simple costume props
- Boxes of various sizes for set props

Preparation for Activity

- Gather props for costumes or the set.

Description of Activity

Form groups of three or four. Tell the group their task is to create a role play based on either the life of Elizabeth Blackwell as she struggles to overcome the obstacles she faced in becoming a doctor or another scenario where a person is faced with obstacles in their attempts to help others. Give the group ten minutes to come up with their role play scenarios. Encourage the groups to find a role for every member. Then, ask the groups to take turns presenting their role plays to the entire group.

After the role plays, invite group reflection with questions such as:

- What did the characters want to do to help others? What obstacles did they face?
- Were the obstacles they faced realistic? Was how they were dealt with realistic?
- What did the role plays show us about overcoming obstacles?

Including All Participants

Some participants may feel more self-conscious than others when doing role plays or acting in a presentation before a group. Form teams that mix more reserved individuals with those who like to be the center of attention.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CREATE A RAP, SONG, OR CHEER ABOUT HELPING OTHERS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper and pencils/pens

Description of Activity

Form teams of four or five participants. Invite each team to create a rap, song, or cheer about helping others. Tell them to include some ideas about how we can overcome any obstacles which stand in the way of our calling, just as Elizabeth Blackwell did in her quest to become a doctor.

Give the teams ten minutes to come up with their idea and then ask each team to take turns presenting to the entire group. After every team has presented their rap, song, or cheer, invite group reflection with questions such as:

- What did the groups' songs, cheers, or raps tell us about helping others?
- What did the groups' songs, cheers, or raps tell us about some obstacles which might be faced as we tried to help others?
- How did the groups' songs, cheers, or raps show ways we can overcome obstacles when we are called to help others?

Including All Participants

Some participants may feel more self-conscious than others when doing role plays or acting in a presentation before a group. Form teams that mix more reserved individuals with those who like to be the center of attention.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 14: STORY: THE WOMAN WHO WOULDN'T GIVE UP

This story appears in volume 5 of *The Stream of Living Souls*, the Rev. Denise Tracy's self-published anthology of short stories for worship based on the lives of famous historical Unitarian and Universalists.

I have a question for you. How many of you have ever been to see or had an appointment with a doctor who is a woman?

What if we went back in time 150 or so years to 1847? How many women doctors do you think there were then?

Well, in 1847, there were exactly no doctors who were women. Nada. Zero. None. Zip. Zilch. Not a one.

But there was a woman who wanted to be a doctor, who dreamed of helping people and who changed our world because of who she was, how she lived and what she believed. Her name was Elizabeth Blackwell and she was a Unitarian. This is her story.

It is 1853. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell closed her eyes and then slowly, ever so slowly opened the door just a crack. Then she opened one eye and peeked. She looked to the right. She looked to left. What she saw made her heart beat faster. They had put up signs all through the neighborhood. Free Clinic. No one knew if it would attract any patients. But it had worked! The room was full! There were patients waiting to see her. This was a dream come true!

She was the first woman to be accepted into medical school! She was the first woman to graduate from medical school. She had studied in England and in France and received the highest recommendations of anyone. She had worked in hospitals and in clinics. Even with all this, no hospital in the United States was willing to let her be a member of their staff. No one had been willing to hire her at any medical college, because she was a woman. She had studied and worked for many years. She was as qualified as any man but she could not find work as a doctor.

When Elizabeth first arrived in Geneva, it seemed all the people in town had heard of this woman who wanted to study to be a doctor. When she walked down the street, people turned their backs and some refused to speak to her.

So since no one would hire her, she decided to found her own clinic. She bought a house in the poorest

section of New York City. She lived upstairs and kept a room to see patients downstairs.

In the first year she treated over 200 patients, most of whom had little or no money to pay her. However, in only a few years, the demand for her services was so great she raised money and founded a hospital supported by the many people who believed in her. Elizabeth Blackwell was both compassionate and courageous. She wanted to be a doctor to help people, and no matter what obstacles she faced, she was determined to follow her calling.

FIND OUT MORE

Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell

Learn more about Elizabeth Blackwell and her contribution to our heritage of helping others on the [National Library of Medicine](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_35.html) (at www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_35.html)'s website, the website of the [National Women's Hall of Fame](http://www.greatwomen.org/women.php?action=viewone&id=20) (at www.greatwomen.org/women.php?action=viewone&id=20), and the [National Institute of Health's Office of Science Education](http://science.education.nih.gov/home2.nsf/Educational+Resources/Resource+Formats/Online+Resources/+High+School/B47A2C254724C3FB852570F3006EFA1D) (at science.education.nih.gov/home2.nsf/Educational+Resources/Resource+Formats/Online+Resources/+High+School/B47A2C254724C3FB852570F3006EFA1D) website.

Books for young readers about Elizabeth Blackwell and her quest to become a doctor include *Elizabeth Blackwell: Girl Doctor* by Joanne Landers Henry (New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1996) and *Elizabeth Blackwell: First Woman Physician* by Tristan Boyer Binns (Danbury, Connecticut: Children's Press, 2005). The [About.com website](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/blackwellelizabeth/a/eliz_blackwell.htm) (at womenshistory.about.com/od/blackwellelizabeth/a/eliz_blackwell.htm) offers an informative article by Jone

Johnson Lewis, "Elizabeth Blackwell: First Woman Physician." Find a [short article on Blackwell](http://clf.uua.org/betweensundays/earlychildhood/UUSaints.html#Blackwell) (at clf.uua.org/betweensundays/earlychildhood/UUSaints.html#Blackwell), by Elizabeth Gillis, on the Church of the Larger Fellowship's Between Sundays website.

Finding a Calling to Help Others

The paperback edition of the book, *What Color Is Your Parachute? 2010: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers* (at www.amazon.com/What-Color-Your-Parachute-2010/dp/1580089879/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1266415678&sr=1-3) by [Richard Nelson Bolles](http://www.amazon.com/Richard-Nelson-Bolles/e/B001JS0P3E/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_3?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1266415678&sr=1-3) (at www.amazon.com/Richard-Nelson-Bolles/e/B001JS0P3E/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_3?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1266415678&sr=1-3) (Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 2009) offers guide questions and exercises to help readers follow their personal calling into a rewarding career.

"The Woman Who Wouldn't Give Up" by Rev. Denise Tracy is found in volume 5 of *The Stream of Living Souls*. The volumes are available for \$17 each or \$65 for all four, including mailing, from the Rev. Denise Tracy, 535 Arlington Ave., Elgin, IL, 60120.

SESSION 15: ALL WORK TOGETHER

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth. — George Bernard Shaw

The Blake covenant closes with the assertion that part of our great covenant is "to help one another." In this session's story, a girl participates with Unitarian Universalists from across the Central Midwest District in No More Turning Away, a program to raise awareness about homelessness and assist homeless people in their local communities. Several experiential, cooperative activities explore what it means to help one another. Participants embody the "tied together" theme as they navigate a course while all tied to one another.

GOALS

This session will:

- Explore the power of individuals and communities working together for the common good
- Promote participants' understanding of Unitarian Universalists as people who come together to make the world a better place
- Empower participants to think of themselves as capable of creating significant change when they work together with others.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Share examples of how they embody their faith by helping others
- Learn how some Unitarian Universalist congregations worked together to raise awareness about homelessness and help homeless people
- Experience the power of collaboration through games.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — No More Turning Away	10
Activity 2: Machine Game	10
Activity 3: Mapping the Way to Help	15
Activity 4: Tied Together Walk	10
Faith in Action: Create "Box House" with Information on Homelessness	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Jointly Weave a Blanket	25
Alternate Activity 2: Sharing Joys and Concerns	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- What have been your most satisfying experiences of working with others to accomplish a common goal?
- What have been your most frustrating experiences of working together with groups?
- When you have helped another person, what, if anything, do you feel you received from the experience?
- In what circumstances do you think it is better *not* to help another person?

You will lead the participants to practice being a cooperative, caring community that is committed to helping one another and others. Share your understanding of what it means to help one another.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Card stock in various colors
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- String or yarn
- Pencils/markers

Preparation for Activity

- Draw a bucket on card stock and cut it out to make a template. Then, make a sample ornament: Trace the template on another piece of card stock, cut out the shape, punch a hole in the top, pass a piece of yarn through the hole, and secure the yarn with a knot so the bucket shape can be hung.
- You may wish to make a few bucket templates.
- Set out template(s), sample(s), and materials on work tables.

Description of Activity

As participants arrive, invite them to make bucket ornaments. Tell the children that later they will hang the ornaments on the Rainbow Wall Hanging.

Including All Participants

If any participants have difficulty with small motor control, encourage them to choose a sheet of card stock and hold a template on it for another child to trace a bucket. Children who have trouble tracing and cutting may be able to decorate ornaments with markers.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Bucket ornaments cut from card stock (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Markers, pens, and pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.

- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

- If you will not do the Welcoming and Entering activity (where the early arriving participants make bucket ornaments), make some in advance—one for each participant, plus a few extra.
- Set ornaments and pencils, pens, and markers by the chalice.

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

The covenant we said together talks about our covenant to "help one another." Why do you think it says "help one another" rather than "help other people?" Can you think of ways that we help one another? What would be an example of your helping someone? We will write ways we help on our bucket ornaments.

Invite everyone to select a bucket ornament and write on it a way people can help one another. Allow participants a few minutes to write. Then, invite them, one at a time, to tie their ornaments to the wall hanging, and, if they feel like sharing what they have written, read it aloud to the group.

After everyone has had a chance to attach an ornament, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

Invite participants unable to write on an ornament to share verbally while you or another participant serves as "scribe." If you know some participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group, let them know as they enter the room that later they will be invited to share about ways people can offer someone a loving gesture of kindness. This may help them prepare. They can also pass.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — NO MORE TURNING AWAY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[No More Turning Away](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to share it with the group.
- Review the discussion questions and choose those that will best help the participants share their interpretations of the story and relate it to their own lives.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story to the group.

Invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking participants to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using these questions:

- How do you think the efforts of all the Unitarian Universalists who participated in the No More Turning Away project made a difference in the world?
- How do you think being involved in the project made a difference in the lives of the UUs who participated?
- Have you ever worked with a big group of people on a project? Participated in a big march or vigil about something that mattered to you? How did it feel?

ACTIVITY 2: MACHINE GAME (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have a large, open space where the group has room to form a machine together.

Description of Activity

A basic element of helping one another is the experience of responding to others and joining them in a cooperative effort. This game fosters cooperation and demonstrates how a group of people working together can create something no one person can even imagine alone.

Gather participants in a circle and tell them they will all build a machine together without any planning or discussion. The first person to volunteer will stand up and choose a movement and sound to begin the machine. Once the first player establishes a repetitive movement and sound, the next volunteer joins in. They should choose their own movement and sound, connected or responding to the first player. The goal is to build a single, complicated (and perhaps inexplicable) machine. All players are welcome to move any parts of their bodies, but movements should be repetitive and each player should remain in the location they choose.

Ask a volunteer to begin. Encourage participants to join the machine, one at a time, adding their movement and sound. Once everyone has joined in, allow the "machine" to run for a few moments. Then, end the game. If you have time, play again.

When you have disassembled the machine, invite participants to discuss the experience:

- How did it feel to be part of a group machine?
- In what ways, if any, did you adapt your movements or sounds to include new parts of the machine as new players joined?
- What did you think the machine was for at the beginning? Did you think it had another purpose, later on, as new people joined in?
- Think of a group you are in, like a team or band. Do you see any similarities between building the machine and other group activities in which you work with others to create something together?

ACTIVITY 3: MAPPING THE WAY TO HELP (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint and tape
- Copies of a map (see below)
- Pencils with erasers, color markers, and crayons—one set for each small group

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a homeless shelter, food distribution center, senior residence, pre-school, or other facility near your congregation where the group or others in your congregation has worked, will work, or could work in service to others.
- Optional: Obtain a map (e.g., using an online mapping service) which shows the locations of both the facility and your congregation. Estimate

how many three- or four-person groups you will make and copy the map for each group.

Description of Activity

Participants work together to map a route to a facility where they do, or could, help others, echoing the No More Turning Away collaboration among Unitarian Universalist congregations of the Central Midwest District.

Form small groups at worktables. Ask what the children know about the nearby facility—homeless shelter, food distribution center, etc.—which you have chosen. Establish the purpose of the facility, the services delivered there, its location in relation to your congregation, and any relationship the children or others in your congregation have as service providers at the facility. (Note: Be sensitive in your phrasing. Some participants may have received services at the facility you have chosen or used similar services elsewhere. Empower all the children as potential helpers. Acknowledge that, from time to time, everyone needs someone else's help; today's conversation is focused on the times when we are the ones helping.)

Tell the groups they will work together to make an illustrated map from the congregation to the facility where they (will, or could) help others. The map should show how to get there and what will happen there. Suggest the groups begin by deciding how to divide the work; illustrating, drawing roads, titling the map or items on it, and pencil-sketching the route are possible tasks. Invite them to work carefully and collaboratively to make a map others could use to find their way to a service opportunity at the facility.

Give each group a sheet of newsprint and a variety of pencils, erasers, markers and crayons. If you have copied maps, give one to each group.

Allow the groups to work for about 10 minutes. Then, ask them to stop working and sign their maps. Invite everyone to walk around and see how the other groups handled the assignment. Then, gather the group to reflect:

- Was drawing a map together fun? Frustrating?
- What was your role in making your group's map? How did you like it?
- Which map(s)
 - ...would be easy to follow?
 - ...are attractive to look at?
 - ...show what goes on at the facility/how people in our congregation (could) help?

- ...show how the map-makers collaborated? (What evidence do you see, on each map, that the group members worked together?)

- Have there been times when you would have liked to help people, but did not know how to start? What kind of directions, or even what kind of map, might have helped you help others?
- Have there been times when you have had to help someone else find help? Besides drawing a map, what other kinds of directions or advice have you given?

Display the children's maps in your meeting space, or in a public area in your congregational building. Congregational members who do service at the facility you chose may enjoy seeing the maps. The staff at the facility might also like to display a map, to mark their connection with your congregation.

ACTIVITY 4: TIED TOGETHER WALK (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Two-foot lengths of yarn or rope, at least two per participant

Preparation for Activity

- Plan an indoor or outdoor course for the group to walk which is safe and accessible for all participants, yet challenging for a cluster of people tied together. Make sure the group will not disturb worship or other activities on your route.
- Cut yarn or rope.

Description of Activity

Participants will need to cooperate with and support one another as the whole group negotiates a walk while all are tied to one another.

Gather the group in an open area and invite them to mingle, each person keeping about a foot of space around themselves. Then, ask everyone to stop. Distribute lengths of yarn or rope and help participants tie themselves to at least one other person, so that the whole group is connected. Ask participants to connect using a variety of body parts; for example, a leg to a leg, a waist to a waist, an arm to an arm. The final grouping should be a cluster, rather than a line. Make sure participants are not all facing in the same direction.

Once participants are tied together, ask them to be silent as you lead them on a walk you have planned. Assure them the walk will be safe and accessible for everyone,

though it will offer some challenges for them to resolve without talking.

Begin the walk, staying ahead of the group. Give them the opportunity to negotiate their passage together through doorways, under or among playground equipment, around corners, up and down curbs, etc. Make sure the group proceeds slowly enough that all members are safe. Encourage those who can see where they are going to communicate with others who cannot. Help the group rotate as it goes along, so all members of the group have the chance to see where they must go and be leaders, as well as to be followers.

After the walk, help the group remove the ties. Lead them to reflect on the experience.

- What was difficult for the group?
- What was difficult for you, individually?
- What helped you as you went along?
- What parts were most fun?
- Which did you enjoy more, helping others to know where they were going or when others helped you?
- What would the exercise have been like if talking were allowed?
- How are we called as Unitarian Universalists to work together in community? How does this calling feel like being tied together?

Including All Participants

Make sure the walking route provides ample room for participants using crutches or wheelchairs to navigate safely while tied to others; make sure children are not tied in a way that unsafely hampers their individual mobility. A participant who may be claustrophobic or extremely uncomfortable being tied or touched can help you lead the group or follow behind, closing doors after the group passes through.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Explain that the session is almost over and that we will now work together as a community to clean the meeting space. Ask everyone to clean up their own area and the

materials they were using first, and then to clean another area or help someone else. No one should sit in the circle until the meeting space is clean.

Then bring the group back to the circle. Ask them to cross their arms in front of their body before taking the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together through helping one another when we..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about how we are tied together by helpful words and deeds. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out, and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body.

(Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: CREATE "BOX HOUSE" WITH INFORMATION ON HOMELESSNESS

Materials for Activity

- Refrigerator box or another large, cardboard appliance box
- Utility knife
- Colored paper, markers, and tape or glue sticks

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange a place in your congregation to display the finished "box home" at your congregation.
- Research homelessness in your area: the number of people without homes, the percentage of the homeless who receive services, how many children are homeless, how many families are housed in cars or other shelters. . Prepare a fact sheet for participants' reference so they can decorate the box with information about homelessness. See the Find Out More section to start an online information search.
- Arrange for the group to have access to the Internet or provide relevant, printed materials so participants can gather additional facts.
- Use a utility knife to cut a door in the cardboard box, to suggest a house.

Description of Activity

Participants will work together to raise awareness in your congregation about homelessness. Decorating a "box home" with information about homelessness highlights the fact that some people have nothing more than a box to live in.

Distribute paper, fact sheets, and markers at work tables. Suggest participants choose facts you have gathered, rewrite them on the colored paper, cut the paper into shapes, and glue or tape the paper to the box. If you have Internet access or other resource materials, invite some participants to find some additional facts.

Participants may also wish to write messages such as "What if this were all the home you had?" to draw attention to the needs of homeless people.

When the box home is completed, display it in a prominent location in your congregation.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it work better?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What connections did we make with the participants? What connections did the participants make with each other? How was this evident? How could we improve a sense of community within this group?

Approach your director of religious education for guidance, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth. — George Bernard Shaw

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we explored what it means to "help one another." We heard the true story of how Unitarian Universalist churches in the Central Midwest District banded together to address homelessness in their communities. We explored working together by making a "machine" using our bodies and drawing maps to a facility which could use our volunteer services, near our congregation. We embodied the "tied together" theme of the curriculum by going on a walk with our whole group tied in a cluster, so we could only move forward by helping one another.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. How do we help one another in our family? How does our Unitarian

Universalist community help one another? How does our family help people in the wider community, and how do others help us? Are there times when we do not want help? How do we know when to help and when to let someone manage alone?

A Family Adventure. What can your family do to be of service in your congregation or in your larger community? Perhaps your family can sign up to lead hospitality on a Sunday for your congregation, making coffee and bringing snacks. You might usher or greet people as they enter for a service. Maybe someone in your neighborhood needs help with gardening, shopping for groceries, or cleaning out a garage. You might even plan a block party, so your neighbors can get to know one another better, to promote mutual help.

A Family Game. Play the "machine" game participants played in this session: One volunteer stands up and starts making a repetitive movement and sound to begin the machine. While the player continues their movement and sound, remaining in the position they chose, the next volunteer joins in with a position, movement, and sound that coordinate with or connect to the movement of the first player. One by one, players join in, adding their movement and sound to The goal is to build a single, increasingly complicated (and perhaps inexplicable) machine.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: JOINTLY WEAVE A BLANKET (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Polar fleece fabric cut into strips:
 - 15 strips approximately 4x72 inches
 - 18 strips approximately 4x60 inches

Preparation for Activity

- Purchase polar fleece or (less expensive) old blankets or flannel sheets from a thrift store. It is best to use at least two colors.
- Find a clean, open floor space at least 10 feet square for the group to weave together.

Description of Activity

The group members work cooperatively and help one another to make a very large weaving project.

Lead the children to lay all the longer strips flat on the floor, evenly spaced with a couple of inches between strips. This task will be simplest if one participant takes the top edge of a strip and another participant takes the bottom edge and together they lay the strip flat in the desired position.

Then, begin weaving. Weave the first shorter strip under the first long strip and over the second, etc. Weave the second shorter strip right next to the first, this time over the first long one and under the second.

Make the weaving tight enough that there are no gaps, but not so tight that the blanket bunches up. Leave at least four inches of unwoven strip on all sides, so you can tie off the blanket when it is done. Multiple people will need to hold the weaving in place as one or two participants weave each strip of fabric.

Continue until all the strips are woven.

Then, adjust the weaving so the blanket lies flat and there are no gaps. Finish the blanket by tying pairs of strips together around the edges.

While weaving together, or after you are done, lead reflection:

- How easy or difficult would it be for one person to do this project without help? Why?
- Is it hard to communicate with others and agree on exactly how a joint project should be done?
- What will you do with the blanket once it is completed? Is there a person or organization you might help by giving them the blanket?

Including All Participants

Participants with limited mobility or dexterity can hold the weaving in place while others manipulate the strips.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn
- Optional: Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Description of Activity

In addition to building community through sharing information about important events in participants' lives, this version of sharing joys and concerns uses a ritual activity based on the metaphor of knots, allowing children to experience being literally "tied together."

Gather participants in a seated circle. Say:

We are all tied together by the bonds of community. What affects any one of us affects us all. We take time now to share our greatest joys and deepest concerns, events that have happened since last time we met which we hold in our hearts.

Invite a volunteer to go first, and give them the ball of yarn. Ask them to share their joy or concern and then, holding the end of the yarn, throw the ball of yarn to another child in the circle. This child may either share a joy or concern or choose to pass, but in either case they keep hold of the strand of yarn as they throw the ball of yarn to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a chance to share or pass, and the whole group is connected by a web of yarn.

At the end of the sharing you may invite participants to take turns winding the yarn back onto the ball. Or, pass around scissors and invite the children to cut a short piece of the yarn and tie it around their wrist as a sign of the covenant of caring which the group shares.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 15: STORY: NO MORE TURNING AWAY

By Steven Cooper and Hannah Cooper.

My name is Hannah and I'm in the sixth grade. I attend a Unitarian Universalist church in Naperville, Illinois. This past year our church joined many other UU congregations in the Chicago area on a project called No More Turning Away.

The purpose of this project was to lead churches to help people who are homeless or near homeless. Many churches throughout Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri also participated in this project.

Each church did work in their own neighborhood to help people. Last Halloween my brother and I trick-or-treated for the food pantry in our town. We pulled a wagon behind us and filled it with canned food and grocery items from our neighbors rather than collecting candy for ourselves (although a lot of our neighbors gave us candy anyway).

One night a month our church was assigned to work at a homeless shelter. Many families from our congregation would bring meals, set up beds, and oversee the activities for the evening. My job was to help serve dinner to our guests. It was strange at first because I knew that they were homeless but they looked just like everybody else. Sometimes there was a mother with two kids who would visit. I tried to be friends with the girl but she was too shy.

At Christmas-time our church put up two Christmas trees in our social hall. One tree was not decorated at all. People were supposed to bring in mittens, hats, and scarves and put them on the tree to decorate it. Just before Christmas, we packed up all the items and took them to a pantry where people who needed them could get them for free.

The second Christmas tree was decorated with gift tags. Each tag was for a child we could buy a gift for, and gave the person's age, whether they were a boy or girl, and what they wanted for Christmas. My dad helped me pick two tags, and then we went and bought those gifts and placed them under the tree. Later, all the gifts were distributed to the children's families so they would have them for Christmas morning. My dad told me that most of these participants would not have had Christmas gifts if it wasn't for us.

Throughout the year, we saw movies about homeless people. We talked about how people become homeless and what possible ways we can help them. We also did a simulation where we pretended we were going to be

homeless. We had to figure what personal items we would take with us and it had to all fit in a backpack.

In March, all the UU congregations participating in No More Turning Away had an event to help the homeless at the same time, and we were in newspapers and on the TV news. For this event kids and adults asked people to sponsor them by pledging money that would go to a homeless shelter or food pantry near their church. Then on a Saturday night, late in March, all the adults and kids slept outside their churches in cardboard boxes. We made a Cardboard City, just like some homeless people do. It was a chance to really feel what it was like to be homeless. I later found out that a lot of my UU friends from other churches were outside in boxes at the same time I was. We were lucky—the weather for us wasn't too bad for March, but for my friends in Wisconsin the weather wasn't as nice.

It was neat to think that over 300 UUs across the Midwest were doing the same thing at the same time that I was to help the homeless. Over \$10,000 was collected and distributed to help homeless people in each community. I felt like our church was really doing something to help people and I can't wait to do it again next year.

FIND OUT MORE

Homelessness and Social Action

The National Coalition for the Homeless website provides [fact sheets about homelessness](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/) (at www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/).

The [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](http://www.hud.gov/kids/hthsplsh.html) (at www.hud.gov/kids/hthsplsh.html) offers information you can share with participants about homelessness and how to help.

Read [10 Tips for Taking Social Action](http://clf.uua.org/betweensundays/middlechildhood/SocialAction2.html) (at clf.uua.org/betweensundays/middlechildhood/SocialAction2.html) on the Church of the Larger Fellowship website's Between Sundays pages.

Deep Fun

The Unitarian Universalist Association has compiled many team-building, cooperative games. Download the [Deep Fun resource](http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/deepfun/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/deepfun/index.shtml) at no charge.

SESSION 16: WE ARE ACTIVE CREATORS OF OUR FAITH

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Each of us has a personal calling that's as unique as a fingerprint ... discover what you love and then find a way to offer it to others in the form of service, working hard, and also allowing the energy of the universe to lead you. — Oprah Winfrey

In this concluding session, participants examine the promises the Blake covenant offers us—that we "dwell together in peace, seek the truth in love and help one another"—in the context of their own ties with family members, friends, and people in their congregation and wider communities. Participants acknowledge their role in our faith heritage: We are active creators of our faith, inheritors of a tradition even as we shape a new heritage to pass along to others.

If your congregation has a covenant of its own, Alternate Activity 1, Our Congregation's Covenant, helps the group compare and contrast it with the Blake covenant.

GOALS

This session will:

- Affirm that we are both inheritors and active creators of our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition
- Explore covenanting as a way of being in right relationship with one another
- Demonstrate how participants of today are capable of creating a legacy for tomorrow.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Review their understanding of the Blake covenant and its application to their own lives and congregation
- Identify the value of creating covenants together
- Discover ways we are active creators of our faith.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	5
Activity 1: Covenant Charades	15
Activity 2: Story — The Treehouse Rules	10
Activity 3: Acting on Our Covenant	20
Faith in Action: Covenant Quilt or Banner	30
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Our Congregation's Covenant	10
Alternate Activity 2: Covenant Categories	15
Alternate Activity 3: Covenant Ritual	10
Alternate Activity 4: Covenant Key Words	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for about five minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, think about the various phrases of the Blake covenant and the meaning the words hold for you personally. What does "Love is the spirit of this church" mean to you? How is love the spirit of your congregation? How is this spirit made manifest? How do members of the congregation experience and express it? The next line is "...and service is its law." In what ways does your congregation do service? How, in your congregation, does "service" function as a "law?" The Blake covenant goes on to enumerate three components of "our great covenant:" to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another. Does your congregation accept this "great covenant?" How is it manifest? How do members "dwell together in peace?" When do you "seek the truth in love?" How consistently do members live by a promise to "help one another?" Keep these thoughts in mind as you lead participants to review the Blake covenant and think about creating a legacy for Unitarian Universalist generations yet to come.

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Covenant Key Words](#) (included in this document)
- Pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.

Description of Activity

Give a handout and a pencil to each child as they arrive. Ask them to take a seat, read the list of words, and beside each word write the first word which comes to their mind. Encourage them to use one-word responses and write them down without thinking long about them—their gut reactions. Invite participants to share verbally with the group some of the words they came up with in their associations. If a word seems unusual to you, ask the child why they think they associated that word with the covenant words.

Tell the group that they will talk in a moment about comments posted on the Rainbow Wall Hanging. Suggest children take a few minutes to look over the words on the wall hanging or try to remember something they contributed in a past session.

Including All Participants

If some participants may find reading a challenge, pair individuals as they arrive. Have one child read a word from the list and the other respond quickly with a one-word association. Or, have a co-leader begin reading from the list and invite all participants to call out their word associations; new arrivals may join in as they enter.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and matches or LED/battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, [Covenant Key Words](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Set up chalice.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:
Love is the spirit of this church,

and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

Description of Activity

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Lead the group to read aloud the Blake covenant. Say something like:

Our wall hanging is very full of our hearts, and buckets, and the other ornaments we have created as we talked about phrases in the Blake covenant. Let's take some time to remember our responses.

Invite participants to share verbally some of the comments written on the heart, chalice, and bucket ornaments attached to the Rainbow Wall Hanging. Have them contribute "popcorn" style, speaking up as they feel comfortable, or ask volunteers to take turns reading aloud some of the comments they see posted. Do not put any child on the spot to read aloud.

After everyone who wants to has shared a comment from the wall hanging, gather around the chalice and extinguish it together.

Including All Participants

Some participants may struggle with reading or be unable, from a distance, to read the written comments. Tell the group ahead of time that the group will talk about comments posted on the wall hanging and suggest children take a few minutes to look over the words on the wall hanging or try to remember something they contributed in a past session.

ACTIVITY 1: COVENANT CHARADES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Five index cards
- A bag or basket
- A timepiece (minutes)

Preparation for Activity

- Write these phrases from the Blake covenant on index cards (one phrase per card):
 - LOVE IS THE SPIRIT OF THIS CHURCH

- SERVICE IS ITS LAW
- TO DWELL TOGETHER IN PEACE
- TO SEEK THE TRUTH IN LOVE
- TO HELP ONE ANOTHER
- Place the cards in the basket or bag, folding them if necessary so the writing cannot be seen.

Description of Activity

Participants act out concepts from the Blake covenant in an adapted version of Charades.

If needed, explain the game, in these words or your own:

Charades is a game where one person acts out a phrase, without speaking, for the others on their team to guess as quickly as possible. To act out a phrase, the presenter first shows what kind of phrase it is—in this game, all the phrases will be quotes from the Blake covenant—and how many words the phrase has. Then the presenter can begin acting out the phrase, either one word at a time or by showing the entire phrase, all at once.

Explain the Covenant Charades hand gestures:

- To indicate that a phrase is a quotation, make quote marks in the air with fingers.
- To indicate the number of words in a phrase, hold up that number of fingers. To act out one of the words, hold up the number of fingers representing that word's position in the phrase (one finger = first word).
- Hold arms far apart to indicate a big word. Pinch fingers together to indicate a small word. Sweep arms in a circle to indicate acting out the entire concept.
- A hand cupped behind the ear expresses the concept "sounds like."

A gesture which appears to be the stretching of a large rubber band can be used to indicate a longer form of the word (such as "painting" when someone guesses "paint").

Select a co-leader or participant to be the timekeeper. Form two teams. Tell them each team will have three minutes for one of its members to act out a phrase, without speaking, for the rest of their team to guess.

Pick a team to go first. Have one team member choose a card from the basket, read the phrase (without showing it to anyone else), and then place the card face down on a table or the floor. Give the child a moment to

think about how they will act out the words on the card. When they are ready, start keeping time and signal the presenter to begin acting out the phrase. Encourage their team to yell out their guesses. Give them three minutes to guess the phrase.

If the team has not guessed the phrase, invite the other team to guess (without the presenter doing any more acting out). If they cannot guess in one minute, tell everyone the phrase.

Now allow the second team to have a turn. Continue until all five phrases have been acted out, or until you are out of time.

Save a few minutes for participants to reflect on the experience. Ask questions such as:

- How did the gestures each person made help you figure out what phrase they were acting out?
- Once you knew what a phrase was, did you have ideas for how the person could have demonstrated it? What?
- Which phrase was the easiest to guess? Why? Which was the hardest? Why?
- What if this was the only way we could communicate with one another? How might it be harder to get along? How might it be easier? Why?

Including All Participants

Some children may be uncomfortable acting out a charade for a group. If you know which children these are, you might offer suggestions as the teams make their selection. Acting out a charade should always be a volunteer activity.

A participant who is unable to either act out a phrase or yell out their guesses can serve as timekeeper or hold the basket of phrases for their team members.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE TREEHOUSE RULES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[The Treehouse Rules](#) (included in this document) "
- A copy of your congregation's covenant

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story several times so you will be comfortable reading or telling it.
- Obtain a copy of your congregation's covenant and prepare to read it to the group.

Description of Activity

Tell or read the story.

After the story, invite the group to be silent for a moment to think about the story.

Begin a discussion by asking participants to recap the story in their own words. What they recall indicates what they found most meaningful or memorable.

Lead a discussion using questions such as:

- How did the kids come to reach a compromise in this story?
- Why were the children able to do so, when the adults were not?
- How were the children active creators of their faith?
- How do people in our congregation (or religious education group) reach compromises?
- Does our congregation have a covenant? What does it say? Who created it? What might be missing from it—something that ought to be mentioned, yet isn't? (You may wish to read the congregational covenant to the group.)
- How do covenants help us live in right relationship with one another?
- When might covenants not be able to help us keep right relationship with one another?

Including All Participants

Provide a hard copy of the story so hearing impaired participants can read along as you tell it.

ACTIVITY 3: ACTING ON OUR COVENANT (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Timepiece (minutes)

Preparation for Activity

- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on newsprint, and post:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

Description of Activity

Form teams of three to five participants. Say, in these words or your own:

We Unitarian Universalists are a living faith with the power to act and evolve. That is why our covenants are not unchanging documents but dynamic ones which we can decide, as a group, to change.

Invite each group to write another line they think should be part of the Blake covenant. Then, they can decide how they wish to share their line with the entire group:

1. Have one member of their team act it out charades-style (as they did in Activity 1).
2. Have one team member draw pictures on newsprint to represent it.
3. Do a role play skit which reveals it.

Invite the groups to think about the treehouse story and how the children at that church came up with their covenant. What might have been in that covenant? Could it be an idea that is not in the Blake covenant, but should be?

Give the teams five minutes to write a line to add to the covenant. Then, tell them they have another few minutes to plan how they will present it to the other groups.

When time is up, encourage one team to go first. After three minutes, call "time." Ask for one final guess, then ask the presenting team to reveal what they were trying to act out or draw.

Allow all the teams to present their additions to the Blake covenant. Then, invite reflection with questions such as:

- How did your team choose to present their additions to the covenant? Was it easy to determine what they were trying to get across?
- Did the groups choose any similar ideas to add to the Blake covenant, or were all the ideas different from each other? Why do you suppose that is?
- Which new addition does our entire group like best? Why?
- What does it mean to be "active creators of our faith?"

Including All Participants

Some participants are hesitant to share or perform in front of others. Remind the teams of the option to have just one person act out or draw their idea, and make

sure teams allow any member to "pass" on presenting to the entire group.

CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Taking It Home
- Scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how you want the children to cut apart the Rainbow Wall Hanging. Consider how the hanging is constructed, the items on it, and the number of participants in the group (the more participants, the smaller the piece each can take home).
- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy as a handout for all participants (or, email to parents).

Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle. Indicate the Rainbow Wall Hanging and say, in these words or your own:

We have spent some time together, at times literally tied together. We have let the Blake covenant guide us to explore many ways we are connected to each other, our families, our congregation, our friends, our communities, and others beyond. Now that our time in this program is ending, we can each take a piece of our experience home with us. Not to undo the ties that connect us—that cannot be done—but so that each of us can remember those ties when we are apart.

Explain how you would like the children to select and cut pieces of the wall hanging. Hand the scissors to one of the participants and invite them to cut and remove a piece to take home. Then encourage that participant to give the scissors to the next person in the circle, who can then cut and remove a piece.

When everyone has returned to the circle with a piece of the wall hanging, ask them to cross their arms in front of their body and then take the hands of the people next to them. Say "We are tied together through helping one another when we..." and ask anyone who wishes to fill in a word or phrase about how we are tied together by the promises we have made to one another in this group—that is, a covenant. When everyone who wishes to share has done so, open the circle by having everyone, while still holding hands, turn to their right, so that everyone is facing out, and no longer has their arms crossed in front of their body.

(Be mindful of participants' physical mobility; use this closing activity only if you are sure all children can comfortably participate. As an alternative, simply invite the entire group to hold hands.)

Distribute copies of Taking It Home that you have prepared. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: COVENANT QUILT OR BANNER (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Situations](#) (included in this document)
- Fabric in bright, complementary colors and patterns
- Fabric markers
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors), needles and thread, and fabric glue
- Masking tape or straight pins
- Optional: A copy of your congregational covenant

Preparation for Activity

- Decide the size and number of fabric squares to cut so (a) each participant can work on one square and (b) the squares will form a quilt or banner that can be displayed in your congregation. Cut the squares.
- Print Handout 2 and cut apart the five phrases from the Blake covenant. Or, select phrases from your congregational covenant and write each on a separate piece of paper.
- Arrange for someone to sew the finished squares together.

Description of Activity

Spread out squares of fabric and the other materials on work tables.

Form five groups and give each group a slip of paper (Handout 2) with a different phrase from the Blake covenant. For example, one group gets "seek the truth in love," another gets "help one another." Or, if you have selected phrases from your congregation's own covenant, form a group to work on each phrase you have selected and give the groups their phrases.

Ask groups to gather themselves at work tables and plan together how to show their phrase on squares of fabric. For example, they may decide each person will show one or two words on their square, they may decide some squares will show the words and others will show

pictures, or they may decide each person will express the entire phrase in the way they wish. Once they have decided, then each individual may choose a square of fabric to design. Tell them they can:

1. Use fabric markers to draw pictures and/or write words.
2. Use scissors to cut the extra fabric into shapes and/or letters, and glue these on to their square.
3. Cut the extra fabric, and stitch it on to their square using needle and thread.
4. Use a combination of these techniques.

Give a five-minute warning so participants have time to finish their individual work before it is time to clean up. Then, ask groups to have some members clean their work area while others help you gather their fabric squares and tape or pin them together so the person stitching the quilt will know how to arrange the squares.

Give the squares to the person who agreed to assemble the quilt or banner. Provide extra, undecorated fabric squares they can use, as needed, to complete a rectangular shape.

When the quilt or banner is done, arrange a time for the children to present this gift to your congregation.

Including All Participants

If any participants may be unable to decorate a square, configure small groups so some children can work with a partner who can draw or write for them, cut out fabric shapes for them, or help them adhere shapes to their square.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on and discuss with your co-leader(s):

- How did the timing go today? What might we do to make it better?
- Was the Covenant Charades game fun for participants? How easy was it for them to guess the part of the Blake covenant being acted out?
- How did the participants respond to the story? Did they "get" it?
- How did the activity of creating additional lines to the covenant work? Were the participants creative in their selection of additional words to be added? Did their choices of what to add show insight about the group and/or your congregation?

TAKING IT HOME

Each of us has a personal calling that's as unique as a fingerprint ... discover what you love and then find a way to offer it to others in the form of service, working hard, and also allowing the energy of the universe to lead you. — Oprah Winfrey

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we concluded our exploration of the Blake covenant by acting out its five key phrases in a game, Covenant Charades. We compared the Blake covenant with our own congregation's covenant. We heard a story about a group of children who found the need to create a covenant on their own when disputes erupted over who could use a treehouse.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... groups you have been involved in and the covenants they used (either formal or informal). Talk about having a covenant made that group a good experience for you, or how the covenant hindered your participation.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... creating a family covenant. Take some time to explore ways you want to behave with one another. Keep in mind that a covenant does not provide rules ("no hitting") so much as ways of engagement ("treat each other with respect"). Light a chalice to lift the moment from the ordinary to a place of importance. Brainstorm ideas for your family covenant, and then combine the ideas to write a three- or four-line covenant. Create colorful posters to display the covenant around your home.

A Family Adventure. Obtain a copy of your congregation's covenant. Read it together and talk about how you have seen its values in action. Share your observations about how well the covenant works in your congregation and your suggestions for anything that could be added. Identify the appropriate congregational leaders with whom you can share ideas your family would like to contribute.

Family Discovery. Use history websites and books, preferably with timelines, to explore instances when groups created covenants to articulate shared expectations about behavior. For example, the U.S. Constitution can be considered a covenant among the nation's founders, the Ten Commandments a covenant among the Hebrew people or between the Hebrew people and their God. Consider these websites as a starting off point: The [Hyper History website](http://www.hyperhistory.com/) (at www.hyperhistory.com/), the [Ohio State University eHistory website](http://ehistory.osu.edu/osu/) (at ehistory.osu.edu/osu/), the [Smithsonian American History Timeline](http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_Si/nmah/timeline.htm) (at www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_Si/nmah/timeline.htm), and the [University of Houston Digital History](http://www.digitalhistory.org/) (at www.digitalhistory.org/)

www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/timelines.cfm) website.

A Family Game. Designate a time when the family is at your congregation together as "covenant search time." Hand each person a notebook or piece of paper and invite them to circulate among the groups of people, taking note of when they witness someone acting on one of the elements of the Blake covenant (such as "dwelling together in peace"). Young participants who are unable to write words can draw pictures of what they find. Compare notes at home.

A Family Ritual. If you create a family covenant together, create a recurring ritual to share it intentionally. You might say the covenant together before a shared meal or recite it once a week, lighting a chalice or candle to mark this special family time.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: OUR CONGREGATION'S COVENANT (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A copy of your congregation's covenant

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a copy of your congregation's covenant.
- Ask your minister or religious educator to tell you the story of the covenant's creation. Prepare to tell the story to the group, or, invite a member of the congregation to come and tell the story of how the covenant was created.
- Write the words of the congregation's covenant on newsprint, and post.
- Write the words of James Vila Blake's covenant on another sheet of newsprint, and post adjacent to the congregational covenant:

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love,

And to help one another. — James Vila Blake

Description of Activity

Invite participants to compare and contrast the two covenants:

- What is similar?

- What is different?
- How does the different wording communicate something different of value?
- If the values of helping one another, seeking truth in love, and service as the law are included in your congregation's covenant, are they listed in the same order as in the Blake covenant? How does a different order signify different importance?

Tell participants the story of how the covenant was created at your congregation (or have your guest do so). Then invite reflection on the story with questions such as:

- How does the story of the covenant's creation show, in the words of the final version?
- Who was involved in creating our congregation's covenant? How does the fact that these others, and not ourselves, wrote it affect its relevance for us today? Why?
- Which covenant do you like better, our congregation's or the one created by Blake? Why?

Including All Participants

Some participants are hesitant to share in a group, and some like to consider their responses carefully before they speak. Pass a talking stick to foster everyone's attentiveness and facilitate sharing by one person at a time.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: COVENANT CATEGORIES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 2, [Situations](#) (included in this document)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks or rolls of cellophane tape

Preparation for Activity

- Calculate how many two- or three-person teams you will have. Copy Handout 2 for each team. Optional: Make each copy of the handout a different color.
- Write these phrases from the Blake covenant on separate sheets of newsprint:

- LOVE IS THE SPIRIT OF THIS CHURCH
- SERVICE IS ITS LAW
- TO DWELL TOGETHER IN PEACE
- TO SEEK THE TRUTH IN LOVE
- TO HELP ONE ANOTHER
- Post the sheets of newsprint around the meeting space where children can easily reach them.

Description of Activity

Indicate the newsprint sheets you have posted and affirm that each sheet shows a key phrase of the Blake covenant.

Form teams of two or three participants. Give each team a copy of Handout 2, a pair of scissors, and a glue stick or a roll of tape. Invite the teams to cut apart the situations on their handout, read the situations together, and then tape each situation on the sheet of newsprint where it seems to fit best. Tell them they will soon notice that some situations could fit in more than one category, and their team will need to determine where it best belongs.

Give the teams eight to ten minutes to categorize the situations. Then, ask teams to stop working. Invite everyone to look around to see where other teams have placed the same situations. Lead whole-group reflection with questions such as:

- Was it difficult to determine the covenant category some of these situations belonged in? Which situations? Why?
- How did your team decide what to do with situations that could fit in more than one category? How did you decide where these fit best? Did any teams find a way to put a situation on more than one sheet?
 - Did your team have any disagreement about where a situation should go? How was the conflict resolved?
- Can you think of other situations that have happened or could happen at our congregation, which belong in one of these covenant categories?
- Can you think of other situations which might fit under more than one category?

Including All Participants

If any participants struggle with reading or have vision limitations, instruct teams to have one member read

aloud each statement so all can participate in the decision making process.

If the group includes children with limited mobility, instruct teams to make their decisions about each situation while seated together as a group, and then to delegate one team member to glue or tape the situation to the newsprint.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: COVENANT RITUAL (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tea light candles and a lighter
- A large, shallow bowl of sand

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure it is okay to use lit candles in your meeting space. Keep a fire extinguisher at hand.
- Set out the bowl of sand. Arrange the tea light candles near the bowl.

Description of Activity

Place a candle in the sand and light it. Invite the children to come forward, one at a time, light their own candle using the flame from the candle you lit, and place their candle in the sand. Tell them they may light their candle silently or share some words about what a covenant is or does or has meant to them at some point in their life. If you like, offer examples (e.g., "a covenant is a promise;" "it's a commitment;" "keeps people on track," or "reminds me how to be with others"). Or, model a phrase about covenant as you light the first candle.

When everyone who wishes to has lit a candle, offer brief closing words, such as:

These candles honor the covenant this group has made and the way we have lived our covenant in the times we have been together.

Then, extinguish the candles.

Including All Participants

If any participants would have difficulty stepping forward and lighting a tea light, designate one or two participants as candle lighters. Gather the rest of the group in a circle, and invite each individual to share their words about covenant as a candle is lit for them. Include the option of silence; make it clear that a child can remain silent as a candle is lit for them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: COVENANT KEY WORDS (15 MINUTES)

Confirm the word by whispering it in the child's ear and take the slip of paper; then they may begin giving clues to the group.

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Covenant Key Words](#) (included in this document)
- Basket or bag

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Handout 1. Cut apart the words so each is on a separate slip of paper.
- Place the slips of paper in the basket or bag.

Description of Activity

Tell the group they will take turns trying to get the others to guess a word, from the Blake covenant, which they will select from the basket. Explain that they may use word clues, but must avoid all forms of the word and all words that include the word. For example, if the word is "peace," they cannot use "peaceful" or "peacemaker" in their clues.

Ask a volunteer to go first and draw a slip of paper from the basket, read the word on it silently, fold the paper up, and try to help the others guess the word. After the group guesses the word, select another child to choose a slip of paper and try to have the group guess their word.

Continue until all the words have been guessed or you have only a few minutes left. Lead reflection with these questions:

- Which words were hard to give clues about? Why?
- Did this activity cause you to think differently about any of the words? Which have other meanings besides their meaning in the Blake covenant?
- How might the covenant be different if the words were switched around? For example, if "love" was substituted for "law?"
- Would the participants prefer any of the key words in the covenant be changed to reflect the reality at your congregation? Which ones and why?

Including All Participants

To accommodate participants who may have difficulty reading, establish a pattern with the very first word that the individual about to give the clues should approach you and show you the word written on the slip of paper.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 16: STORY: THE TREEHOUSE RULES

The treehouse was built on the congregation's grounds over three Saturdays in September, using donated lumber and the donated labor of the families who attended the church and other adults who wanted to help with the project. Even the kids got involved—especially those age ten and up—by pitching in and helping in any way that they could during the construction.

And it was a fantastic place to be once it was completed, with a window that faced the nearby playground, a rope ladder to climb up, and a slide to exit. While everyone was happy that the treehouse was there after all the planning and construction, it soon became a problem. When too many kids wanted to enjoy it at once, their different ideas about how to use it came into conflict with each other.

The younger kids got a thrill out of running races through it, hurriedly climbing up the rope ladder, rushing through the treehouse to race down the slide over and over again, one after the other. But the older kids wanted to hang out in the treehouse after the worship service ended, playing games like jacks and cards. One day, a second grader racing by interrupted the fifth graders' game of cards for the third time. That was it. A fight broke out, with name-calling, pushing, and some tears.

Some adults demanded that the treehouse be off-limits until the children learned to cooperate with each other. Other adults protested that their children had special rights to use the treehouse because they had helped to build it. The Religious Education Committee had meetings about a policy for use of the treehouse. They were getting ready to report to the congregation's board of directors with their findings. Meanwhile, the minister

considered bringing in a consultant from the District to address the conflict, which had now spread through the entire congregation.

But while the adults were arguing, holding meetings, and creating policies, something happened. The children who had been temporarily banned from the treehouse started talking to each other and looking for ways they could all use the playhouse together. A few of them remembered the covenants they had created in their RE programs the year before. They suggested a covenant could be created for how the kids could use the treehouse. So they sat down and talked about why they liked the treehouse and what made it fun. They discovered ways they could all enjoy their treehouse in the way they wanted to. They came up with a covenant which laid out how they would be in the treehouse and how they would respect others who were also using the space.

Just as the adults were starting a congregational meeting to adopt a policy for use of the treehouse, some church leaders looked out the window. They saw the children cooperating with each other and using the treehouse without conflict. A teenager was dispatched to the treehouse to discover what "rules" the participants had come up with, and when she reported back to the adults at the congregational meeting, the announcement came that the participants had created a covenant with one another.

The adults were humbled. Some sheepishly glanced at their church covenant, framed on the wall—hanging there and mostly forgotten. The congregational meeting was adjourned. The adults went on their way, reminded of the power of covenants, working together to find a solution and the commitment of people in right relationship with one another—all because of the treehouse rules.

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 16:

HANDOUT 1: COVENANT KEY WORDS

LOVE

PEACE

SPIRIT

SEEK

CHURCH

TRUTH

SERVICE

LOVE

LAW

HELP

DWELL

ANOTHER

TOGETHER

COVENANT

LOVE CONNECTS US: SESSION 16:

HANDOUT 2: SITUATIONS

During coffee hour, older participants help the younger participants get appropriate snacks from the hospitality table.

The congregation builds a new playground for the children, on our congregational grounds.

A canned food drive helps bring in needed food for a local food pantry.

You are drawing a picture with your friend. You want to color the sky and your friend wants to color the ocean, but there is only one blue marker. You agree to leave white space for clouds in the sky and your friend agrees to combine green and blue to color the ocean.

At a gathering for all ages, everyone watches a thought-provoking movie and then works on a craft with a partner while talking about the movie.

On the playground, two participants begin fighting, but one of your friends intervenes as a mediator and helps them "talk it out."

Some of the teenagers in the congregation come to your religious education group to answer your questions about what high school is like.

One of the religious education groups creates a Peace Garden at the church.

One of the religious education groups creates a Community Garden at the church. The garden will produce vegetables which the congregation will donate to a family homeless shelter.

Someone shares something very sad during Joys and Concerns.

A new person volunteers to teach a religious education group at your church.

Your minister invites your religious education group to help collect the offering during the worship service, and you agree to do it.

FIND OUT MORE

Covenants in Unitarian Universalism

There are several accounts of how the Unitarians and Universalists developed a set of Principles in 1960 and covenanted as a unified religious association to affirm and promote them. One is *The Promise and the Promise: The Story of the Unitarian Universalist Association* by Warren G. Ross.

In the UUA website's Leaders' Library, find a [sample congregational covenant](#) (at www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/leaderslibrary/uufait_hworks/24968.shtml) provided by the Rev. Deborah Mero, interim minister (2000-02) of All Souls Church Unitarian Universalist, Brattleboro, Vermont.

[Session 2 of Wonderful Welcome](#) (at www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/wonderfulwelcome/session2/index.shtml), a Tapestry of Faith program for grades 2/3, also focuses on covenant. You may find helpful resources here as well as activities you could adapt for a slightly older or wide-age range group. The session opens with an excerpt from a sermon by the Rev. Lisa Ward, "From Creed to Covenant," delivered November 17, 2002 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County (Churchville, Maryland):

A covenant is not a definition of a relationship; it is the framework for our relating. ... This calls for a level of trust, courage and sacrifice that needs to be nurtured, renewed and affirmed on a regular basis. ... Abiding in covenant is an art form. A mutual creation.