

**SIGNS OF OUR FAITH:
BEING UU EVERY DAY**

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children

Grades 2-3



BY JESSICA YORK

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jessica York began her career in religious education after several years' experience in the theatre, retail bookstore management, and substitute teaching. After six years as the Director of Religious Education at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham, AL, she joined the UUA as Youth Programs Director. In that role, she has edited several Tapestry of Faith youth programs. She is a co-author of the Tapestry of Faith programs [Creating Home](#) and [Virtue Ethics: An Ethical Development Program for High School Youth](#), as well as [Sharing the Journey: Small Group Ministry with Youth](#) and the book, [Bridging: A Handbook for Congregations](#). Jessica is also the author of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's curriculum [Beyond the Mountain: A Multigenerational Religious Education Program on Haiti](#).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Tapestry of Faith Core Team

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THE PROGRAM

...if religion is ultimately about what we love, then “faith” is not so much about what we think is true (or hope is true, despite lack of evidence), but about being faithful to what we love. — Peter Morales, past president, Unitarian Universalist Association

Rev. Morales asks us to think about religion as the practice of being faithful to what you love. In order to do this, you must decide what you love and do your best to live that love faithfully every day. *Signs of Our Faith* guides children to do their best to live faithful lives every day. It presents fourteen traits or values that most Unitarian Universalist love, including the quest for knowledge, reverence for life, supporting one another on our faith journeys, and public witness. Children examine how their lives do and can exhibit these traits and values, and come to understand that their faith is a living faith whose histories and teachings are fortifications for living faithfully in a complex world.

Signs of Our Faith engages children to explore ritual practices of our faith that remind us of these traits and values. Some of the rituals are enacted in the congregation. Some we conduct alone, or in our interactions with family, friends, and peers; others are offered to the wider world. This program helps children understand the abstract concept of a ritual by naming rituals as signs of our faith. Rituals are defined broadly, so that naming and dedicating a baby is a ritual, but so too is befriending a new child at school. Through the concept of “ritual,” children discover evidence of their faith in everyday actions and are encouraged to ritualize or form into habit such traits as caring, welcoming, and making fair group decisions.

Signs of Our Faith asks young people to see themselves as leaders of their faith. They build experience performing and, at times, creating rituals to share in their families as well as the congregation, and are thereby positioned as co-creators of the faith. Leadership in Action, alternate activities included in every session, invite children to lead the flower ceremony, host an appreciation event for congregational leaders, and write meditations and prayers for congregational use. By sharing their leadership with a wider group, children deepen their connection to our faith and see themselves as needed leaders in the congregation, other UU communities, and the world beyond.

Your leadership of this program is truly a sign of great faith. It is a sign of lived faith. Your leadership will be an example to the participants that will outlive any particular

activity. May this program help you nurture the next generation of UU leaders.

GOALS

This program will:

- Identify common traits or characteristics of faithful Unitarian Universalists, including revering life, being welcoming, finding beauty in our uniqueness, and sharing leadership
- Encourage and guide children to live their UU faith in their everyday lives
- Explore the nature of rituals—particularly religious rituals—and the role they play in our lives
- Build leadership skills.

LEADERS

A team of two or more adults should lead the program. Having two leaders present at all times helps assure child safety. While one leader implements an activity, the other can focus on classroom management. Communication between team members is crucial to create a common culture in the sessions. Your leadership should include at least one congregational member who is familiar with the rituals of the congregation.

PARTICIPANTS

Signs of Our Faith is for children in second and third grade or ages seven through nine. 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 from seven-, eight-, and nine-year-olds can be quite helpful, especially to first-time leaders.

In [*Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook*](#) (Boston: UUA, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd discusses developmental characteristics of school-age children. She notes that by age seven, children's learning disabilities and behavioral or psychological issues may have appeared and been identified. Individual learning styles and strengths may also be apparent. Children who need glasses often get their first pair around this age.

Hurd notes that the typical child in this age group is “passionately interested” in moral issues:

She seeks what is fair and right... By developing games with rules, playing sports, or creating or belonging to clubs, the school-age child

practices figuring out what is fair... This play is practice for more generalized moral decision making.

In general, children in second or third grade are:

- Able to use gross and fine motor skills, which are almost fully developed
- Influenced by media images and messages; beginning to compare themselves to norms perceived as desirable
- Engaging in logical thinking based on "concrete operational" thinking
- Practicing cognitive skills of acquiring, storing, and retrieving information
- Developing their individual learning style, which may be auditory visual, sensory, and/or kinesthetic
- Showing their domain-specific intelligence, which may be verbal/linguistic, musical/rhythmic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and/or naturalist
- Finding self-esteem in their knowledge and their student identity
- Engaging peers; learning through mutual friendships
- Able to comprehend the perspectives of others
- Likely to engage in gender-segregated play
- Interested in their own racial, ethnic, and gender identity, and seeking affirmation of these identities from peers
- Learning and negotiating early understandings of social scripts about sexuality
- Aware of and able to apply the Golden Rule (treating others as they wish to be treated)
- Energized by developing rules for play or work that ensure fairness
- Interested in personal moral issues and able to wrestle with moral dilemmas in relationships
- Aware of societal moral issues
- Interested in helping to solve community and world problems
- Showing interest in concrete aspects of faith and religion
- "Doing" religion or spirituality by participating in rituals, practices, and traditions.

Hurd offers a variety of strategies that speak to these developmental considerations and may help you shape your sessions effectively. You can:

- Provide for children's overall physical needs, including nutrition, exercise, and rest
- Allow children to be active; avoid extended times of sitting and listening
- Provide time for play and hands-on activities
- Present challenges that promote children's use of their thinking skills
- Support different learning styles
- Encourage problem-solving and discussion; allow children opportunities to experience others' perspectives through role play
- Support children's natural impulse toward rule making and peer-to-peer negotiation of what is fair
- Allow time with like-identity peers; support or facilitate mixed-peer time, as well
- Intervene appropriately against exclusion or bullying, yet affirm children's need to work out relational complexities as a part of their moral development
- Recognize the unique needs that attend the identity development of children who may be multiracial, multiethnic, or transgender and/or belong to a minority in another way
- Offer children many ways to contribute to the community
- Give opportunities to "do" religion and be part of a faith community
- Welcome large spiritual questions; encourage questioning of religion
- Support self-esteem; affirm the child's developing body and identity
- Support the whole child as an individual and as a member of the group
- Provide encouragement and love.

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

By adapting activities or using alternate activities, you can make every session inclusive of children with a range of physical and cognitive abilities, learning styles, food allergies, and other needs or limitations. As you plan sessions, be aware of activities that might pose

difficulties for children who are differently abled. All spaces, indoor and outdoor, need to be accessible to participants and leaders. Check the width of doorways and aisles, the height of tables, and the terrain of outdoor landscapes.

Each session mixes active and quiet, expressive and listening, whole group and individual activities. As you recognize different learning styles among participants, let this information guide your plan of each session. Substitute alternate activities for core activities if you feel they better suit the group.

Including All Participants notes specific concerns and/or suggests adaptations to make an activity fully inclusive. You are encouraged to devise your own adaptations as needed. As the leader, you know best how to provide a fully inclusive learning experience for the group. If you have questions about the accessibility or adaptability of a particular activity, please ask your religious educator for advice. A helpful resource available from the UUA Bookstore is Sally Patton's book, [*Welcoming Children with Special Needs*](#) (PDF file).

FAMILIES

Families are the primary influences on the faith development of their children. As a program leader, you take on a special role: supporting parents to shape their children's Unitarian Universalist faith and moral development. By involving parents in this program, you can deepen the experience for children and their families.

Each session offers Taking It Home resources including conversation topics and other ways for families to extend the session. These may include a family game or ritual, or links to informative and/or interactive websites. Exploring session topics at home can help children and parents practice the skills, personalize the concepts, and make connections among congregational life, home and family life, and life's daily challenges. Be sure to adapt each session's Taking It Home to reflect the activities you have chosen. If you have an email address for every family, you might provide Taking It Home as a group email, either before or immediately after the session. You can also print and photocopy Taking It Home to distribute at the session's Closing.

Invite families into your sessions. Adult or teen volunteers can be extremely helpful with arts-and-crafts activities. Parents who bring musicianship, storytelling, or artistic skills will foster participants' sense of connection between their family and their religious education. Faith in Action activities offer ideal opportunities to engage parents and other congregants. Find out who can enrich your long-term Faith in Action

activities with their personal interests, professional networks, or simply their time.

The leader-parent relationship is very important and must be both welcoming and reassuring. When parents bring their children to Unitarian Universalist religious education, they need to feel confidence not only in the safety and enjoyment you will provide, but also in your faith leadership. Strong partnerships foster parents' commitment to becoming strong faith leaders in their own families. As a leader, you can support and inspire parents to bring intentionality and excitement to their role in their children's Unitarian Universalist faith development.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The program includes an Introduction and 16 sessions.

The sessions build as units:

- Unit 1 (Sessions 1, 2, 3, and 4) — Looking for Signs in Me
- Unit 2 (Sessions 5, 6, 7, and 8) — Looking for Signs in My Relationships
- Unit 3 (Sessions 9, 10, 11, and 12) — Looking for Signs in the Congregation
- Unit 4 (Sessions 13, 14, 15, and 16) — Looking for Signs in the World

Each session has its own Introduction, followed by a Session Plan.

In each session Introduction, find:

Quotations. The quotations that introduce each session are primarily for leaders, though at times you may wish to read one aloud to the group as an entry point to a session. Exploring a quotation together can help co-leaders feel grounded in the ideas and activities. These quotations are also included in Taking It Home for families to consider.

Goals. Reviewing the goals will help you understand the desired outcomes for the session and connect its 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. These show how participants will learn and grow as a result of the experience of the session. As you plan, apply your knowledge of the particular group of children, the time and space you have available, and your own strengths and interests as a leader to determine the most important and achievable learning objectives for the session. Choose activities that will serve them best.

Session-at-a-Glance. This table 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 (though you will need additional time beyond the core 60-minute session to include a Faith in Action activity). The Session-at-a-Glance table also presents 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 participants and provide the best possible learning experience. Each session offers a short Spiritual Preparation exercise to focus you on your own life and Unitarian Universalist faith. Calling forth your own experiences and beliefs will prepare you to bring the topic to the group in an authentic manner. We believe that teaching is a spiritual practice.

Session Plan

Following the Session Introduction, the Session Plan presents every element of the session in detail in the sequence established in the Session-at-a-Glance table. The materials and preparation needed and a step-by-step description are provided for each core activity, Faith in Action, and alternate activity. Additionally, the Session Plan provides Taking It Home with activities for families; Stories, Handouts, and Leader Resources for all session activities; and Find Out More with resources for leaders and parents to explore session topics further.

Adaptation to include all participants should always be part of your planning process. Under Including All Participants, many activities suggest specific modifications to make the activity manageable and meaningful for children with particular limitations or needs.

If you are reading this program online, you can move among a session's elements: Opening, Closing, Faith in Action, Activity 4, Story, etc. Each element occupies its own web page. You can click on "Print This Page" at any time. If you click on "Download Entire Program" or "Download Workshop" you will have a user-friendly document on your computer that you can customize as you choose, using your own word processing program. Once you decide which activities you will use, format and print only the materials you need.

To distribute Taking It Home and other handouts or letters to parents, you may wish to go green; download and adapt these documents, then use email to distribute to all children's families.

MATERIALS

Few special or unique materials are called for in the sessions, except the stoles (see "Before You Start").

Because much of the program concerns the rituals of the congregation, it is suggested in several activities that you share with the group photos, videos, and other mementos of congregational rituals and activities. Leaders may need help gathering these materials. Consult the religious educator, congregational historian, administrator or minister for guidance.

LEADER GUIDELINES

Read each session ahead of time and plan with your co-leader. Be organized enough to be flexible. Read stories through at least once so your storytelling has a good flow.

Tapestry of Faith programs are designed for adaptation to your congregational needs. Use Alternate Activities to replace core activities if they seem better suited to your group. Since this program focuses on rituals, pay attention to Opening and Closing rituals. Treat materials used in rituals with respect and encourage children to do the same.

Throughout the program, you will explore ways to live faithfully in the world. Children may realize that they make mistakes or poor choices sometimes, and sometimes do not act in caring or fair ways. Acknowledge that this is true for everyone. None of us are perfect. Label bad choices as mistakes and encourage children to make better choices—more faithful choices—next time.

IMPLEMENTATION

Leadership in Action

Use Alternate Activities to extend session time, add sessions, or replace core activities to better suit the group. Signs of Our Faith includes a special series of Alternate Activities called Leadership in Action (LIA). These are presented as Alternate Activities because they usually cannot be conducted during the session. They frequently engage with the larger congregation and provide opportunities for children to take a leadership role. Activities such as writing and reciting a chalice lighting in congregational worship, nominating an organization to receive a share of the offertory plate, and hosting a welcoming event for families who join the congregation teach children much about the life of the congregation and help them become comfortable interacting with congregants of all ages. Try to include as many LIAs in the program as your schedule will allow.

Guest Speakers

Several sessions include activities that can be enriched by inclusion of a guest speaker. Mark these sessions on your calendar and plan to recruit guests several weeks ahead. Contact each guest a week before the session to confirm their attendance and remind them what you wish them to present. It is particularly important to remind them of the time allowed for their visit and of the age of participants, which calls for short presentations, with time for questions and answers.

BEFORE YOU START

Rituals

In every session, a ritual associated with the session theme is highlighted. Some of the rituals may be alien to your congregation. If a described ritual is conducted in your congregation in a different way, replace the text with an accurate description. For example, different congregations have different methods for sharing Joys and Concerns. Describe the ritual as children would see it conducted in their own congregation. Some rituals may not be part of your congregational culture at all. In this case, explain to participants that some UU congregations conduct rituals around this theme, but your congregation honors this theme in another ways. Each session's theme is general enough that leaders should be able to find evidence of the theme's existence in their congregation's culture. Be willing to adapt sessions to reflect what is true for your congregation.

Some rituals are scheduled to happen during set times in the liturgical year, such as flower, water, and bread rituals or child dedications. Consider scheduling Signs sessions that discuss these rituals to coincide with the liturgical calendar. In this way, if the congregation engages in multigenerational worship services, children will learn about them and be able to experience them in the congregation simultaneously. If these rituals have not previously been held during multigenerational services, consider asking the worship team to hold these rituals during times when the Signs group may witness them and even, perhaps, participate in them. In this way, the congregation supports the learnings of the Signs group and witnesses their budding leadership.

Leadership

Signs of Our Faith is also a program on building leadership in children. Consider adding additional opportunities for leadership, whenever possible. One addition could be assigning duties that would rotate amongst participants. See Faith in Action: Sharing Leadership in Session 2 for suggestions. Though Faith in Action activities are not part of the core session plan,

it is highly suggested that you find time within the first few sessions to conduct this activity.

Stoles

The program includes the wearing of ceremonial stoles. In Sessions 4, 8, and 12, children add an emblem to their stoles that symbolizes concepts taught in the previous sessions. The first emblem (Session 4) represents living one's faith to oneself. The second emblem (Session 8) represents living one's faith in relations with others. The third emblem (Session 12) represents living their faith in the congregation. The Leader Resources in these sessions provide a template for the emblems. In Session 16, the conclusion of the program, the children add an iron-on chalice patch to their stoles. It represents living their UU faith out in the world.

Work with the religious educator well before the start of the program to make decisions about the stoles, including:

- Will you purchase stoles or do you have the resources in the congregation to make them?
- Will they be the same color or a variety?
- Where will stoles be safely stored between sessions?
- If stoles become soiled, who is responsible for cleaning them?
- Will you use the designed emblems included with the program, ask an artist in the congregation to design emblems, or invite children to design their own?
- On what material will the emblems be created? How will they be attached to the stoles?

Consider budget as well as congregational resources for design, sewing, and craft skills. There are several options for creating and attaching emblems:

- Let children design their own emblem with fabric paint directly on the stoles. Do a practice run on paper first.
- Outline simple designs to sew on with simple embroidery
- Before each session, use the template to cut out felt emblems. Attach pin backs to the felt with glue. Children attach the emblems to the stole with pins.
- Another option is more involved but could be fun for craft-loving people. Copy the template designs onto inkjet shrink paper or shrink film. Follow the instructions with the paper or watch

this [YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6BPBfTl8yw) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6BPBfTl8yw) that demonstrates how to use the shrink paper. This will create small plastic emblems that can be glued to pin backs and pinned on stoles.

- Another option to involve more members of the congregation in Signs, is to ask artists in the congregation to design emblems. Use these instead of the ones in the program. If they are drawn, follow the shrink paper directions. If you choose an artist who works in a fabric medium, you may be able to make individual emblems by hand and pin them to the stoles.

In Session 16, you will help children add a UUA chalice patch along with the fourth emblem. Purchase the patches from the UUA Bookstore; order extra for children who may join the group during the program. These patches are iron-on.

The sessions suggest children wear stoles for Opening, Closing, and occasional worship-like activities, but leaders may wish to help the group in decide how best to use the stoles.

PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven [Principles](#):

- 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 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 that create and uphold life
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men that 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

RESOURCES

Here are few books that might be useful. The first three are available from the UUA Bookstore.

[Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook](#) by Tracey L. Hurd (Boston: UUA, 2005)

[The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children](#) by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar 2nd Ed. (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003)

[Welcoming Children with Special Needs](#) (PDF file): *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)

Rituals and Patterns in Children's Lives, edited by Kathy Merlock Jackson (Madison, WI: Popular Press, 2005)

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:

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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: SIGNS, SYMBOLS, AND RITUALS

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Ritual is the act of sanctifying action—even ordinary action—so that it has meaning: I can light a candle because I need light or because the candle represents the light I need. — Christina Baldwin, storyteller and author

This first session teaches what we mean when we talk about signs, symbols, and rituals. Children understand the concept of a ritual by reflecting on both secular and religious rituals in their lives. They learn that Unitarian Universalist congregations engage in rituals for events that are universal, such as birth, death, and coming of age, and enact rituals unique to our faith, such as a UU flower ceremony. The children examine why rituals are important to connect us to each other and our faith. And, they explore how signs can represent abstract ideas. This will help them understand the foundational statement of the program: Our behavior every day is a sign of our faith.

Beginning in Session 2, leaders will invite the children to wear stoles during Opening and Closing rituals. Before the next session, obtain a stole for each child in the group plus extra stoles for newcomers and guests.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the program
- Define important terms such as sign, ritual, symbol, and abstract
- Identify signs and rituals in participants' everyday lives
- Identify signs and rituals related to the Unitarian Universalist congregation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand "ritual" by naming the rituals they engage in each day
- Become familiar with terms that will recur throughout the program: sign, ritual, symbol, and abstract

- Through hands-on activities, learn how religious rituals and signs represent abstract ideas.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	15
Activity 1: Rituals In Our Lives	10
Activity 2: Story – Abby's Birthday	10
Activity 3: Symbol Game and Drawing	20
Faith in Action: Attending Worship	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action –	20
Alternate Activity 2: Ritual Charades	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Welcome to the first session of Signs of Our Faith! Thank you for taking the time to journey in faith with children.

Set aside time before each session to engage in the Spiritual Preparation activity, either alone or with your co-leader(s). Consider spiritual preparation as a ritual that can help you center yourself and connect with co-leaders of this program. Design the ritual so it will be meaningful for you. You might conduct it in the session meeting space 15 minutes before the children enter, or find another, quiet space conducive to reflection. You can journal on the reflection questions the night before, and share your thoughts with your co-leader before the session.

Before this first session, think about yourself at ages seven through nine. What kinds of rituals did you experience? Did you have rituals at home, school, a congregation, a club? Did you enjoy the rituals? Were the abstract meanings of rituals clear to you? Did you sometimes want to do things differently, or wish you did not need to do them at all? What role does ritual play in your life now?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Name tags and markers, and (optional) decorations for the name tags
- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle

Preparation for Activity

- Set name tag supplies on work tables.

Description of Activity

Invite children to decorate a name tag to use each time the group meets. Help children get started on their name tags, as needed. While they work, say:

Who knows what a "sign" is? A sign can be a picture or an action that shows an idea. A stop sign shows a driver when to stop their car. A wave of your hand shows you are greeting someone. What other kinds of signs can you think of? [Affirm responses.] Our group is called Signs of Our Faith. It is all about the ways we show that we are Unitarian Universalists.

I have a question for you: Are you UU just on Sundays [or whichever day your group meets]? [Take responses.] You are right: Though we meet at the congregation on Sunday, we are UU all the time—not just on Sunday or just when we are at the congregation. We live our faith every day, in many different ways. In this program, we are going to talk about the signs that we are UU. We will name the ways we show we are Unitarian Universalists in our everyday lives. We will explore ways we mark special occasions as Unitarian Universalists. If you are new to Unitarian Universalism, you will hear many ideas for ways you can grow in your UU faith.

This program will help you build your leadership. You may be young, but you can still be a leader in our congregation, in our faith, and in the world. Leadership means knowing your behavior sets an example to others, and stepping up to be a good example. We will discover UU ways to be leaders.

Have the children put on their name tags and invite them to gather around the chalice. Say:

Lighting our chalice is a sign that we are UUs. It is a UU ritual that you might see in religious education meetings like ours, and in worship.

Did you know that the chalice is the most common symbol of our UU faith?

Light the chalice. Then, explain that everyone will introduce themselves by saying their name and something they like to do at the UU congregation or at any other religious home they may have visited, such as a church, a temple, or a mosque. Start by introducing yourself by the name you want the children to call you and sharing something simple you like in your congregation, such as seeing friends on Sunday morning or hearing the choir. Have the children and co-leader(s) introduce themselves.

After introductions, affirm that there are many different ways we live our UU faith. Say, in these words or your own:

Sometimes, we know that what we are doing is a sign of our faith. An example is lighting a chalice as we just did. Sometimes, we may not be aware. For example, if you see a new child in your class or group, and they do not appear to know anyone else, you might sit next to them, talk to them, and introduce them to your friends. You may not think, "I am doing this because I am Unitarian Universalist," but maybe you are. As UUs we think it is important to be welcoming. Acting with kindness toward the new child could be a sign of your faith.

ACTIVITY 1: RITUALS IN OUR LIVES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Sticky stars in a variety of colors

Preparation for Activity

- Write on newsprint, and post: A ritual is an action that is repeated. A ritual is always done in the same way.
- Title three sheets of newsprint "School," "Holidays," and "Home," and set them aside.

Description of Activity

Participants identify rituals in their lives and discover how secular and religious rituals differ.

Say, in your own words:

Some signs of our UU faith are our UU rituals. A ritual is an action that is repeated and always done in the same way. [Indicate the definition on

newsprint.] Rituals can be in our congregation, or they can be actions we repeat at home or at school or anyplace we regularly go. Our lives are full of rituals. Some rituals have a lot of meaning, and some are just actions we repeat. Some rituals are such a part of our everyday life that we do not realize they are rituals. Let's see if we can name some rituals.

Post the newsprint sheets titled "School," "Home," and "Holidays" where children will be able to reach them. Lead the group to suggest rituals for each list. Remind children of the definition of a ritual, as needed. Use these prompts:

- At school, is there a ritual for when a class walks in the hallway?
- At home, what is a ritual related to leaving your house in the morning?
- Whose family has a special ritual for your birthday?

It is fine if one child suggests a ritual that others do not know. The important thing is to agree that the action is indeed a ritual, according to the definition provided. Make sure the process is respectful and that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

Call attention to the "School" list. Ask:

- Do you have the same classroom rituals every year, with every teacher?

Say that at school, rituals often change from year to year. There may be a new teacher, new children in the class, a different room, and a new schedule. When a group changes, sometimes the rituals change, too. This is because the group is not exactly the same. It has a new identity and so it may have new rituals.

Point out that when a group has been together for a while, everybody in the group knows the ritual. Sometimes the people in a group have created a ritual themselves, and someone who is new would not have a way of knowing it. Ask:

- What do you do about rituals when a new person joins the group?

Give everyone three sticky stars and ask them to place stars on the newsprint sheets next to their favorite rituals. Notice that everyone likes different rituals. Say that, throughout the program, we will see that we also differ in how we like to live out the signs of our faith.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — ABBY'S BIRTHDAY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Abby's Birthday](#)" (included in this document) "
- Leader Resource 1, [Illustration - Abby's Birthday Party](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to tell or read the story to the group using the illustration of Abby's birthday party (Leader Resource 1).
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Participants respond to a story that presents many different types of signs and rituals.

Invite participants to listen to a story. Remind the group that one definition of a ritual is an action that is repeated and always done in the same way. Ask participants to raise their hand or otherwise indicate whenever the story talks about someone performing a ritual.

Tell or read the story.

Process the story with these questions:

- What were some rituals in the story?
- Were there any rituals in the story that you have done yourself? [For example, saying "Good morning," singing "Happy Birthday," blowing out candles, giving cards and gifts, lighting a chalice.]
- What do the candles on the birthday cake represent?
- Why did Kamal and Sherry light a chalice when they got home? Was it because it was dark and they needed light, or was there another reason?

Tell the group that some rituals are actions that hold special meanings.

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening to a story or can focus better with sensory stimulation. Remind children where the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. (For a full description and guidance, see Leader Resource 2.)

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 3: SYMBOL GAME AND DRAWING (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, [Symbols](#) (included in this document)
- Drawing paper and crayons, markers, or color pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Download Leader Resource 3, Symbols. If you wish, add symbols from your own files. Print each image large enough for all children to see when you hold it up.

Description of Activity

Participants talk about symbols and their meanings, and draw a symbol to represent themselves. Learning how symbols work helps children understand how religious rituals represent abstract ideas.

Tell the children you want to talk about symbols. Say that a symbol is something you see or touch that represents an idea that cannot be seen or touched. Say that you have examples to demonstrate what you mean.

Hold up the picture of an American flag. After participants identify it, ask the group what the flag is a symbol for. What does it represent? Is it just a piece of cloth? If no one says the flag represents the whole United States of America, give this answer. Say, "You cannot see or touch our whole country, but you can see or touch the American flag."

Next, hold up the peace symbol. Follow the same steps to solicit that it symbolizes "peace." Ask if you can touch peace or see it, as you can see or touch the peace symbol. Hold up the dove. Make sure children identify it as a dove and not just a bird. Solicit responses to what it symbolizes—"peace." Say there can be more than one symbol of the same idea.

Continue with as many symbols as time allows.

Say, in your own words:

Symbols are tangible. They are items you can touch and see. They make us think of ideas we cannot touch or see, and we call those ideas "abstract." Some rituals are like that too. Singing "Happy Birthday" makes us think of the idea of someone's special day. But lots of rituals are not symbols. Brushing your teeth every day is a ritual that cleans your teeth. It doesn't stand for something else. Buckling your seatbelt every time you get in the car is a ritual. Why do you buckle your seatbelt? Right, to keep you safe. It is not a symbol of something that you can't see or touch. Can you remember some of the everyday rituals in the story about Kamal and Abby's birthday? What did Kamal and his mom do before Abby's birthday party? [Remind the children that the story included buckling the seatbelt, and a morning cup of coffee.]

Now let's think about rituals that have more meaning. Rituals like singing "Happy Birthday," show ideas that are too big to touch or see. For example, some people who celebrate Christmas have a ritual of giving presents. What is the meaning of that ritual? Why do some people give Christmas presents? [Take and affirm responses. One answer is that it symbolizes the presents given to the baby Jesus. A participant might say the present is given to show love and that is a good answer, too.] In the story, Kamal gave Abby a gift and a card that she could touch and see, to show his friendship. The gift and card are symbols of friendship.

When we talk about rituals in our Signs group, we will mostly be talking about the kind of rituals that are symbols for something special.

Now invite the children to create an image that symbolizes them. Distribute drawing paper and markers/crayons. Say, in these words or your own:

What would a symbol that represents you look like? A symbol of you is NOT a picture of you. It might be a picture of something very special to you. A soccer ball? A violin? Ballet shoes?

Invite participants to share their symbols with the group.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Download the Taking It Home section, adapt it for your session, print it, and copy for all participants. Optional: Prepare to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after the session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.
- Set the chalice on a centering table.

Description of Activity

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive these fun activities to share with their family or friends. Read a sample of the activities aloud.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice. Indicate the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint and invite participants to read them together.

We end as we began—together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Extinguish the chalice together.

FAITH IN ACTION: ATTENDING WORSHIP

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Worship Rituals at My Congregation](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain your congregation's worship calendar. Then, consult the families of children in the group to determine two or three dates that most of the children could attend worship. Let them know the children will sit together, as a group. If the group is large, recruit other adults to sit with you. You might suggest that the children's families also sit together.
- Consult with the minister, religious educator, and worship committee. Review the topics for the possible dates of attendance and determine which one is the best fit.
- Contact families with the chosen date. Send a reminder three days before the service. Ask parents and caregivers to bring children to your RE room 15 minutes before the service for a short meeting and to go to the worship space together. Reserve seats for the children ahead

of time, if worship leaders agree it is appropriate to do so.

- Adapt Handout 1, Worship Rituals at My Congregation, so it will work for your congregational worship. Copy for all participants.

Description of Activity

Children observe a worship service.

Tell the children they will observe a worship service to identify rituals.

Coordinate plans for the group's attendance at worship with the children's families and the congregation's worship leaders.

On the day of the service, gather the children 15 minutes beforehand. Brief the children on appropriate behavior in worship. Provide Handout 1, Worship Rituals at My Congregation and crayons or pencils. Ask families or other adults who will sit with the group to be ready to help children fill out the handout quietly during the service or immediately afterward. Suggest the adults use the printed Order of Service to help children remember what they observed.

Discuss the handouts with the group with questions such as:

- What rituals did you see?
- What makes it a ritual?
- What do you think the purpose of that ritual is?
- What signs or symbols did you see? What do they stand for?

The purpose of the discussion is to make sure the children have a meaningful understanding of the concepts of signs and rituals. Accept all responses.

When you conclude the discussion, you may wish to collect the completed handouts, so children will have them handy when the Signs group talks about worship in future sessions.

Including All Participants

If the group includes children who have difficulty sitting through a worship service in the sanctuary, consider using an alternate space (such as a Crying Room), or plan to take the children out before the sermon.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What lessons have we learned, for next time? How did the group interact? Were session themes communicated clearly? Did co-

leaders allow adequate time for our own spiritual preparation?

Look over the next session and assign preparation duties as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

*Ritual is the act of sanctifying action—even ordinary action—so that it has meaning: I can light a candle because I need light or because the candle represents the light I need. —
Christina Baldwin, storyteller and author*

IN TODAY'S SESSION... children learned to recognize signs, symbols, and rituals inside and outside our congregation that show we live our Unitarian Universalist faith. This session provided a working vocabulary that children will use to explore a variety of signs of our faith in the sessions to come. We talked about how some rituals, especially religious rituals, are symbols for abstractions—ideas that cannot be touched or seen in their entirety. For example, singing "Happy Birthday" is a symbol for the honor and attention we give someone on their special day. In future sessions, children will be offered their own stole to wear during the Opening and Closing rituals of our sessions, as a symbol that each child is a UU worship leader.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... your favorite family rituals. What do we like about them? Where did they come from?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. As a family, talk about the activities you most like to do together. Could one of these activities become a ritual? For example, if you all enjoy bowling, could you all go bowling on your birthday every year? Another idea, make Friday or Saturday night Family Fun Night and each member takes a turn each week to choose a game or activity for all to share.

Family Discovery. What rituals does your family have? Are any religious? Are any specifically Unitarian Universalist? If you always collect some water from your summertime travels to share at your congregation's Water Communion, that is a UU ritual. Did any member of your family grow up in a non-UU religious tradition? Ask them about religious rituals they recall. Are any of them similar to UU rituals? Do they symbolize similar ideas?

Family Ritual. Does your family gather regularly on vacation or for a holiday meal? Make a group photograph a ritual. Take turns as the photographer so everyone will be seen in the photos. Keep a record of these special times with a special photo album. Purchase an album with a plain cover you can decorate, or make an album out of poster board and yarn. Ask

every family member to contribute to the cover decoration. [The Book of New Family Traditions](http://www.amazon.com/Book-Family-Traditions-Revised-Updated/dp/0762443189/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1354208662&sr=1-1&keywords=the+book+of+new+family+traditions) (at www.amazon.com/Book-Family-Traditions-Revised-Updated/dp/0762443189/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1354208662&sr=1-1&keywords=the+book+of+new+family+traditions) by Meg Cox, a member of the UU Congregation of Princeton (New Jersey), offers many more family rituals to consider.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – TOUR OF THE BUILDING (20 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Schedule a short tour for a time other than during worship services.
- If are less familiar with the space than you would like, ask the minister, religious educator, or another informed lay leader to conduct the tour.

Description of Activity

Participants become more familiar with the congregational facilities by taking a guided tour.

Tell the group that as leaders it is important that they are familiar with and comfortable in their surroundings—so, the group will take a tour of the building and grounds.

Make sure the tour includes unglamorous spaces, such as closets and offices. Expect children to tell you they are already familiar with some spaces; ask them to look with new eyes. Invite them to point out places where they know rituals happen. Point out places where rituals are held, such as a pulpit (worship rituals). Point out the chalice (rituals: chalice lightings and extinguishes), the pews or chairs in the sanctuary (rituals: hymn singing, responsive readings), the front door or narthex (rituals: welcoming and greeting), memorial garden or cemetery (rituals: memorial service) and other spaces. At each space, invite children to share about experiences they have had there. After the tour, ask children what they learned that was new.

Communicate that this is space is theirs, as well as the adults'.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: RITUAL CHARADES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Index cards

Preparation for Activity

- Write on newsprint, and post: A ritual is an action that is repeated. A ritual is always done in the same way.
- Write descriptions of rituals from home, congregational, or school life that children will easily recognize, using an index card for each ritual. Examples: Reading a story at bedtime, saying a blessing before a meal, walking the dog, choosing teams for kickball, brushing your teeth, lighting a chalice, hearing the Story for All Ages during worship, saying the Pledge of Allegiance, trick-or-treating at Halloween, and hunting for Easter eggs.
- Decide how you will form teams to play Charades.

Description of Activity

Form teams. Explain that a team will act out a ritual without talking and other participants will try to guess what the ritual. Offer a hint: The rituals could be actions from home, from school, or from our congregation. Give each team two or more ritual index cards. Have teams take turns acting them out.

Including All Participants

Children this age vary widely in reading ability. Be prepared to help, as needed.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 1: STORY – ABBY'S BIRTHDAY

Kamal was excited. His best friend Abby's birthday was today. In the kitchen, Kamal found his mother, Sherry, drinking her morning cup of coffee out of the mug he had given her for Mother's Day. He said, "Good morning, Mom. Are you ready to go shopping for Abby's birthday card?"

Kamal's mother got behind the wheel. Kamal jumped in the back and buckled his seatbelt. He watched his mother look behind her to make sure the road was clear before she backed the car out of the driveway.

Kamal watched the road. Every time he saw a Volkswagen Beetle, he yelled, "Punch buggy!" His mom tried to say it before he did.

At the store, Kamal was amazed at the long rows of cards. There were anniversary cards, sympathy cards, holiday cards, thank you cards, and even cards from one pet to another. Kamal looked through the birthday cards until he found one he thought would make Abby laugh.

Sherry asked, "Should we buy a present for Abby?"

Kamal answered, "No. I made Abby a present."

Sherry said that was thoughtful. This made Kamal feel good.

That afternoon, Kamal and Sherry walked to Abby's house for the birthday party. The house was decorated with balloons and crepe paper streamers. First, the children played games while the parents talked. Then everyone gathered around the table and sang "Happy Birthday" to Abby. She made a wish and blew out the eight candles on her cake.

Abby had said that presents were optional because being at her party was present enough, but some kids brought presents anyway, including Kamal. His gift was wrapped in the comics from Sunday's newspaper. Abby unwrapped it and smiled. Kamal had made a photo frame and inserted two school pictures, side-by-side. One was of him and the other was of Abby.

"Side-by-side," said Abby. "That's the way we'll always be!" She thanked Kamal and gave him a hug. That made Kamal feel good.

That night, at dinner, Kamal and his mother lit the chalice that sits in the middle of their kitchen table. As always, their nightly ritual included Sherry saying, "This is the end of another day that we were blessed to share together. What was your favorite part of today, Kamal?"

"Making Abby happy!" Kamal said.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 1:

HANDOUT 1: WORSHIP RITUALS AT MY CONGREGATION

Draw or write. What rituals do you notice during these parts of the worship service?

GREETING:

BEFORE WORSHIP STARTS:

OPENING THE WORSHIP SERVICE:

SINGING AND MUSIC:

GIVING MONEY TO THE CONGREGATION:

CLOSING THE WORSHIP SERVICE:

AFTER WORSHIP ENDS.

WORDS SAID MORE THAN ONE TIME:

Other rituals I observed:

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 1: ILLUSTRATION - ABBY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

Illustration by Ginger Wyatt.

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/karma_gift.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/karma_gift.pdf) for printing.



SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 1:

LEADER RESOURCE 2: FIDGET OBJECTS

The idea for a basket of "fidget objects" to provide children during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader, and advocate for children with special needs.

A basket of fidget objects is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, modeling clay, and other objects that can be quietly manipulated.

Introduce the fidget object basket to the group by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the fidget object basket available for the duration of the session, or bring it out only during activities, such as hearing a story, which require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 3: SYMBOLS

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/symbols.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/symbols.pdf) for printing.

Symbol 1: Flag and Dove

Symbol 2: Fair Trade and Recycle

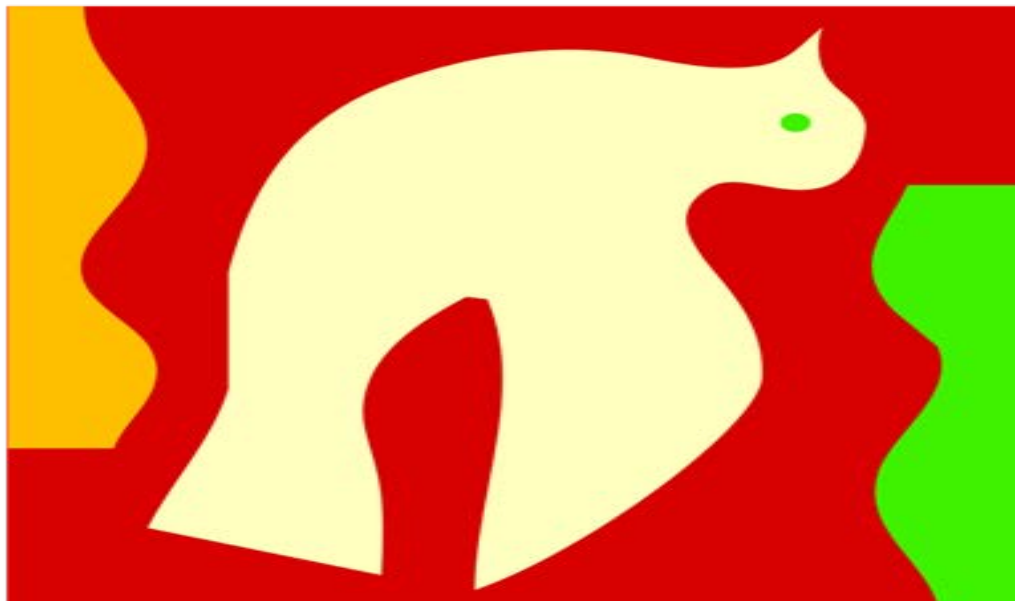
Symbol 3: Library and Peace

Symbol 4: School Crossing

Flag

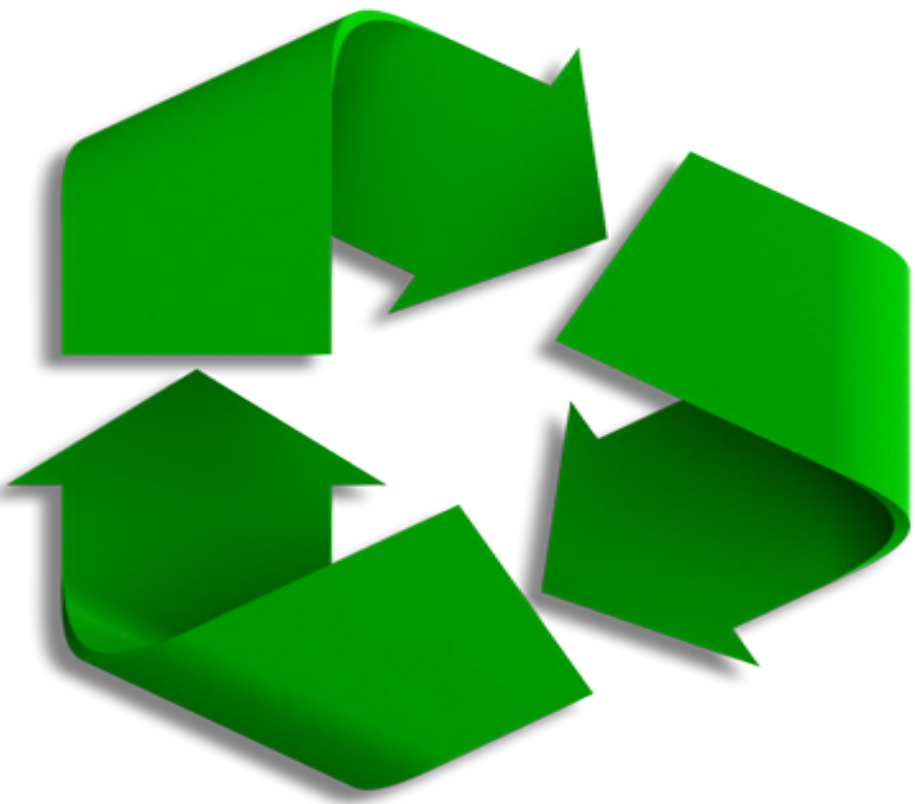


Peace (dove)





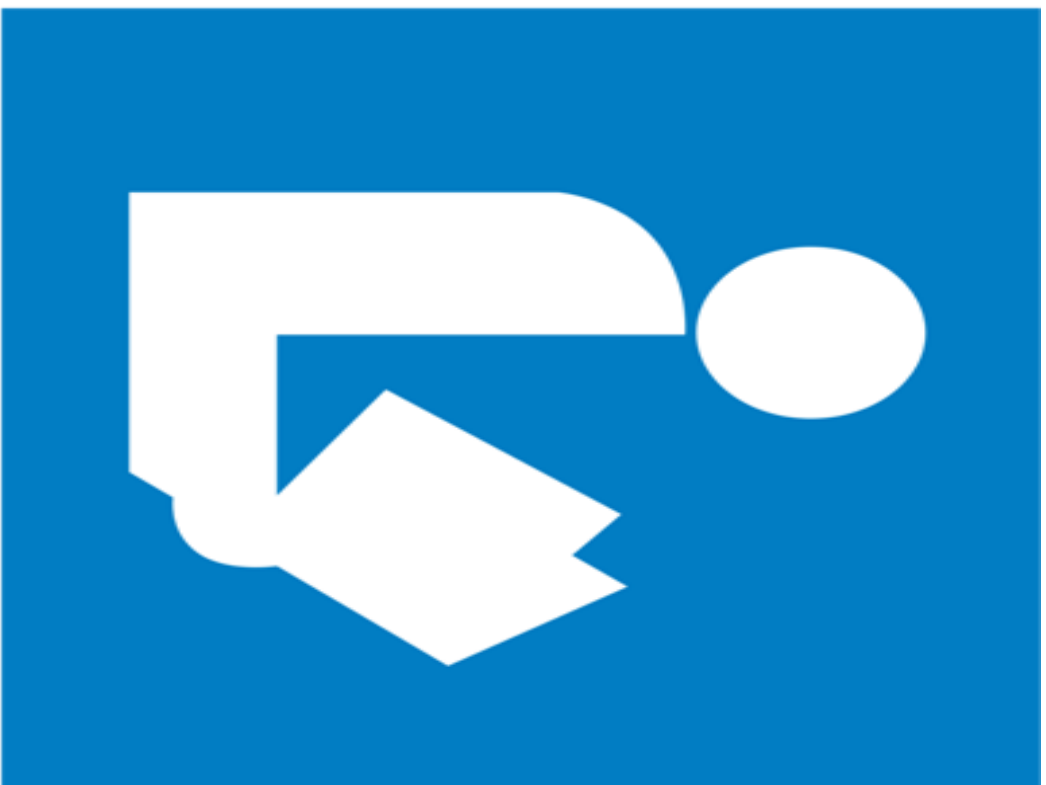
Fair Trade



Recycle



Peace symbol



Library



School crossing

FIND OUT MORE

Rituals and Patterns in Children's Lives, edited by Kathy Merlock Jackson (Madison, WI: Popular Press 3, 2005), is a book of essays on the evolution of modern rituals and their significance for individuals and families.

[The Book of New Family Traditions](http://www.amazon.com/Book-Family-Traditions-Revised-Updated/dp/0762443189/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1354208662&sr=1-1&keywords=the+book+of+new+family+traditions) (at www.amazon.com/Book-Family-Traditions-Revised-Updated/dp/0762443189/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1354208662&sr=1-1&keywords=the+book+of+new+family+traditions) by Meg Cox, a member of the UU Congregation of Princeton (New Jersey), offers more family rituals to consider.

SESSION 2: WE LEAD

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Our leadership is just ourselves. — Claudette Colvin, civil rights activist

A community is like a ship: everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm. — Henrik Ibsen, playwright

This session sets a stage and expectations for children to grow in Unitarian Universalist leadership. Participants share what they already know about leadership. They discover ways they can become faithful leaders in Unitarian Universalism and in other communities to which they belong.

The Faith in Action activity introduces a chart of revolving, shared leadership duties to use throughout the program. It is highly suggested that you include this Faith in Action in this or another early session.

This session also introduces the stoles children will wear, beginning with this session, to symbolize that they are a Unitarian Universalist worship leader. See the Program Introduction, Before You Start, for guidance on obtaining, decorating, and working with the stoles.

GOALS

This session will:

- Show that accepting leadership can be a sign of our faith
- Propose that everyone can be a leader in their own way
- Name qualities of a good leader
- Introduce stoles as a symbol of participants' accepting a leadership role.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand leadership as a sign of Unitarian Universalist faith
- Recognize a variety of signs of leadership, and understand there are many different ways to be a leader

- Become familiar with congregational leaders and opportunities for leadership in the congregation
- See themselves as leaders
- Accept a stole as a sign of their own developing leadership in the context of this program.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	3
Activity 1: Follow the Leader	10
Activity 2: Leadership	15
Activity 3: Story — Belling the Cat	15
Activity 4: Receiving Stoles	15
Faith in Action: Sharing Leadership	20
Closing	2
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Appreciating Congregational Leaders	
Alternate Activity 2: Leadership in Action — Leadership Skit	
Alternate Activity 3: Game — Belling the Cat	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Who are the leaders that have helped shape your notions about leadership? Have you intentionally developed some of their characteristics? What do you think they were faithful to in their leadership? Some of our most famous models of leaders have been religious women and men. Other leaders might have been faithful to science, the gaining of knowledge, building a just world, or the future of all people. How has the faithful leadership of others affected your life?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle. Write the Opening words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice, and recite together:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together to learn, together to share faithful leadership, together to celebrate the traditions of our faith.

ACTIVITY 1: FOLLOW THE LEADER (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have enough space to play. If you wish to play outside and weather is a factor, give parents advance notice.

Description of Activity

Play Follow the Leader. Have one co-leader be a poor leader. Poor leading might include moving too slowly or too quickly or making movements that are hard to follow. For example, a tall leader might reach a height the children cannot.

Every participant who wishes to lead should get a turn.

After the game, process with these questions:

- Have you played this game before or something like it? Do you like it? Why or why not?
- Do you like to be the leader? Why?

- Why do we take turns being the leader?
- Was [the co-leader] a good leader in this game? Why or why not? What was not good about their leading?
- What makes a good leader in this game?

Say:

Today we will talk about how leadership can be a sign of our faith.

Including All Participants

Make sure the game stays accessible. If a leader does a movement that any participant cannot safely follow, suggest a different movement.

ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Poster board and glue

Preparation for Activity

- Make a poster of congregational leaders: Collect and cut out photos of five to ten congregational leaders, and tape them to poster board. Make sure you know each person's name and leadership role(s). Seek diversity in ethnicity/race, age, gender, sexual orientation, and type of leadership (i.e., board members, musical leaders, building and grounds committee chair, nursery volunteers, ushers). Include staff. Make sure you include a youth, such as one who helps in the RE program.
- If any congregants helped the group by making the stoles the children will receive today, collect their photo and leave space for them on the poster, but do not yet post them (unless they are posted for another leadership activity). You will post them in Activity 4.
- On newsprint, draw a large outline of a genderless, generic person. Set the newsprint aside.

Description of Activity

Children brainstorm qualities of a good leader.

Part One

Say, in your own words:

When we played Follow the Leader, we took turns being the leader. Unitarian Universalists think it is important that everyone gets a turn at being the leader. Why? [Affirm that it is important because it is more fair, because no one person should have to assume all the responsibility, and because different people bring different talents and skills and different ways of being a leader.]

Because we believe in shared leadership, taking a turn at being a leader is a sign of our faith. Our congregation has many people who provide leadership and service. Here are some of them.

Show the group the poster of congregational leaders. Help the children identify the leaders and what they do in the congregation that is leadership.

Part Two

Ask: "Can children be leaders, too? Invite volunteers to tell about their leadership at home, at school, at the congregation, or in the community. They might be scout leaders. Their classroom at school might designate daily or weekly leaders who help the teacher, collect papers, or lead lines. They might have helped lead a food drive at the congregation, been the lead in a holiday pageant, or sang a solo in the choir. Ask if any are role models for younger siblings or family friends.

Part Three

Post the newsprint of the human outline. Invite children to think of their experiences in leading, other leaders they know, and think about playing Follow the Leader. What qualities make a good leader? If you wish, invite them to consider movies or stories they know that feature a good leader. What qualities does that character have?

Invite children to be quiet for one minute to think.

Then invite them to share "popcorn style," popping up as they name a quality for you to write inside the human figure. Alternately, if any participants wish to, they may write the qualities on newsprint themselves. Tell them not to worry about spelling, but if they have spelling questions, they can ask you and co-leaders.

Read the qualities aloud. Make sure the list includes:

Leaders listen to everyone.

Leaders are fair.

Leaders also know how to follow at times, and to take turns. Add other qualities you think are missing.

Post the newsprint where you can refer to it throughout this session and in future sessions.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — BELLING THE CAT (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Belling the Cat](#)" (included in this document) "
- Optional: Props such as paper doll or puppet mice and cat, and a bell
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story (Option 1) and the play (Option 2) provided with the story "Belling the Cat." Decide if you will read or tell the story, or engage children to act out the play. Note: Only use the play if you are sure the group includes five children who will be comfortable reading from a script. Adapt the story and print out the pages you need. Or, for the play, print six copies—one for you, and five for actors. Optional: Enlarge text to make scripts easy to read, and highlight one character's spoken lines on each copy.
- Optional: Use props to tell the story.
- Optional: Plan to invite children to retell the story using props after the discussion, if you think time will allow.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Children respond to a fable about failed leadership.

Read or tell the story.

Process the story with as many of these questions as time allows:

- All four mice posed solutions to the problem. Why did some of the solutions not work?
- Did the mouse who suggested belling the cat show good leadership skills? Why or why not? Affirm that having good ideas as a leader is not enough: Ideas need to be realistic and someone needs to carry them out—that person is a

leader, too, even if the original idea was not theirs.

- Can you think of a solution to the mice's problem? Is there a way they could work together to keep safe from the cat? If time permits, invite participants to role-play solutions.
- Have you ever had to work together with a group of people to solve a problem? What was that like? Were there leaders in the group? What did they do that showed leadership?

Tell the group that every time the Signs of Our Faith group meets, children will discover more ways they can be good leaders: in their family, at school, among their friends, in their congregation, and with sports teams or music groups and other communities to which they belong.

Point out the newsprint with the human figure filled with leadership qualities. Read the qualities aloud again. Say that participants might already hold some of these qualities. Other qualities might be ones they want to develop. Say:

In our Signs of Our Faith group, we will support each other as we each find our own, individual ways to be leaders. Sometimes, the entire group will be leaders together. Everyone will get opportunities to practice leadership skills: not just at the congregation, but in their everyday life. Taking It Home has suggestions for ways to practice faithful leadership at home, school, at play, with friends, and in the world at large.

Variation

After the discussion, if you have time, invite children to act out "Belling the Cat" as a skit. Choose actors, assign parts and let the cast rehearse away from the group for several minutes.

Including All Participants

Support beginning readers who wish to be actors in the play.

If you are telling the story, you may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 4: RECEIVING STOLES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Stoles, one for every participant
- Arts and crafts materials for children to initial their stoles
- Chalice patches, one for every participant

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain or make stoles, and order or make chalice patches. You can order the [patches](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=735) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=735) from the UUA Bookstore. See the Before You Start section of the program Introduction for more information.
- Decide how the children will initial their stoles—for example, fabric paint, glitter glue, embroidery floss and needles, or cut-out felt letters and fabric glue or a glue gun (for adults to use)—and where on the stole the initials will be; you may prefer that they be visible, you may prefer the initials hidden on the inside or hem of the stoles. See suggestions in the Before You Start section of the program Introduction. You might want to practice on a fabric swatch before applying paint or glue.
- Obtain and set out materials for children to use to initial their stoles.
- Decide how to use the stoles today and in future sessions, and where to store the stoles between sessions. One decision important to this activity is when children will wear their stoles—for example, during the Opening and Closing of every session. Be ready to explain your plan to the children.

Description of Activity

Children make a commitment to be the best congregational leader they can be and receive stoles as a sign of their leadership.

Remind the children that Unitarian Universalists believe in sharing leadership. Say:

We will continue to share leadership when we are together, and you will keep learning ways to share leadership here in our UU congregation and in your everyday life. We have a stole to give each of you. It is a symbol that you are a leader.

Distribute the stoles. If someone from the congregation made the stoles, tell the group and add that person's photos to the poster you introduced in Activity 2.

Tell the group that stoles have been a symbol of religious leadership for a long time. Ask if anyone has seen others in the congregation wearing stoles. If you have examples, provide them.

Indicate the newsprint that shows qualities of a leader, and tell children that when they are wearing their stole, they should practice these qualities because the congregation will look to them for leadership. Say that you know they will take the responsibility seriously.

Let them know that people wear stoles when taking part in rituals and that is how this group will wear them, too. Tell them when, during the sessions, they will wear the stoles. Also let them know that they will wear stoles when they participate in rituals with the wider congregation. Tell the children anything they need to know about taking care of the stoles, including where they will be kept.

Today they will initial their stoles. In some future sessions, they will add decoration and, at the final meeting, they will add a chalice patch to their stoles. That patch will be a symbol of the work they have done together in the Signs of Our Faith group. Show the children a chalice patch.

Help the children apply their initials to their stoles.

CLOSING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together. Have them store their stoles in the place you have designated. Stoles should stay at the congregation and not go home with children.

FAITH IN ACTION: SHARING LEADERSHIP

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A roster of the group participants
- Optional: Poster board and markers
- Optional: Stickers

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use a simple group roster to keep track of participants' leadership roles, or make and display a poster. You might keep track by adding check marks or stars to a child's name on the roster. If you will make a poster, obtain materials you will need.
- Decide how you will: keep track of who leads, remind children about their assigned duties in upcoming sessions, provide make-up time for a child who is absent when they were scheduled to lead, and thank the leaders. Leaders could be thanked by a simple thank you during each Closing, or co-leaders could send out thank you cards. Make reasonable plans that will not cause co-leaders much additional work.
- Post blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Children adopt shared leadership as a practice for future sessions.

On blank newsprint, brainstorm a list of duties for the time the Signs group is together. This can include lighting the chalice, writing down chalice lighting words or posting the newsprint where they are already written, helping serve a snack, and helping clean up after activities. Engage the children to help you set up a schedule so leadership can be rotated.

Remind the group that following through is an important part of being a leader—a lesson from the story, "Belling the Cat."

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Evaluate the effectiveness of today's activities, especially the conversation on leadership and the stole activity. Do children understand the importance of the stole? Do they understand it is a sign that they are leaders? Do you have a good plan in place for using and storing stoles? How did all participants react to the concept of shared leadership? Who do you think will need to step back? Who will need to step forward? How will you and your co-leaders help children recognize and live into their own, distinct leadership abilities?

Assign preparation needed for the next session.

TAKING IT HOME

Our leadership is just ourself. — Claudette Colvin, civil rights activist

A community is like a ship: everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm. — Henrik Ibsen, playwright

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we said that, as Unitarian Universalists, we provide leadership and service to our congregation and other communities to which we belong. We talked about different ways to provide leadership and the qualities of a good leader.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... ways family members provide leadership at your congregation. How have they served in the past? How are they serving now? How would they like to serve in the future? Consider roles, and potential roles, for all ages.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Chores are an opportunity to share leadership of your family. Do some of chores allow the person who does them to make a unique contribution to the life of your family? You can try this in groups other than your family, too. If you think sharing leadership is important, volunteer to do something you normally do not do. Gather equipment at the end of a sports practice. Help fold laundry at home. Ask for instructions, if needed, to perform the service well. Let the people around you know that you think shared leadership is important and you are doing your part. After all, as the quote says, "Leadership is just ourself."

Family Game. The [Laughter Yoga Institute](http://www.lyinstitute.org) (at www.lyinstitute.org) website includes fun [variations for the game Follow the Leader](#). (at

lyinstitute.org/resources/) Play with your family and friends.

Family Discovery. Play Leadership Mix-Up. Let family members change leadership roles. Perhaps the children should make out the grocery list and parents should feed the pets. Invite each person to see how well they can perform services normally done by someone else. Perhaps you will discover new talents.

Family Ritual. Start a leadership check-in. One way is to start or end a weekly dinner by putting out a bowl of grapes. Everyone should share a way they have provided leadership to a community (congregation, school, scouts, dance class, sports team, or other groups) and take a grape. You can substitute other items for grapes, such as little candies, stickers, or pennies.

Family Adventure. Watch the Disney movie, "Finding Nemo," in which creatures of all ages and species have chances to lead—some well, some not so well. What does it have to say about leadership. Is "Just keep swimming?" a mantra leaders might use? What other movies are about leadership? Watch this [cartoon](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZfSdhwqPqw&feature=related) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZfSdhwqPqw&feature=related) about leadership and forgiveness. Who shows good leadership? Is apologizing when you are wrong a good trait for a leader?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – APPRECIATING CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS

Description of Activity

Children show congregational leaders their appreciation. Leadership in Action activities invite children to take the lead in an activity that engages with the congregation and begin to see themselves as leaders of their faith.

Ask the group if they have ever shown a leader appreciation. The leader might have been a teacher, a coach, or scout leader. How did they show appreciation: a gift, a certificate, a thank-you, or a hug?

Appreciating people who provide the service of leadership in your congregation is a way to show that you are a leader, too. Leaders are people who make a special effort to lift up caring, service, and gratitude for the whole group to appreciate.

Brainstorm ways the group could thank congregational leaders. They might bake cookies, create thank-you cards, or add special stickers to the leaders' name tags. Make plans. Notify families, if their help is needed, and the leaders whom you wish to appreciate.

Afterward, ask the children:

- How did you feel, thanking our congregational leaders?
- Have you ever been thanked for demonstrating leadership? Share the story with the group.
- Is there anyone in your life, perhaps someone who gave you good advice or someone who is a good role model, who you need to thank for the leadership they have shown to you? How and when will you thank them? When you make a special effort to show your appreciation, that's a sign that you are a leader, too.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — LEADERSHIP SKIT

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Belling the Cat](#)" (included in this document) "
- Costumes and props

Preparation for Activity

- Print the story "Belling the Cat." Make the copies you need to help children learn their roles in the play.
- Arrange for children to perform "Belling the Cat" for the congregation. Appropriate times can include canvass, RE teacher recruitment, the launch of an adult leadership training program such as [Harvest the Power](#) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/harvest/index.shtml), or any time the congregation seeks new leaders.

Description of Activity

Children present "Belling the Cat" to the congregation.

Gauge children's interest in performing the play for the congregation. Adapt the script to include more roles to feature more children, if needed.

Leadership in Action activities invite children to take the lead in an activity that engages with the congregation. Through these activities, young people will start to see themselves as leaders of their faith.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: GAME — BELLING THE CAT (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chairs

- A small bell

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange the meeting space as described below, making sure the game will be accessible for all participants.

Description of Activity

Children play a derivation of Doggie, Doggie, Who's Got the Bone with a cat and bell instead of a dog and bone.

Choose a volunteer to be the cat. The cat sits in a chair, isolated from the group, with their back to the group and eyes closed. A volunteer from the group, (the mouse) is silently picked to sneak up and place a bell beneath the chair of the cat. After they sit back down with the group, everyone sings: "Cat, cat, you've got a bell. Who put it there? Can you tell?" Give the cat one chance to guess the identity of the mouse (or two or three chances, depending on the size of your group).

Give everyone who wishes a turn at being the cat. Let participants take turns choosing the mouse.

Variation

To make the game harder, allow the cat to turn around while the bell is being placed and try to catch the mouse before the mouse returns to its seat.

Including All Participants

Do not play the game if you are not able to make it accessible to all participants.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 2: STORY: BELLING THE CAT

Adapted from an Aesop fable.

OPTION 1 — Story

Once there was a family of mice living on a farm. They had a pleasant life and all the food they could eat.

Then, one day, the farmer brought a cat to live on the farm. The cat was very good at one thing: chasing mice! The cat could move so quietly, the mice did not know it was there until it pounced on them. The mice became desperate. They were afraid to venture out into the grain because of the cat and they were hungry.

The mice held a meeting. They decide they could not stop the cat, but it would be good to at least know when she was approaching. This would give them enough time to run and hide. Many mice offered suggestions, but none that everyone thought good enough. Then, a mouse said, "I have listened to all your suggestions, but they are no good. I know what to do. This will be successful. We must hang a bell around the cat's neck. When the cat is on the move, we will hear the bell and can run to safety."

The mice became excited. This was indeed a very good idea. In the midst of their excitement, the wisest mouse spoke, "It is indeed a good idea. But tell me: who will bell the cat?"

All the mice became silent.

OPTION 2 — Play

Cast:

Cat

Mouse One

Mouse Two

Mouse Three

Mouse Four

Scene One

The four mice run and play in the fields, stopping to eat grain now and then.

Cat sneaks up on the mice and chases them away.

Scene Two

The four mice huddle together. They are hiding from Cat. Cat prowls around outside where the mice hide.

MOUSE ONE: We have had a good life here on the farm.

MOUSE TWO: We would eat and play and sleep in the lovely field all day.

MOUSE THREE: Now, the farmer has a cat.

CAT: Meow!!

MOUSE FOUR: The cat sneaks up on us all the time.

ALL MICE TOGETHER: This is bad!

MOUSE ONE: We must think of a way to protect ourselves from the cat.

ALL MICE THINK.

MOUSE TWO: Perhaps we should ask the farmer to take the cat away?

MOUSE ONE, THREE, and FOUR: No, no. Fine idea, but it will never work!

CAT: Meow! Meow!

MOUSE THREE: Perhaps we should give the cat some cheese. It will know we want to be friends and will leave us alone.

MOUSE ONE, MOUSE TWO and MOUSE FOUR: No, no. Fine idea, but it will never work!

CAT: Meow! Meow! MEOWWWWWWW!

MOUSE ONE: I do not think we can stop the cat from chasing us. If only we knew when it was coming so we could quickly hide.

MOUSE FOUR: I know! I have the best idea. Your ideas would not work, but mine will! We could put a bell around the cat's neck. Then, it could not sneak up on us because we would hear the bell as it approaches.

MOUSE TWO and MOUSE THREE: Great idea! Hurrah! Hurrah!

MOUSE ONE: A fine idea, but who volunteers to put the bell on the cat?

ALL MICE LOOK SCARED, STAY SILENT, AND HANG THEIR HEADS.

CAT (pouncing on mice): MEOWWWWWWW!!!

THE END

FIND OUT MORE

On the Buzzle website, read an article by management guru Peter Drucker on [Qualities of Leadership in Children](http://www.buzzle.com/articles/qualities-of-leadership-in-children.html). (at www.buzzle.com/articles/qualities-of-leadership-in-children.html) The article encourages adults to motivate children to develop leadership qualities.

[This short article](http://www.interpretermagazine.org/interior.asp?ptid=43&mid=8928) (at www.interpretermagazine.org/interior.asp?ptid=43&mid=8928) in the United Methodist Church's *Interpreter Magazine* suggests ways to include children in congregational leadership.

The website [Teach with Movies](http://www.teachwithmovies.org/) (at www.teachwithmovies.org/) offers lessons based on

many movies and TV shows. Lesson plans for eight year-olds include the movies "Babe" and "A Bug's Life," both of which feature characters growing into leadership. If you purchase a membership, you can have film-based lesson plans available on short notice.

[Growing Field Books](http://www.growingfield.com/home/index.php) (at www.growingfield.com/home/index.php) publishes books to recognize and build leadership skills in children.

For Adults

The Tapestry of Faith program [Harvest the Power](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/harvest/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/harvest/index.shtml) provides a faith-based journey for adults into congregational leadership skill development.

SESSION 3: OUR FAITH IS A JOURNEY

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

What is religion, you might ask. It's a technology of living. — Toni Cade Bambara, 20th-century African American author and activist

This session invites children into a lifelong process of building a Unitarian Universalist faith. Children learn that a covenant for being together is a sign of our faith. They make a covenant together, look for signs of covenanting in congregational life, and discover additional ways UUs support one another to build a faith that will give their lives meaning and purpose.

Activity 3, Big Questions, invites children to write questions on blank puzzle pieces which form the basis of an activity in Session 4. You will need to obtain a blank jigsaw puzzle in advance. After Activity 3, store the completed puzzle pieces for use in Session 4.

GOALS

This workshop will:

- Show how Unitarian Universalism supports individuals in building their faith
- Demonstrate that a promise to express our shared Principles in the way we spend time together—a covenant—is a cornerstone of UU faith building
- Connect being part of a UU community with making a personal faith journey.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify covenant, the freedom to ask big questions, and the wisdom of our Sources as signs that Unitarian Universalism supports each person's individual faith journey
- Identify aspects of Unitarian Universalism by naming ones they love or like

- Discover UU practices to develop their faith, including covenanting in a group, offering leadership, and asking big questions
- Recognize that they are on a faith journey.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: What I Love about Being UU	20
Activity 2: Story — Journey of a Snowflake	10
Activity 3: Big Questions	10
Activity 4: Ritual of Covenanting	15
Faith in Action: Covenant Search	
Closing	3

Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Providing an Opportunity to Be in Community

Alternate Activity 2: Leadership in Action — Providing a Learning Opportunity

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

What do you love about your Unitarian Universalist faith? What activities or relationships that happen at your congregation embody what you love about being UU? Some love to be active in congregational governance. Others love the relationships formed in a small group ministry, study, or social group. Some will immediately respond that they love the hymns the congregation sings together, or to hear the choir sing. Have you ever thought about the aspects of being UU that you love as ways your faith community supports your personal faith journey? Bring your sense of feeling supported in your UU faith journey to today's session.

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: If children will wear stoles during the session, make sure you have extra stoles for new participants and visitors. A child who begins to attend regularly can add their initials to a stole in Session 4, 8, 12, or 16.

Description of Activity

If the children wear stoles for Opening and Closing, distribute stoles. Invite the children to put on their stoles. Offer any visitors a stole and explain that they may wear it during the Opening time and the Closing time if they wish. Remind the children their stoles are a sign that everyone in the group is a worship leader.

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice. Lead the group to say these Opening words:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists
and members of the Signs of Our Faith
community.

Together, we celebrate what we love about our
UU faith.

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT I LOVE ABOUT BEING UU (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Drawing paper
- Crayons and markers in a variety of colors, to share

Preparation for Activity

- Write on newsprint, "I love being UU at this congregation because..." Under this, write "I like coming to this UU congregation because..."
- Be prepared to help new or visiting children complete the second phrase. Some examples include, "I like visiting this congregation because my friend is here" or "I like coming here because my dad's come with me."
- Optional: Identify a bulletin board where you can display the children's drawings, after the session.

Description of Activity

Participants identify something they love or like about being UU or coming to the congregation.

Indicate the newsprint and say, in your own words:

Each of you has your own reasons why you like to be a UU here at our congregation or why you like to visit our UU congregation. You can pick which sentence you want to complete, and think of your own answer.

Read the two phrases aloud. Then say:

Let me give you some ideas. You can finish either phrase with something UUs believe. For example, "I like being Unitarian Universalist at our congregation because... UUs try to respect all people."

You can finish either phrase with an activity UUs do at our congregation. For example, "I like being Unitarian Universalist at our congregation because... we collect food for the hungry."

You can finish a phrase with something you have learned to do in RE or in worship services at our congregation. For example, "I like being Unitarian Universalist at our congregation because... we learn hymns here and singing together makes me feel good."

If you are new or visiting, even if you are only here for today, you can say a reason you like to visit. For example, because you get to see friends here or make new friends, or because you think the building or something about it is pretty. Or maybe you've noticed one thing you really like, such as our chalice for worshipping together, or the recycling bins that mean UUs try to take care of the earth.

Distribute drawing paper and set out markers and crayons. Invite children to write their ending to one of the sentences on their paper, and draw a picture to show what they love or like. Help children think of an answer and write it on their paper, as needed. Use clarifying questions to help participants identify what they love about their UU experiences. For example, if a child says they love coming to RE, ask which parts of RE they love: seeing friends, doing art work, hearing stories? Is there a particular story they especially liked?

Allow 10 minutes for children to draw. Give a two-minute warning, then gather the large group and invite volunteers to share. Say it is okay if they do not want to share and okay if they do want to share.

Affirm that there are many different reasons people come to the congregation. People love different things about Unitarian Universalism and that is okay, too, because everyone is on their own, unique faith journey.

Optional: After the session, you may wish to display the children's drawings. Include the phrase "I love being UU at our congregation because..." in the display.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — JOURNEY OF A SNOWFLAKE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Journey of a Snowflake](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling it to the group.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Child hear and discuss a story about a journey and relate it to taking a faith journey.

Tell or read the story.

Ask participants, "How are snowflakes like people?" Affirm that people are unique like snowflakes and our lives are journeys, too.

Invite the children to act out the story.

Then, say, in these words or your own:

As Unitarian Universalists, we are on a faith journey. Our journey is similar to the snowflakes in the story. UUs are as diverse as snowflake. No two of us are alike. We have different genders and different skin colors. We know how to speak different languages, and we are different ages. But we are all on a journey. On our journey we figure out what we believe and decide what kind of people we want to be in the world. Snowflakes become different because of their environment. People do, too. Growing up UU, we might end up with many different beliefs. For example, some UUs believe there is a God, some believe there is not, and some believe it is not important to know that answer. However, we share many beliefs, like the importance of loving each other.

Ask: "What other beliefs do UUs share?" Affirm answers. You may wish to make note of our UU Principles. Then say:

When snowflakes fall from the clouds, they are taking a journey. They do not know where the journey will take them. This is like our lifelong faith journey. However, there is a big difference: in our religion, we can support each other's faith journeys. Even when my journey of beliefs takes me in a different direction from where your journey takes you [insert one or more children's names here], we can still journey together. I will stay with you and share being leaders together, and learning together, and worship, and companionship—all the things we do as signs of our UU faith. That's what UUs do in our congregation, and that's what we do here in our Signs of Our Faith group.

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 3: BIG QUESTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large, blank puzzle pieces and appropriate markers

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain or make a blank puzzle with 7 to 12 interlocking pieces large enough for children to write on. [The Piece puzzle pieces sold on Bare Books](http://www.barebooks.com/puzzles.htm) (at www.barebooks.com/puzzles.htm) are large enough to write on and each piece can lock with any other piece. For a homemade puzzle, cut a large sheet of poster board into identical hexagonal shapes. The shapes will not lock, but, they will fit neatly together when re-assembled randomly. For every puzzle piece that has a question on it, you will need two or three blank pieces for use in Session 4, Activity 1, Religious Explorers.
- Post blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Children experience how UUism supports us to articulate big theological questions. They create puzzle pieces which they will work with again in Session 4, Activity 1, Religious Explorers.

Say, in these words or your own:

No one is too young to start a faith journey and everyone here is definitely old enough! Let's support one another to take some steps in our UU faith journeys now.

Along a UU faith journey, we get to ask any question we want about life and what it means. Questions like these are called "theological" questions. Theology means religion. These are questions that our religion—Unitarian Universalism—supports us to try and answer.

Invite the children to think of big, theological questions—questions they wonder about life and what it means. Write their questions on newsprint. Prompt, as needed:

- Is there a God?
- Why do people die?
- Why is there war?
- How should I treat people who are mean to me?

Write the children's questions clearly on newsprint. If two questions are similar, work with the group to combine them. Gather 7 to 12 questions.

Assign participants to write the questions, one question per large puzzle piece. While they write, say that Unitarian Universalism helps us look for answers to big questions like these. Say that as Unitarian Universalists, we help one another look for answers in many different places: Sometimes we find answers in science.

Sometimes we find answers in the wisdom of people from all cultures and religions who came before us and who share the Earth with us. Sometimes we find answers inside ourselves.

Collect the puzzle pieces and set them aside for use in Session 4.

ACTIVITY 4: RITUAL OF COVENANTING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, [The UU Principles](#) (included in this document) , or a poster of the Principles

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.
- Post blank newsprint.
- Optional: Find sample children's covenants on the websites of UU congregations, including [Unitarian Universalist Society East](http://uuse.org/religious-ed/religious-education-for-children-and-youth/our-children%E2%80%99s-covenant/) (at uuse.org/religious-ed/religious-education-for-children-and-youth/our-children%E2%80%99s-covenant/) (Manchester, Connecticut) and [Bismark-Mandan \(North Dakota\) UU Fellowship](http://www.bismanuu.org/node/1285) (at www.bismanuu.org/node/1285).

Description of Activity

Children create a group covenant.

Ask the group to name activities during which they interact with the other age groups in the congregation. These might include worship, Our Whole Lives workshops, parties, potlucks, camps, or retreats.

Say, in your own words:

Unitarian Universalists all over the world come together in community. Part of a UU faith journey is to gather for fun and friendship along the way. In a way, we are like the snow pile when the snowflakes come together. Every time we have fun together, we also have the chance to show signs of our faith—signs that we agree about healthy, respectful, loving ways to be together in a group. One of these signs is called a covenant—a written-down promise.

It's a promise we make each other in a UU group, like our Signs group, and like our congregation. We promise to act in ways that show our UU Principles.

Let's remember some of our UU Principles. They will help us make a covenant for our Signs group—these are promises we will keep when

we are together, to show we share our Principles and our UU faith.

Distribute Handout 1. Read the Principles aloud, one at a time—or invite volunteers to read. Ask the children to think of promises they can make to show each Principle. Write their ideas on newsprint.

Say:

This is a good beginning for a covenant of promises.

Ask:

- What else should our covenant say?
- What promises do we wish to make, about how we will treat one another, and our leaders and visitors, when we are together?

Prompt to ensure the covenant is complete. Children's covenants often include:

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Let someone finish talking before you start to talk.
- Do not hurt each other, with our bodies or our words.
- Everyone gets a turn.

Make sure everyone understands and agrees to each promise. If someone disagrees, help the group refine the item to everyone's comfort, or do not add it.

Tell the group that everyone in the Signs community is responsible to hold themselves and one another to the promises of the covenant.

Ask the group what they think should happen if someone breaks the covenant? Who should confront the covenant-breaker? How will the group bring the person back into the covenant?

Point out that keeping the covenant is a sign of UU faith in many different ways. It is a sign that we agree with UU Principles such as respecting one another, working for fairness, and honoring the earth and all the life that shares it. It is a sign that we support each other on the faith journeys we each will take.

Now or after the session, re-write the finished covenant on a fresh sheet of newsprint. Post it where it can remain for the duration of the program.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle

- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Invite each child turn to the child to the right of them and say "Thank you for being in covenant with me."

Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together. Have them store their stoles in the place you have designated. Stoles should stay at the congregation and not go home with children.

FAITH IN ACTION: COVENANT SEARCH

Materials for Activity

- A copy of your congregation's covenant
- Optional: Handout 1, [The UU Principles](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Become familiar with the congregation's covenant. Prepare to share it with the children in language they will understand. If the group includes strong readers, make copies for the children to share.
- Plan a tour of the congregation. In advance, identify signs of the congregational covenant in action, to point out to the children. Some may be obvious—for example, the covenant language is probably printed in a publication or posted on a

wall. Others may be more subtle—for example, you may see a hand-held microphone which is passed around so individuals can take turns speaking in a congregational meeting. See other suggested signs of covenant, below.

- Optional: If the congregation does not have a covenant or the covenant language is too wordy or abstract to guide this activity, base the activity on the UU Principles instead of a congregational covenant.

Description of Activity

Children look for signs of a covenant in the congregation. Or, the children search for signs that people in the congregation have agreed to share the UU Principles as a guide for supporting one another's UU faith journeys.

Ask the children: What do you think it looks like when a group of people follow a covenant—promises they have made to be together in ways that show our UU faith? (Or: What do you think it looks like when a group of people agree on UU Principles as a guide for how to take a faith journey together?) Feed the group phrases from the congregational covenant (or, the UU Principles from Handout 1) and encourage them to think of signs that these promises, or Principles, are being honored.

Now say:

Let's use our congregation's covenant (or, the UU Principles we share) as a map, and take a tour of our congregation. Let's find out what these promises (or Principles) look like when a UU group is keeping them.

Optional: Distribute copies of the congregational covenant (or Handout 1).

Lead the tour. Take care to articulate how each stop on the tour expresses a specific promise (or Principle). Make space for children to come up with their own interpretations of how an item or room shows adherence to a promise (or Principle). Their observations may surprise you.

Sample "tour stops," with language from Handout 1, The UU Principles:

- A pulpit, a conference table with chairs in a circle, a "talking stick" = We agree to listen to one another.
- A garden, a recycling bin, a notice urging people to conserve water or electricity, posted information or photos related to a UU Partner Church = Caring for our planet earth and life that shares it.

- Books or a library, a classroom, a newsletter, a computer center = Keep on learning together. / Search for what is true and right
- Disability accommodations = We believe each person is important. / We believe all people should be treated fairly and kindly.
- A room or items used in congregational decision-making, a plaque listing ministers who have been invited to serve the congregation = All persons should have a vote about the things that concern them.
- Flyers/photos related to a social justice event, collection bins for donated goods = We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.

Including All Participants

Plan a tour that is accessible to all participants. Include a child with limited vision by describing spaces or items they cannot see.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What are some lessons for next time? Did everyone participate in the covenanting process? Make a plan to revisit the covenant in future sessions to remind children of how they agreed to be together.

Does the covenant cover promises you feel you, as leaders, need to make to each other? If RE co-leaders do not already have a covenant, consider creating one.

Assign preparation needed for the next session.

TAKING IT HOME

What is religion, you might ask. It's a technology of living. — Toni Cade Bambara, 20th-century African American author and activist

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we said that, as UUs, we are in a lifelong process of building our faith. We talked about learning together, asking big questions together, and sharing companionship as ways our life in a UU community supports the faith journeys of every member. The children learned that a UU group covenant consists of promises we make each other, based in UU Principles, and that a group covenant is both a tool and a grounding for supporting one another's faith journeys.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... How aware are family members of ways Unitarian Universalism supports their faith-building efforts? Go around the group. Ask each person to name an activity or a relationship they have enjoyed at your congregation

or in their Unitarian Universalist practice. Then, help one another articulate how that activity or the relationship has supported the individual to pursue their own journey in UU faith.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER: Try... creating a covenant for family meetings or family decision-making. Ask your child to suggest promises that the Signs of Our Faith group included in its covenant. Can these promises be part of your family covenant? Talk about how making a promise to act respectfully toward one another is a step in a UU faith journey.

Family Game. In this session, the children generated a list of big, theological questions. They learned that Unitarian Universalism supports them to keep on asking, to share their questions with others, and to use a variety of Sources including science, the wisdom of the ages, and their own experiences to forge a path toward their own answers. See how many big questions you can generate together about life, its meaning, and how to live it.

Family Discovery. Explore the world of snowflakes by taking this [Snowflake Safari](http://www.sciencefriday.com/video/12/31/2009/snowflake-safari.html) (at www.sciencefriday.com/video/12/31/2009/snowflake-safari.html). Don't have enough snow to go looking for snowflake designs? Create your own online at [A Kid's Heart](http://AKidsHeart.com) (at akidsheart.com/holidays/winter/snowflake.htm), a Christian game site.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE IN COMMUNITY

Materials for Activity

- Paper or card stock for invitations, and writing implements, and/or access to Internet and congregational email addresses

Description of Activity

Children host a community opportunity.

Leadership in Action (LIA) activities provide opportunities for children to take the lead in an activity that engages with the congregation. Through these activities, young people begin to see themselves as leaders of their faith.

Does your congregation need more opportunities for children to be in friendship and community? Challenge the group to create one. It can be an ice cream social, pizza party or just a play date in a nearby park. Guide the children to choose an activity, a venue, and the age group(s) they wish to engage—for example, families

with children, elders, older youth, or the entire congregation. Work with congregational leaders to choose a date. Engage the children's parents and caregivers to provide food and/or financial support.

Once a plan is made, have the children write and send out paper invitations and/or an E-vite. Assign other host duties. Hold the event and have fun.

After the event, ask the group what they enjoyed most. Ask: How is spending time with other UUs helpful in building each of our faith? How did you feel when you saw everyone enjoying the activity that had been your idea and your responsibility? What does it feel like to be a leader in our faith community who helps bring people together?

Including All Participants

Plan an event that is accessible to everyone. If the event will be off-site, determine accessibility before making a commitment on behalf of the congregation.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — PROVIDING A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [The UU Principles](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Costumes and props

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange a time and place for the children to perform one or more brief skits for a larger congregational group. Publicize the performance.
- Draft skits, and plan some rehearsal time.
- Secure props and costumes, if needed.

Description of Activity

Children provide a multigenerational learning opportunity.

Leadership in Action (LIA) activities provide opportunities for children to take the lead in an activity that engages with the congregation. Through these activities, young people begin to see themselves as leaders of their faith.

Encourage and lead the group to create skits that showcase UU Principles in action. Make skits easy for all ages to understand. Possible plots:

- A family makes a decision about going to see a movie by soliciting suggestions from all family members, including children and grandparents. (democratic process)
- Children playing a game notice a child who has no one to play with, and include them; children adapt a game to include someone who has a disability. (everyone is important)
- English-speaking children engage with a child who speaks another language and they teach one another how to greet someone, in both languages. (accepting one another and learning together)

You might enact a skit that first demonstrates a situation where a UU Principle is not applied, then shows what happens when the Principle is applied.

Children might introduce the skits by saying something like:

We are learning different ways Unitarian Universalism supports each of us to go on our UU faith journey. We have learned that when we act on our UU Principles, we are part of UUs supporting one another in our faith journeys.

After the skits, discuss the experience. What did the participants learn from performing the skits?

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 3: STORY: JOURNEY OF A SNOWFLAKE

The existence of a snowflake is a journey — like your life, which is a journey, too.

It starts in a cloud. Clouds carry drops of water vapor. Clouds also contain tiny particles of dust. Drops of the water vapor cling to the dust particles. When conditions are cold enough, the water freezes into crystals and a snowflake is born. Crystals can attach in many different ways to make infinite patterns — "infinite" means more numbers than anyone could ever count. The temperature, what the cloud is like and other factors influence how the snowflake grows. So it is probably true that no two snowflakes are alike. Each one is unique — like you are unique from everyone else who has ever lived. Each snowflake has a journey ahead of it: some parts of the journey are common to all snowflakes, some parts are unique.

The next part of the journey is the same for every snowflake: it falls to the earth. But where it falls can vary. The snowflake may fall on a warm sidewalk and melt into water right away. It may fall on cooler grass and stick. I like it when a snowflake falls gently on my eyelashes. Do you? The snowflake may even fall on top of other snowflakes, making piles of snow you can use to build snow kids.

Eventually, though, all snowflakes take the same journey of melting into water. Some water is soaked into the ground and nourishes plants, flowers and even vegetables, like tomatoes. Some water runs in gullies to rivers, which meet the oceans, the biggest gatherings of ex-snowflakes on the planet!

Water from the oceans and plants and other sources evaporates when it gets warm and turn into water vapor. Where does the water vapor go? Back up into the clouds! Our snowflake has returned from where it began.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 3:

HANDOUT 1: THE UU PRINCIPLES

1. We believe that each and every person is important.
2. We believe that all people should be treated fairly and kindly.
3. We believe that we should accept one another and keep on learning together.
4. We believe that each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.
5. We believe that all persons should have a vote about the things that concern them.
6. We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.
7. We believe in caring for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living things.

FIND OUT MORE

[Enlighten](http://www.enlightengamesinc.com/spirit-game-1024.html) (at www.enlightengamesinc.com/spirit-game-1024.html) is a board game that takes the player on a spiritual journey through different religions of the world. Its purpose is to build religious tolerance by teaching about different faiths.

Many have written about their faith journeys. Near the end of his life, the Reverend Forrest Church wrote [*Love & Death: My Journey through the Valley of the Shadow*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1099) (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008). You might read *My Spiritual Journey* by the Dalai Lama (New York: HarperCollins, 2011). Elizabeth Andrew's [*Writing the Sacred Journey*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=629) (Skinner House, 2004) and [*The Pen and the Bell: Mindful Writing in a Busy World*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1618)

(2012), by Brenda Miller and Holly Hughes, are available from the UUA Bookstore. Christian writer Dan Phillips offers [*Spiritual Journaling: God's Whispers in Daily Living*](#) (at www.amazon.com/Spiritual-Journaling-Whispers-Daily-Living/dp/1846947049/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1309917193&sr=8-1). In Workshop 1 of the Tapestry of Faith program Spirit of Life, find a handout that [guides you to map your own spiritual journey](#) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/life/workshop1/workshopplan/handouts/159104.shtml).

Interested to know more about snowflakes and their uniqueness? Read a blog post at [GrokEarth](#) (at grokearth.blogspot.com/2012/12/a-snowflakes-journey.html). Or, start on the [National Geographic website](#) (at news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/02/070213-snowflake_2.html).

SESSION 4: SEEKING KNOWLEDGE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

I am not going to question your opinions. I am not going to meddle with your belief. I am not going to dictate to you mine. All that I say is, examine, inquire. Look into the nature of things. Search out the grounds of your opinions, the for and against. Know why you believe, understand what you believe, and possess a reason for the faith that is in you. — Frances Wright, writer, feminist, abolitionist, and utopian

Children discover there can be multiple answers to big questions. They learn that to seek and evaluate answers to big questions is a sign of UU faith. They experience prayer or meditation, the ritual of this session, as a way of seeking answers within and a way to articulate and feel their own appreciation, gratitude, wishes, and hopes.

For Activity 1, you will need the puzzle pieces children made in Session 3 and blank puzzle pieces from the same set.

If your congregation has a prayer or meditation ritual, add the relevant words to Handout 1, UU Prayers and Meditations and plan to teach the ritual as part of Activity 3.

In Activity 4, children receive their first emblem to add to the stoles they received in Session 2. Decide whether you will use the image provided in Leader Resource 1 or create emblems another way, such as having children use the symbols of themselves they made in Session 1. See the program Introduction for more guidance.

GOALS

This session will:

- Show that questioning in religious exploration is a sign of our faith
- Introduce Unitarian Universalist rituals that use prayer or meditation
- Engage participants in experiencing and creating a prayer or meditation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Recognize questioning and seeking answers as activities of religious exploration and signs of Unitarian Universalist faith
- Understand prayer or meditation as a religious ritual that can connect us to our inside thoughts and spirit as well as the world around us
- Use prayer or meditation to articulate and express religious feelings such as gratitude, awe, hope, and longing
- Add an emblem to their leadership stoles.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Religious Explorers	10
Activity 2: Story — Sitting on the Answer	10
Activity 3: Ritual of Prayer or Meditation	25
Activity 4: First Emblem	10
Faith in Action: Collecting Prayers and Meditations	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Question Board	
Alternate Activity 2: Personal Spiritual Practice	10
Alternate Activity 3: Question Me an Answer	15
Alternate Activity 4: Story — How Do You Know?	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

What does religious exploration mean to you? How does it occur in the context of your involvement with Unitarian Universalism? Discuss this question and your own journey of religious exploration with your co-leader or another partner. What resources, including people, have helped you on your journey so far? How can you help children recognize resources that support them to seek and evaluate answers to their faith questions?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: If children will wear stoles during the session, make sure you have extra stoles for visitors. A child who has begun to attend regularly can add their initials to a stole during today's session, or later, in Session 8, 12, or 16.

Description of Activity

If the children wear stoles for Opening and Closing rituals, distribute stoles. Invite the children to put on their stoles. Offer any visitors a stole and explain that they may wear it during the Opening time and the Closing time if they wish. Remind the children their stoles are a sign that everyone in the group is a worship leader.

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice together. Lead the group to say these Opening words:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together, we take a journey of spiritual exploration. Together, we ask questions and continue our lifelong search for truth and meaning.

ACTIVITY 1: RELIGIOUS EXPLORERS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Puzzle pieces from Session 3, Activity 3

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain the puzzle pieces used in Session 3, Activity 3—the pieces on which children wrote their big questions, and the extra blank pieces. For every puzzle piece with a question written on it, you will need two or three blank pieces that can attach to it. Review the big questions children wrote on the puzzle pieces. Think of two or three different answers to each question, reflecting different theologies. For example, for a puzzle piece with the question "Is there a god?" you could write "Yes. God's name is Allah." on a blank puzzle piece, and "No, there is no god. People are responsible for helping each other." Make sure you include diverse theological answers. Keep the question puzzle pieces separate from the answer pieces you are writing.
- Hide the answer pieces around your meeting space.
- Set the question pieces on an accessible table.

Description of Activity

Participants experience a search for answers to big questions, and encounter multiple answers rooted in various theologies.

Show the children the puzzle pieces on which they wrote questions in Session 3. Remind them that the last time the group met they brainstormed big, theological questions—questions about life and how we should live it, the kind of questions religions help people answer. Say, in these words or your own:

Unitarian Universalists believe it is good to ask big questions and seek the answers using many different sources. When we explore our big questions, that is a sign of our UU faith.

We are going to have a chance to search for answers to our own big questions, right now. Some answers from different religions are written on puzzle pieces just like the ones with your questions, and they are hidden. Let's be religious explorers now, and find the hidden answers.

Monitor the search to make sure all children who want to find pieces find them, and that all pieces are eventually found.

Re-gather the children at work tables and invite them to match each question with its answer. The children may quickly discover that each question has more than one answer. If they do not, ask if they think there is only one answer for each question. Give them the hint that they may find more than one answer that could fit each question. Monitor and assist the matching.

Read the questions and answers. Ask:

- If there are three answers to this question, could there be even more?
- Why are there different answers to the same question?
- With so many questions and so many answers, how can anyone know what to believe?

Affirm people with different beliefs answer big questions differently. People in different times, places, and circumstances have believed different answers. Even one person may change their answer as they get older and their life goes along and they come to believe different things.

Post blank newsprint. Brainstorm ways we look for answers when we have big questions about life and how we should live it: How do Unitarian Universalists do a religious exploration? Prompt for answers such as: read books, listen to wise people, and learn from our own experiences. Say that Unitarian Universalists understand that many Sources can have good answers—like other cultures and religions, wise teachers in the past or in our lives, and even the way we feel inside about things that happen to us. Affirm that asking questions is a sign of UU faith and the first and most important step toward finding answers.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — SITTING ON THE ANSWER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Sitting on the Answer](#)" (included in this document) "
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling it.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects

for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Children discuss a story about finding answers.

Read or tell the story.

Process the story with these questions:

- Did the stranger know the box contained something valuable?
- Why do you think the beggar had never looked in the box?
- Have you ever had a problem solved in an expected way, by something or someone you did not think could solve it?
- How does this story relate to our brainstorm about finding answers to big questions? Could we be sitting on some of our own answers, without even knowing it? Is one place to find answers your own experiences?

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 3: RITUAL OF PRAYER OR MEDITATION (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [UU Prayers and Meditations](#) (included in this document)
- A chime or bell
- Writing paper and pencils
- A binder notebook, and clear plastic sleeves or a three-hole punch
- Optional: Color markers or crayons and other art materials

Preparation for Activity

- Select a meditation or prayer from Handout 1 to read aloud to the group. Optional: If your congregation uses a regular prayer or

meditation ritual, add the words to Handout 1; plan to teach the ritual as part of this activity.

- Copy the handout for all participants.
- Decide how you will engage the children to act out prayers or meditations provided in the handout. You may wish to invite someone to interpret prayer or meditation words in American Sign Language and teach the movement to the group. You could have children work in small groups with a co-leader to create movement for a prayer or meditation, and then have the small groups share, or you could lead the large group to develop movements for a prayer together. Consider how much time you want to allocate this part of the activity.
- Choose one or more themes for the meditations the children will write. For example: appreciation of a season of the year, or all four; a hope for poverty to end; a wish for world peace; gratitude for families, friends, their pets, their school, clean water to drink, or holidays.
- Prepare a binder notebook to collect the meditations the children write.
- Plan ways to use the meditations in future Signs sessions and/or with the larger congregation. You might incorporate them into the Opening or Closing ritual, arrange for the children to share them during a worship service or another congregational gathering, ask to have them published in a congregational newsletter or online, and/or display them on a congregational bulletin board. You might also send them to the Unitarian Universalist Association's [WorshipWeb](http://www.uua.org/worship/index.php) (at www.uua.org/worship/index.php) for sharing with other congregations.
- Optional: Provide art materials so children can illustrate their meditations after they've written them and volunteers can decorate the binder notebook cover.

Description of Activity

Participants experience the UU ritual of prayer or meditation, and write a prayer or meditation.

Say, in these words or your own:

What could be a good way to look for answers that are already inside you? Some people use prayer or mediation. That is a UU ritual. When UUs gather for worship, we sometimes pray together out loud or listen to the words of a meditation together. We can also pray or

meditate without making a sound. Prayers and meditations are a good ritual for looking inside our hearts and spirits and minds.

Ask the children if they have ever said or heard a prayer or meditation. Affirm that a blessing, such as one might say before eating a meal, is a form of prayer or meditation.

Meditation is a way to quiet your body and your thoughts, so you can hear your big questions inside yourself and listen for answers.

Ask the children if they can think of more reasons, besides giving thanks or thinking about big questions, that people might pray or meditate. Prompt children to brainstorm situations where they might like to look inside for their important thoughts and hopes and wishes—for example, when someone they love is sick, when they are scared, when something especially nice has happened and they feel happy, when they feel sad about someone else's suffering, when they have a big decision to make, or at the start or close of the day.

Now invite the children to sit comfortably in a place where they are not touching someone else. Say they may close their eyes or put their head down, if they wish. Say:

I am going to lead you in a UU meditation. Once I sound the chime, keep yourself quiet and still. If you are comfortable doing so, close your eyes. That will help you listen with not just your ears but also your inside self.

Sound the chime. Read to the group the meditation or prayer words you have selected. Sound the chime again to end the meditation.

Now distribute Handout 1, UU Prayers and Meditations. Read a few aloud or have volunteers read.

Point out that some prayers and meditations are addressed to God, and others do not mention God. Explain that UUs have many different beliefs about whether there is a God, or another power larger than humankind, and what to call that power if there is one. Point out the prayers addressed to "spirit of life and love" and "Earth."

Say that we often sit still when we pray or meditate, but at times we may use our bodies as part of a prayer or meditation ritual, if that helps us understand and express what we feel. Lead the group to act out one or more prayers or meditations from Handout 1 in the way you have planned.

Now invite participants to write a short meditation on their own. Distribute writing paper and pencils, and assign or suggest a theme you have chosen. Remind

the children they can address a meditation or prayer to God, to something else they wish to connect with, such as the Earth, or the whole universe, or to nothing in particular if that feels right to them.

Circulate and help individuals articulate and write their meditations, as needed. Give the group ten minutes. Optional: As children finish writing, invite them to decorate their paper.

Reconvene the large group and let volunteers share their meditations. Tell the group your plan for sharing their meditations with the larger congregation. Say that sharing their meditations is a sign that they are worship leaders in the Unitarian Universalist community. Ask if they can think of other ways to share their meditations with the congregation, and make a commitment to follow up on their suggestions.

ACTIVITY 4: FIRST EMBLEM (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Stoles
- Craft materials
- Optional: Leader Resource 1, [First Emblem](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Children's symbols of themselves (Session 1, Activity 3)

Preparation for Activity

- Print copies of Leader Resource 1 and cut out a First Emblem image for each child, including extra for newcomers. Alternatively, copy for all participants an emblem of your own design that symbolizes "The way I act is a sign of the faith that is inside me."
- Optional: Gather and set out craft materials for children to create their own emblems for "The way I act is a sign of the faith that is inside me." Possible images include a large "I" or a simple drawing of a wooden pole, to reference the Session 3 story of the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations' journey. You can plan to have each children draw a simple, self-portrait and/or use the symbol for themselves they created in Session 2. Find suggestions for guiding this process in the Before You Start section of this program's Introduction.

Description of Activity

Children add an emblem to their stole.

This emblem represents "The way I act is a sign of the faith that is inside me." It is based on the experiences children have had in the first unit of this program (Sessions 1-4).

Remind children that the stole is a symbol that they are growing as leaders in the congregation and in their UU faith. Say, in your own words:

The first few times we have met to study Signs of Our Faith, we have talked about signs of faith that each one of us can do on our own. Each of us can show leadership. Each of us can decide what we love about the Unitarian Universalist religion or about coming to our UU congregation. Each of us has our own big questions about life and looks to our UU faith in our own way to look for answers. Today, you may add an emblem to your leadership stole. This emblem shows that the way you act is a sign of the faith that is inside you.

Lead children to make emblems (optional) and attach the emblems to their stoles.

Have children help put away the craft materials they have used. Invite them to put on their stoles to wear during the Closing ritual.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Optional: If children wear stoles for every Opening and Closing, distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Ask participants to share these fun activities with their parents and try them with family or friends.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Invite each child thank the child to the right of them for being a religious explorer. Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together.

FAITH IN ACTION: COLLECTING PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

Preparation for Activity

- Choose a date for the collection, and publicize it via congregational newsletter, website, and pulpit announcements.

Description of Activity

Participants collect the favorite prayers and meditations of members of the congregation and share them with the ministry team.

On collection day, set up a table that is accessible to everyone entering or leaving the building. Provide paper and pens. Ask congregants to share any favorite prayers or meditations. Suggest they share words from their childhood or youth, words that are part of a current spiritual practice, and/or words that address specific occasions, such as a grace for meals or a Jewish prayer for lighting Sabbath candles.

Invite the children to explore the collection. Can they identify common themes or words in the pieces? Are any of the prayers or meditations familiar to the children?

Give the collection to the congregational ministry team. Invite them to use the prayers and meditations in worship, as graces before potlucks, and as readings to open meetings. Meditations can be used to center groups before religious education workshops, at retreats, and myriad congregational activities.

A word of caution: Be aware of copyright issues. Any piece submitted by an original author may be reprinted with their permission. If a prayer or meditation was written by someone else, you may use it in worship, but you may not reprint it or publish it without the author's permission.

Including All Participants

Have at least one adult available on collection day to transcribe any prayer or meditation a congregational member asks to dictate.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What would you do differently next time? What did the children understand about the use of prayer or meditation as a UU ritual?

Read the next session and assign advance preparation, as needed.

TAKING IT HOME

I am not going to question your opinions. I am not going to meddle with your belief. I am not going to dictate to you mine. All that I say is, examine, inquire. Look into the nature of things. Search out the grounds of your opinions, the for and against. Know why you believe, understand what you believe, and possess a reason for the faith that is in you. —Frances Wright, writer, feminist, abolitionist, and utopian

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we discussed how asking questions and seeking the answers can be a sign of our UU faith. The children learned they can look inside themselves for answers to their big questions. They experienced the UU ritual of prayer or meditation and explored reasons to meditate or pray besides seeking answers. They learned that many UUs engage in prayer or meditation to stay connected to that which is greater than just themselves, and that our faith does not require us to address a prayer or meditation to God.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... the spiritual practices of family members. Who has used prayer or meditation? Why? Have they used it regularly, that is, as a ritual?

Family Ritual. Read Handout 1, UU Prayers and Meditations together. Pick one to recite regularly as a new family ritual.

Family Discovery. How does your family deal with questions? Did adults or older youth in the family ask many questions when they were children? When younger people in the family ask questions, do adults or older youth try to answer them? Is there a family member who is the "go to" person for answers?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — QUESTION BOARD

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- A display board and materials to decorate it, such as markers, construction paper, scissors, and tape)

Preparation for Activity

- Decide the best way to create the question board. You can use a bulletin board, a dry erase board, or poster board mounted on a bulletin board or easel.
- Locate a place to display the question board and seek permission, if needed. Choose a prominent place on an existing bulletin board, on a table large enough for a dry erase board or a tri-fold, free-standing, poster board.

Description of Activity

Participants create a forum for collecting congregational questions and wisdom.

Ask:

There are many Unitarian Universalists who come to our congregation, but each one's religious exploration is unique. If you could poll our congregation about religious exploration, what kinds of questions would you ask?

Post blank newsprint. Prompt the group to generate questions to ask the congregation related to faith, spiritual practices, religious questions, and religious beliefs. Questions should be open-ended (not "yes/no") to invite personal answers. Questions might include "What is your personal spiritual practice?" or "What leadership roles have you held at this or another congregation?" or "What is your favorite piece of wisdom to share?" or "What is the biggest religious question you have ever wondered?"

Once you have a few good questions, tell the children you want them to create a bulletin board of questions and invite the congregation to respond by writing their answers. Engage the children in planning. Do they want to put all the questions on the board at once, or post one question at a time and so there will be room for many people to write their answers to each question.

Decorate the board and post one or more questions. Leave an assortment of colored markers by the board. Plan to have children look at the responses on the board in future sessions. Remember to change the question periodically if you have agreed to do so.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: PERSONAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICE (10 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Say in these words, or your own:

A spiritual practice is an activity you do regularly to deepen your spirituality, or connect yourself to something greater than just you. Prayer or meditation are common spiritual practices among Unitarian Universalists. When people perform a spiritual practice regularly, it becomes a ritual.

Many people say their spiritual practice helps them feel centered and connected to their values. It can help you remember what you love and remind you to act every day being faithful to what you love.

Help the children name spiritual practices. These might include yoga, journaling, reading from holy texts, and attending worship. Point out that different spiritual practices suit different people. You might say:

For someone, saying grace at mealtime might help them focus on how thankful they are to be nourished. For someone else, reading the newspaper every morning might remind them how much they wish for fairness and justice and peace all around the world. Gardening or taking a walk can be a spiritual practice if it helps us feel connected to nature and the Spirit of Life.

Ask if the children know anyone who engages in a spiritual practice, or if they themselves do. Encourage them to explore different spiritual practices and find one that fits them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: QUESTION ME AN ANSWER (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A recording of the song, "Question Me an Answer," and a music player
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Listen to the song "Question Me an Answer." You can hear it on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sew4NUQ-Vkl) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=sew4NUQ-Vkl).
- Obtain a recording of the song. You can plan to play the YouTube clip for the group, or you can purchase the song from an online music service.
- Obtain the lyrics—they are [posted on the Lyrics Time website](http://www.lyricstime.com/burt-bacharach-question-me-an-answer-lyrics.html) (at www.lyricstime.com/burt-bacharach-question-me-an-answer-lyrics.html)—and write them on newsprint.
- Think of an example of how learning new knowledge can set someone free that you can share with the children.

- Test equipment and cue the music.
- Optional: Obtain a version of the film musical, *Lost Horizon* (dir. Charles Jarrott, 1973). Plan to show the clip that features the song.

Description of Activity

Children learn a funny song about questions.

Teach children the song, "Question Me an Answer," from the film musical *Lost Horizon*. Post the lyrics on newsprint and play the song a few times, asking children to join in after the first time.

Though the song is meant for fun, it has one especially wise phrase: "They say knowledge sets you free." After children learn and sing the song, point out this line. Ask the children:

- Can you remember a time when you felt freed, after you gained some new knowledge?
- What are you looking forward to learning as you grow up? How will learning new things free you?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: STORY – HOW DO WE KNOW (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[How Do We Know?](#) (included in this document) "

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story to become familiar with it.

Description of Activity

Children respond to a story that demonstrates no one has all the answers.

Read or tell the story.

Process the story with these questions:

- Why does answering the question make the person a fake? Does this mean we can never answer a question? What kinds of questions are the ones that do not really have a single, simple answer?
- In the story, the Baal Shem Tov is very wise. But do you think he has answers to every question? Do you think he had an answer as to how to keep your mind from wandering when praying? [If he did, he, too, would be a fake!]
- The Baal Shem Tov was a Jewish rabbi, or teacher. Rabbis often teach by asking questions. Jesus was a rabbi, too, and he asked people a lot of questions to help them learn. Do

you have any teachers who ask many questions?

- Some people believe the Bible has all the answers or the Koran or their minister or their parents. What do you believe? Does any one source have all the answers to the questions of religious exploration you have now? What about questions you may have in the future, as you grow older? Do you think it is good or bad that looking for answers in religious exploration is complicated? Why?

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 4: STORY: HOW DO WE KNOW?

An adaptation of a traditional story, retold by [Doug Lipman](#), used with permission.

Some students of the Rabbi Baal Shem Tov came to him one day with a question. "Every year we travel here to learn from you. Nothing could make us stop doing that. But we have learned of a man in our own town who claims to be a tzaddik, a learned and righteous one. If he is genuine, we would love to profit from his wisdom. But how will we know if he is a fake?"

The Baal Shem Tov looked at his earnest students. "You must test him by asking him a question." He paused. "You have had difficulty with stray thoughts during prayer?"

"Yes!" The students answered eagerly. "We try to think only of our holy intentions as we pray, but other thoughts come into our minds. We have tried many methods not to be troubled by them."

"Good," said the Baal Shem Tov. "Ask him the way to stop such thoughts from entering your minds." The Baal Shem Tov smiled. "If he has an answer, he is a fake."

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 4: STORY: SITTING ON THE ANSWER

By Eckhart Tolle from *The Power of Now* (Novato: New World Library, 2004).

A beggar had been sitting by the side of a road for over thirty years. One day a stranger walked by.

"Spare some change?" mumbled the beggar, mechanically holding out his old baseball cap.

"I have nothing to give you," said the stranger. Then he asked: "What's that you are sitting on?"

"Nothing," replied the beggar. "Just an old box. I have been sitting on it for as long as I can remember."

"Ever looked inside?" asked the stranger.

"No," said the beggar. "What's the point? There's nothing in there."

"Have a look inside," insisted the stranger.

The beggar managed to pry open the lid. With astonishment, disbelief, and elation, he saw that the box was filled with gold.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 4:

HANDOUT 1: UU PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

Prayers

Dear God,

May I be kind,

Strong and brave,

Joyful, useful, loving,

Honest and healthy.

— Meg Barnhouse, used with permission

Thank you for my friend next door

And my friend across the street

And please help me to be a friend

To each and every one I meet.

— Anonymous

Here at the table now we pray;

Keep us together day by day;

May this, our family circle be

Held fast by love and unity.

— John S. Mackey, used with permission

Earth, who gives to us this food,

Sun, who makes it ripe and good;

Dear Earth, dear Sun, by you we live;

To you our loving thanks we give.

— Native American prayer

Help us to be the always hopeful

Gardeners of the spirit

Who know that without darkness

Nothing comes to birth

As without light

Nothing flowers.

— May Sarton, used with permission

Meditations

There is love

Holding me.

There is love

Holding you.

There is love

Holding all.

I rest

In this love.

— Rebecca Ann Parker, used with permission

May I be peaceful.

May I be happy.

May I be well.

May I be safe.

May I be free from suffering.

May all beings be peaceful.

May all beings be happy.

May all beings be well.

May all beings be safe.

May all beings be free from suffering.

— William Collinge, from *Subtle Energy: Awakening to the Unseen Forces in Our Lives* (Warner Books, Inc., 1998); used with permission.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 4: LEADER RESOURCE 1: FIRST EMBLEM

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/first_emblem.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/first_emblem.pdf) for printing.



FIND OUT MORE

The [UUA WorshipWeb](http://www.uua.org/worship/index.php) (at www.uua.org/worship/index.php) has guidelines for writing your own prayers, meditations, and blessings. See the activity [Writing Family Prayers](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/families/workshop10/workshopplan/activities/106965.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/families/workshop10/workshopplan/activities/106965.shtml) in Families, a UUA Tapestry of Faith curriculum for youth; participants use Rev. Gary Smith's framework of five elements a prayer can contain.

Two Skinner House books with worship resources, available from the UUA Bookstore, are [*A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers*](#) (at www.uua.org/publications/skinnerhouse/browseskinner/titles/104049.shtml) by Eliza Blanchard and [*Rejoice Together: Prayers, Meditations, and Other Readings for Family, Individual, and Small-Group Worship*](#) (at www.uua.org/publications/skinnerhouse/browseskinner/titles/18797.shtml) edited by Helen Picket, which provided some of the prayers and meditations in this session.

SESSION 5: WE REVERE LIFE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

... each of the three times I have been present at the birth of one of my children, I have been overwhelmed by a sense of reverence... It was quite suddenly, the first day of creation; the Goddess giving birth to a world... Like men since the beginning of time I wondered: What can I ever create that will equal the magnificence of this new life? — Sam Keen, author

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe life is sacred---not only human life, but all life that shares our planet. The ritual of child dedication is one way UUs show we revere life and celebrate its beginning. This session looks at traditions and rituals to welcome new life into families and faith communities. Shape the activities to reflect the traditions and experiences of your congregation and families.

Activity 4, Child Dedication, calls for one or two families to visit and tell about their child dedication ritual. Several weeks ahead, arrange for one or two families to visit; they need not be families with children in this group.

GOALS

This session will:

- Invite children to experience wonder, awe, and reverence for life, particularly in its emergence through birth or new beginnings
- Demonstrate different ways UUs demonstrate our reverence for life, through rituals such as a child dedication and through everyday actions
- Explore the UU tradition of child dedication—what happens in a ceremony, and what the ceremony means.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Appreciate the miracle of birth and new beginnings
- Learn UU ways to express reverence for life

- Learn how the congregation and the families in it celebrate births and beginnings
- Understand what it means to "dedicate."

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Birth in Nature	15
Activity 2: Reverence for Life	10
Activity 3: Story — Hannah Dedicates Samuel to the Lord	15
Activity 4: Child Dedication	15
Faith in Action: Baby Cuddlers	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Dolls for Dedication	
Alternate Activity 2: Baptisms and Naming Ceremonies	20
Alternate Activity 3: Religious Birth Days	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Even when a new beginning is welcome, it sometimes involves pain and sacrifice. Think about giving birth—both literally and figuratively. One idea that can keep us going, through pain and sacrifice, is that the new birth holds the promise of making our world a better place.

Have you been part of bringing something or someone new to life? What were your hopes and dreams about how this beginning would make the world a better place? To what did you dedicate your efforts?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle. Write the Opening words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice, and recite together:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together, we express reverence for all life by celebrating birth and new beginnings. Together, we dedicate ourselves and our community to supporting new members and their families. Together, we dedicate ourselves to making the world a better place for all life.

Ask for a definition of the word "reverence." Then affirm or explain:

Reverence means an attitude that is deeply respectful. We have reverence when we honor, respect, and cherish someone or something. Reverence goes with words like "awe," "sacred," and "holy."

Some people feel reverence for God. They sometimes show this reverence by bowing their head or kneeling in prayer. Some people feel reverence for nature. When we are asked to stand for the national anthem or to say the Pledge of Allegiance, it is to show reverence for symbols of our country. We show reverence for life by not hurting living things and by treating all living things with respect.

Tell the group that they will begin exploring ways to show signs of our faith in relationship to others. Today

they will talk about the relationships they have, as Unitarian Universalists, with new life—people who are just born. They will talk about how UUs and people in other religions and communities celebrate a new baby.

Say:

Celebrating new life demonstrates our reverence for it, how much we cherish and respect life. When we celebrate new life, it is a way to show our hope for the future in which this new life will grow.

ACTIVITY 1: BIRTH IN NATURE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Magnifying glasses

Preparation for Activity

- If needed, seek permission and alert parents that the children will go outside for this activity. Make sure children will have appropriate outerwear.
- Does the congregation have a nursery or an area where parents may sit outside worship with their babies? Ask nursery caretakers or parents with babies if the group may stop by for a visit. Tell them the children will observe only and not touch or interact with the babies. Or, plan a visit to the preschool or kindergarten room instead.

Description of Activity

Children recognize the importance of new life and how to demonstrate reverence for it.

Visit the nursery or a space with younger children as a place that holds new life. Let the group know that they will observe only and not interact with the babies, to prevent the spread of germs. Ask participants, "Why are babies and children important?"

Lead the group outside and ask participants to look for signs of new life. Look for new leaves unfurling, buds, and spider egg sacs. Remind child to look but not to harm or interfere. Ask the group, "Why are we careful not to harm the plants or animals we find?" Affirm that it is because we revere life: Life is sacred and we cherish it. Because we think life is sacred, we protect life when we can. Do the children think animal and plant life is important to the congregation? To the world? How do they know?

Return indoors. Gather the group, and ask:

- What have you been told by your family, at school, or here at our congregation, or someplace else, about respecting living things?
- What do baby humans have in common with baby animals and plants?
- Why do you think families bring their babies and children to our congregation? Aren't babies too little to understand what we do here?
- Why do we have a special place in the congregation to take care of babies and younger children? Do you think they are important to the congregation? Why or why not?
- Congregations often have an announcement or even a ceremony when a family has a new babies or a new child joins a family. Why would a congregation care about a family having a new baby or child?

Including All Participants

Check the outdoor area ahead of time to ensure it is accessible to all the children. Make sure the area is safe for any children with plant allergies; learn whether and where there may be poisonous plants in the area you will tour.

ACTIVITY 2: REVERENCE FOR LIFE (10 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Remind the group of how careful they were not to harm the new life forms they found in nature. Say that that action showed reverence for life found in nature. Tell the group that you will now name several actions. Ask participants to indicate if they think the action shows reverence or respect for life by standing on one side of the room. If they think it does not show reverence but disregards or disrespects life, they should move to the other side.

Actions for the continuum:

- recycling and other efforts to respect the earth's resources
- helping find homes for stray cats and dogs
- stepping on an ant bed
- praying for peace in the world
- bullying
- planting trees on Arbor Day
- loading up a plate with too much food that you then throw away

- saying a grace at mealtime that honors the food that sustains us
- making mean comments about someone who looks different

Ask the children to name more actions they have done or witnessed that are signs of reverence for life. Invite them to consider both human life and animal and plant life. Say they may think of an action that happened in the congregation, in their family, at school, or anywhere else.

Acknowledge that sometimes we do not mean to disrespect life, but we are just careless. We don't put too much food on our plate because we plan to throw it away, but we are not thinking carefully about how much we really need. Showing reverence for life takes practice. The more we think about how we want to honor all life, the less careless we will be in our actions.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — HANNAH DEDICATES SAMUEL TO THE LORD (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Hannah Dedicates Samuel to the Lord](#)" (included in this document) "
- Leader Resource 1, [1 Samuel 10-17, 20](#) (included in this document)
- A children's book that includes the author's dedication
- Drawing paper, and crayons/markers to share
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story "Hannah Dedicates Samuel to the Lord" so you will be comfortable telling or reading it to the group. You may wish to compare the story with its biblical source (Leader Resource 2).
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Participants respond to a story about dedicating a child, through discussion and art work.

Tell the group you know a story about a baby that was important to the life of a congregation. Tell or read the story. Tell the group it comes from the Hebrew Bible, sometimes called the Old Testament.

Read or tell the story. Then, process the story with these questions:

- Who or what is "the Lord" [God, the God of the Jewish and Christian Bible]? Why do you think Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord?
- What does it mean to dedicate? [Take answers, affirming all, including guesses, as being at least partially correct.] One definition is "to offer formally to a person or a cause." Hannah formally offered Samuel to God. Sometimes a book will have a dedications [show example]. "Dedicate" can also mean to devote wholly and earnestly. This is what people mean when they say things like, "I want to dedicate my life to helping others." or "I am dedicated to make good grades in school."

Say:

Hannah felt that by dedicating her son to God, she was dedicating him to a great purpose. She felt that dedication to a great purpose was a way to show reverence for his life. Being dedicated to a positive purpose in life is a way to improve the world, to help make our world a better place for all life. Can you think of a time you, or someone you know or read about, dedicated themselves to improving the world? [If needed, prompt with examples: taking an anti-bullying pledge, dedicating an afternoon to cleaning up a local park, dedicating some time to tutoring a classmate who needs help.]

Point out that Hannah gave her baby the name of Samuel, which means "Because I asked the Lord for him." Ask:

- Why did your parents name you your name? Does your name have a special meaning?

Invite the children to give their name a special meaning by making a name poems. Distribute drawing paper and crayons/markers. Ask children to write their first name vertically along the left-hand side of their paper, like this:

S
A
L

L

Y

Challenge participants to think of a word or phrase that starts with each letter which describes them or is important to them. For example,

Sings

Artsy

Lemon pie

Loves coming to church

Youngest

Give children a few minutes to think, discuss, and write. Help children write, as needed. Invite sharing.

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can help control active bodies.

ACTIVITY 4: CHILD DEDICATION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Photos and memorabilia from child dedications in your congregation

Preparation for Activity

- Invite one or two families to tell the group about their child dedications. If inviting two families, one should have dedicated an older child and/or represent another diversity; seek out families with two moms, two dads, a single parent, or grandparents or other relatives raising children; families with multicultural ethnicities; and/or families whose dedication happened at another congregation, even in another faith.
- Offer visiting families these questions to help them prepare a five-minute or shorter presentation:
 - Why did they decide to have a child dedicated?
 - How old was the child? Was the child involved in the decision or the planning?

- Did the family help shape the ritual or did they follow a traditional or suggested ritual?
- Who was present? Who had a part in the ritual?
- What part did the congregation play? Refer to the Order of Service, if appropriate.
- Can they describe to what or whom they wished to dedicate their child?
- Did they and/or others, perhaps the congregation, dedicate themselves to the child? In what way?
- What did this ritual mean to them as UUs? As a family?
- Confirm the families' attendance during the the workshop.
- Gather items from child dedications to show the children: photos, an Order of Service, a Child Dedication certificate, or flowers or a chalice such as those used in child dedication ceremonies in your congregation. Include items the visiting families wish to bring, but, it is fine to have items from other families' child dedications; these are just examples.

Description of Activity

Participants learn how families in the congregation have honored new life and new beginnings with a child dedication ceremony.

Say, in these words or your own:

Our group has talked about how we use rituals as as signs of our faith. In our UU worship services, we have rituals to symbolize the opening and closings of our special worship time and space, rituals that show we support each other in good times and bad, and rituals that celebrate our common human experiences. Some rituals are associated with holidays. Others mark important changes, like birth, death, and becoming an adult.

Starting a new life is an important transition. As UUs, we sometimes use a ritual to honor new life and new beginnings, such as births and adoptions. A UU child dedication ritual is a sign of our reverence for life, our welcome of a new person, and our hope for the future of the world.

Some of you may have been dedicated in this UU congregation or in another one; some of you may not. It is not required in our faith that

children be dedicated. It a choice some families make as a sign of their UU faith. As you already know, one way to show faith is not better than another.

Introduce the guest families. Facilitate five-minute or shorter presentations, which may include passing around or showing the group items you and the families have brought. Before guests speak, let children know they may raise a hand to ask a question during the presentation—or, instruct them to remember their questions for after each speaker has finished.

Facilitate questions and answers and make sure the children have a chance to examine the mementoes families have brought.

Thank the guests and congratulate the children on giving a warm reception.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Optional: If children wear stoles for every Opening and Closing, distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Ask participants to share these fun activities with their parents and try them with family or friends.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Invite each child to name one way they show that they revere life. Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together.

FAITH IN ACTION: BABY CUDDLERS

Preparation for Activity

- At least three weeks ahead of time, invite a guest speaker to talk to the group about programs that enlist volunteers to rock babies in hospitals. Search the congregation or local hospitals for a speaker.
- Prepare the speaker to make a five- to ten-minute presentation: Tell them the age of the group and the theme of the session. Ask them to bring any photos or illustrations they may have. Also, ask if there is a way for children to help, such as making simple toys or writing thank you cards to the cuddlers; obtain the materials you will need for the children to do a craft. You might use Alternate Activity 1, Leadership in Action — Dolls for Dedication and have the children make cloth dolls for cuddlers to use on the job.

Description of Activity

Participants learn about baby cuddling or baby rocking—a way to give service that welcomes a newborn and shows reverence for their new life.

Introduce the guest speaker by saying that one way we show what we believe in is by what we dedicate our time to doing. Some adults (and perhaps youth—check with your guest) dedicate some of their time to helping sick newborn babies by offering them the warmth and love of close cuddling. Explain that these volunteers visit a hospital to cuddle and rock the babies that must stay in the hospital until they are healthy enough to go home with their families.

Invite the speaker to talk for five to ten minutes. Make sure there is time for questions. If the speaker suggested a craft activity the children can do to help, lead the activity. Thank your guest and congratulate the children on how well they welcomed them.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What have you learned that you can apply in the future? How did the children interact? Did everyone in the group enjoy the outdoor activity? How did time and logistics flow, with regard to the guests?

Read the next session and assign advance preparation to co-leaders.

TAKING IT HOME

... each of the three times I have been present at the birth of one of my children, I have been overwhelmed by a sense of reverence... It was quite suddenly, the first day of creation; the Goddess giving birth to a world... Like men since the beginning of time I wondered: What can I ever create that will equal the magnificence of this new life? — Sam Keen, author

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we said that, as Unitarian Universalists, we hold life sacred, in reverence. We talked about birth and new life. Births are special times in the lives of families and the congregation; child adoptions are also special, because they represent a new beginning in life. We examined how Unitarian Universalists celebrate births and beginnings with the ritual of child dedication, and what “dedication” means. We also talked about other ways people celebrate and honor new life.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... fairy tales where a new baby is received with special reverence, or dedicated. One is the tale of Sleeping Beauty: The mother wishes for a child and her wish comes true. The queen and king do not dedicate the baby as we might in a UU congregation. But the baby is blessed by wise women, with the same kinds of words one might hear in many naming ceremonies. Of course, the story includes a curse and a handsome prince—that part is different. Read the story on [If You Love to Read](http://www.ifyoulovetoread.com/book/chtwo_storiesfullsleeping.htm) (at www.ifyoulovetoread.com/book/chtwo_storiesfullsleeping.htm) or watch a movie version. Discuss it with family and friends. What part of the story do you like? What parts do you dislike? How are women and men portrayed in the story?

Family Adventure. Talk about your name. Does it hold a special meaning? Were you named after someone in your family, a friend, or a famous person? Why were you given the name you have? Does your name mean your parents hoped to “dedicate” you to something?

Family Game. Ask an older family member to create a name game with you. You will need paper to make a list, and index cards to write clues for the game. List the names of every family member you will be able to contact. Then, privately ask each family member about the origin of their name. They might tell you they are named after someone, or what their name means. They might say something like “My mother just liked the name!” Make this a game by writing each name on an index card. Write the origin of that name on another index card. Write a number on the backs of both cards so you will be able to match them later. To play, ask

family members to match each name with a story. Invite family members to play the game when you are together, such as at a holiday meal. Some family members may have more stories about one another's names. You may even find that people disagree about some of the stories!

Family Ritual. What rituals does your family have for welcoming a new member? Is there a ritual for when a new baby is born? Are there any rituals that were held when your parents or grandparents were born that your family does not use anymore? Talk to the elders in your family—grandparents, aunts, great uncles. Were they dedicated as a newborn or young child? Or did they have another kind of ceremony, perhaps in a church, a synagogue, or a special outdoor place?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — DOLLS FOR DEDICATIONS

Materials for Activity

- Yarn, in different colors
- Scissors, fabric glue, and fabric markers
- Refreshments
- Music and music player
- Optional: An attractive basket

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange a day, time, and space for a doll-making party. Plan to make the dolls in time to be included as gifts in any scheduled child dedication ceremonies at your congregation. Recruit adults or older youth to help organize and host the party.
- Find instructions on making simple yarn dolls. [eHow](http://www.ehow.com/how_4693381_make-yarn-doll-kids.html) (at www.ehow.com/how_4693381_make-yarn-doll-kids.html) has a set of instructions. If using these instructions, do not include buttons. Alternately, invite a congregational member to lead the craft.
- Plan to use a variety of colors of yarn and avoid light blue and pink.

Description of Activity

The children invite the congregation to a doll-making party.

Leadership in Action (LIA) invite children to take the lead in an activity that engages with the congregation. Through these activities, young people will start to see themselves as leaders in their faith.

Open the party by helping the children explain to the larger group why they are making the dolls and the importance of the congregation in a UU child dedication. Explain how to make the dolls and where to put finished dolls. Serve refreshments, play music.

Make dolls that are gender neutral. Make at least enough dolls for every child being dedicated. While making the dolls, invite all ages to discuss what they think a child dedication signifies. What hopes and dreams do they hold for the new lives? How are they willing to dedicate themselves to helping these children become the best they can be?

You might keep the dolls in an attractive basket. Arrange with worship leaders to invite each dedicated child (or a parent/caregiver, for babies) to choose a doll as a gift as part of the dedication ceremony or afterward.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: BAPTISMS AND NAMING CEREMONIES (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Rituals to Welcome a New Child](#) (included in this document)
- Drawing paper and crayons/markers

Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 2.

Description of Activity

Children explore ways different religions celebrate a birth.

Tell the group they will make name poems.

Distribute drawing paper and crayons/markers. Ask children to write their first name vertically along the left-hand side of their paper, like this:

S
A
L
L
Y

Challenge participants to think of a word or phrase that starts with each letter which describes them or is important to them. For example,

Sings

Artsy

Lemon pie

Loves coming to church

Youngest

Give children a few minutes to think, discuss, and write. Help children write, as needed.

Invite sharing. Ask participants what they like or do not like about their name. Affirm that our names are important to us—so important that many cultures have traditions for naming babies.

Share this information with the group, showing Leader Resource 2 if you choose:

Jewish families might have a naming ceremony in a synagogue, where a rabbi gives blessings to the new baby. There is also a special ceremony for boys, held when the baby is eight days old.

A Hindu family might have a naming ceremony, between a baby's 10th day of life and first birthday. The mother or father will whisper the name they have chosen into the baby's ear, before the name is announced to family members and guests.

Many cultures hold naming ceremonies for babies. Sometimes they are religious and sometimes not.

Ask if anyone has ever been to a naming ceremony.

Other religions have different ways of welcoming babies. Some Christian families might have a baby baptized. A minister or priest will touch the baby with water which has been blessed so it is considered holy. Aside from being a blessing, like a child dedication, the ritual welcomes the child into the faith community and provides an opportunity for family and church members to dedicate themselves to helping the child become a good Christian. At a baptism, people who are close to the family might be named a godfather or godmother for the baby. That means they agree to help protect the child and to guide the child to live by their religious faith. Infant baptisms are sometimes called christenings.

Ask, "Do you think other major religions consider life sacred, too?" Affirm that they do, though they sometimes show it in different ways.

Ask if there are any questions about ways different religions celebrate new life.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: RELIGIOUS BIRTH DAYS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, [Holy Babies](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 4, [For So the Children Come](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 3. Keep one copy intact; with the other copy, separate the images from the names so participants can match them.
- Print Leader Resource 4, *For So the Children Come*. If the group includes strong readers and you wish children to participate in this responsive reading, make copies for children to share. (You may wish to enlarge the type.) Otherwise, make one copy so co-leaders can each take a part in reading aloud.

Description of Activity

A matching game highlights the importance of births in religions. This game helps Children identify several religious births and leads into a conversation about what Unitarian Universalism has to say about whose birth is important.

Say, in these words or your own:

Many religions have stories about babies—babies who grew up to be holy people, or babies who a religion considers gods. I am going to tell you some birth stories from different religions. Let's see if you can match pictures of the babies with my stories.

Display the images where all the children can see them. Read the descriptions below, in any order you wish. As you finish each one, invite the children to choose which baby has been described:

Baby Jesus (1) — Jesus was known to be special from the moment he was born. Shepherds in their fields saw a message in the stars at night, and traveled to bring rare spices as gifts to welcome the baby. Jesus grew up to be a kind, wise teacher. In Christianity, Jesus is considered both a real person who lived on earth and a Divine being, the son of God.

Baby Moses (2) — To save his life, Moses's mother put him in a basket and sailed him down the river. He was not alone: His sister watched from the bushes. He was discovered by the Egyptian princess, who raised him as her son. When Moses grew up, he discovered he belonged to the Jewish people who were enslaved in Egypt, and heard a call from God to lead his people to another land where they could be free. Moses was an important prophet of Israel who brought the people the Ten Commandments from God.

Baby Krishna (3) — Krishna's parents had to hide him, too, because his uncle was afraid of a prophecy that the child would conquer him and take the throne. Krishna was hidden away until he was safe. In Hindu religion, the baby Krishna was a new, human body to live in for

Lord Vishnu, a god who had lived before but not in human form.

Birth of Aphrodite (4) — She had no parents. She was born of the sea. She came riding to shore on the ocean surf, on a shell, fully grown. She is the Greek goddess of love and beauty.

Baby Buddha (5) — This baby's mother was Queen Maya, of India. She dreamed that a white elephant pierced her with its tusks and then disappeared into her. The kings called wise men to interpret the dream. They declared that Maya would give birth to a son. They said if the son became a ruler, he would be great. However, if he ever left the household, he would become a great holy man, the Buddha. The king tried to keep his son inside the royal compound. Yet, he did escape and became a great holy man. Nowadays, to celebrate his birthday, some Buddhist people pour tea over statues of him.

The Birth of Ganesha (6) — Pavarti created a boy from the dirt of her body to protect her house. He was so good at his job, he would not even let her husband, Shiva, in. Shiva sent other gods to defeat the boy. One of them cut off his head. Pavarti was grief-stricken and Shiva felt badly, so he brought the boy back to life but could not find his head. He promised to give the boy the head of the next creature he encountered, which happened to be an elephant. Pavarti assigned the boy to be a new god, Ganesha, remover of obstacles. Ganesha is still prayed to today.

Afterward, invite further questions about these prophets and divine beings, and share what you know.

Then say, in your own words:

As Unitarian Universalists, we draw wisdom from many different religions So we believe is important that Jesus and Buddha were born, and Moses, and Muhammad, the prophet who founded the Muslim religion. We also find wisdom outside of religions—so we also believe it is important that wise, courageous people were born like Harriet Tubman, and Florence Nightingale, and Aung San Suu Kyi And of course, each and every one of us has wisdom and courage to help the world. So it is important that my parents were born, and your parents, and that you were born. We believe all people are important and all their births deserve celebrating.

A famous UU, Sophia Lyon Fahs, wrote a poem about this topic.

Share the poem (Leader Resource 4) as a responsive reading. Invite participants to read the italicized lines, or have co-leaders alternate the parts. If your congregation

reads this piece during Christmas Eve services, remind the group of this and that the holiday of Christmas celebrates the birth of a baby who grew up to be an important prophet, Jesus.

Ask the children what words of the poem they remember. Ask what they think the poem means. Remind participants that the First UU Principle is "Each person is important." And so, each of our births is important, too.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 5: STORY: HANNAH DEDICATES SAMUEL TO THE LORD

From the Hebrew Scriptures, 1 Samuel 1:10-17, 20,
New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Hannah was a very religious woman. She spent her days praying and trying to serve God by being a good woman and good wife. She wanted to be a good mother, too, but she did not have children. This made her sad.

One day, she went to the temple, her house of worship, to pray to God for a son. She sat outside the temple, crying and praying. She prayed to God, reminding God that she was God's servant and wanted but one thing only. Then she made a promise. She said: "Oh, God Almighty, if you will only see my misery and remember me by giving me a son, then I will give my son to serve you, God, for all the days of his life."

A priest at the temple, Eli, saw her sitting outside. Because she was behaving strangely, he thought she

was a vagrant. "Why are you hanging around the temple?" he asked. Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief, asking God to grant my prayer." Eli was moved by how earnestly she was praying and said, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

Several months later, Hannah gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

Baby Samuel lived with his family and they loved him very much. But when Samuel was old enough, Hannah made good on her promise to dedicate him to God. She took Samuel to the temple to live with the priests and Eli promised to take good care of him. Every year, Hannah and Samuel's father visited him at the temple. Samuel did not want his mother to be lonely, so he blessed her and prayed for her. She had more children, and was a good mother to them. Samuel, who had been dedicated to God, became a prophet of his people and a leader of Israel.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 5:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: 1 SAMUEL 1: 10-17, 20

From the Hebrew Scriptures, 1 Samuel 1:10-17, 20, *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*.

She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: 'O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a Nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.'

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, 'How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.' But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.' Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.' And she said, 'Let your servant find favour in your sight.' Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. In due time, Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, 'I have asked him of the Lord.'

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 5: LEADER RESOURCE 2: RITUALS TO WELCOME A NEW CHILD

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/naming_ceremonies.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/naming_ceremonies.pdf) for printing.

Image 1: Baptism from [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Girl_at_catholic_christening.jpg) (at commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Girl_at_catholic_christening.jpg); Little girl at Catholic christening. Taken September, 2005 by Nils Fretwurst.

Image 2: Jewish Naming Ceremony from [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SabatoBirkatKohanimBrit.JPG) (at commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SabatoBirkatKohanimBrit.JPG); Rabbi Haim Sabbato blessing the baby with Birkat Kohanim at a brit mila. Taken January 18, 2011.





SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 5: LEADER RESOURCE 3: HOLY BABIES

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/holy_babies.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/holy_babies.pdf) for printing.

Image 1: Baby Jesus

Image 2: Baby Moses

Image 3: Baby Krishna

Image 4: Birth of Aphrodite

Image 5: Baby Buddha, from [Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple](http://www.hsilai.org/) (at www.hsilai.org/). Used with permission.

Image 6: Birth of Ganesha













SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 5:

LEADER RESOURCE 4: FOR SO THE CHILDREN COME

By Sophia Lyon Fahs.

For so the children come

And so they have been coming.

Always in the same way they come—

Born of the seed of man and woman.

No angels herald their beginnings

No prophets predict their future courses

No wise men see a star to show

where to find the babe that will save humankind

Yet each night a child is born is a holy night.

Fathers and mothers—sitting beside their children's cribs—

feel glory in the sight of a new life beginning.

They ask, "Where and how will this new life end?

Or will it ever end?"

Each night a child is born is a holy night—

A time for singing,

A time for wondering,

A time for worshipping.

FIND OUT MORE

["We Dedicate This Child"](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=537) is a pamphlet by Unitarian Universalist minister Linda Olsen Peebles, available from the UUA Bookstore, about the UU ritual of child dedication.

Find sample child dedication liturgies online, including one posted by the [Unitarian Universalist of Puerto Rico](#) (at www.uupuertorico.org/child%20dedication.html) and [one written by minister Dan Harper](#) (at www.danielharper.org/misc3.htm). *Bless This Child: A*

Treasury of Poems, Quotations and Readings to Celebrate Birth (Boston: Skinner House, 2005) has UU resources collected by Edward Searl that can be used in ceremonies to celebrate birth. Another resource is Carl Seaburg's *Great Occasions: Readings for the Celebration of Birth, Coming-of-Age, Marriage, and Death* (Boston: Skinner House, 1984).

The Harvard Square Library has a [short biography of the religious educator Sophia Lyon Fahs](#) (at www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/fahs.html).

SESSION 6: SIGNS OF CARING

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. — Leo F. Buscaglia

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe members of communities take care of each other. This session identifies ways we care for others in our families, at school, in the congregation, and in the wider world. Children learn about the common Unitarian Universalist ritual of sharing our joys and concerns. Many congregations include Sharing of Joys and Concerns in worship. However, if your congregation call this ritual by a different name or conducts it in a different manner than is described in this session, replace the details with ones that fit your congregation. Feel free to include other rituals around caring that your congregation may practice.

GOALS

This session will:

- Identify actions and experiences of caring for others and being cared for, in the congregation and in other communities
- Demonstrate that actions of taking care of one another are ways to be UU every day
- Introduce Sharing of Joys and Concerns, a UU ritual of caring

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand a Sharing of Joys and Concerns ritual as a symbol of our UU belief that we are interconnected and must care for one another
- Share joys and concerns in the Signs of Our Faith community

- Identify themselves as loving individuals, capable of providing care and worthy of receiving care, and understand that caring actions can be a sign of their UU faith
- Demonstrate caring, by making "caring candles" for the congregation.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Joys and Concerns	15
Activity 2: Story — This Morning...	20
Activity 3: Candle Decorating	20
Faith in Action: Celebration Kits	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Children's Caring Team	
Alternate Activity 2: Skits	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Think about your childhood. Can you remember a time when a friend or a family member told you something important that was happening in their life? Did you understand that simply by listening, you showed that you cared? Letting others into our lives is not always easy. For some adults, it is much harder than when we were young. Feelings of vulnerability can sometimes prevent us from connecting heart to heart. If you have not had a recent opportunity to care for someone or receive another's care by sharing a joy or concern, seek such an opportunity. Consider using Activity 1, Joys and Concerns to do it. What joy or concern can you comfortably and appropriately share with the children that will deepen your connection to them?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle. Write the Opening words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice, and recite together:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together to learn. Together to care for each other in good times and bad. Together to celebrate the traditions of our faith.

ACTIVITY 1: JOYS AND CONCERNS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- LED battery-operated candles, for all participants and co-leaders plus one extra

Preparation for Activity

- Think of a joy or concern that is appropriate and comfortable for you to share with the group, to model the activity.
- If needed, place the chalice on a table accessible to the children with enough space for all their candles.

Description of Activity

The group participates in Sharing of Joys and Concerns.

Invite the group to share a time for joys and concerns. If this practice is unfamiliar to your congregation or the children, you might say:

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe it is important that we take care of each other. When we care for each other, our connections to each other become stronger. The interconnectedness of us all is part of our seventh Principle. Sharing good times and bad times helps us to be more caring people, and being caring people is one way we are UU every day.

Sometimes we share our good and bad times in a ritual during worship services. Sometimes this is called Joys and Concerns. "Joys" are things that have happened that make us happy; "concerns" are events that make us worried or sad. What are some of the reasons we share good and bad news with each other?

If participants do not suggest these, mention:

- So we can comfort and help each other.
- So we can celebrate together.
- Keeping each other informed of important events in our lives, so we can feel closer to each other/so we can think of ways to help each other.
- We might be able to help someone if we have gone through a difficult event like one they are experiencing.
- Some people might not have family or close friends with whom they share their feelings.

Ask participants to think for a moment:

Is there something that has happened to you recently that you would like to share with the group? It can be something you are happy about or something that makes you sad or concerned.

Give each child a battery-operated candle. Invite children to light a candle, place it near the chalice, and share their joy or concern with the group. Explain that each person may come up, one at a time, to light a candle and if they wish to speak aloud, say their joy or concern, and that after each person has shared, the group will sit in silence together for a few moments. Say:

Let's listen to each sharing in silence. Later, it is okay to talk to the person and offer support if you feel you can be helpful or congratulations if you wish.

Tell participants that if they do not want to say their joy or concern, that is fine. They are welcome to take a turn and light a candle in silence.

Go first to model sharing a brief joy or concern. Then encourage children to take turns. After everyone who wants to participate has shared, light one last candle and say:

This is for all the joys and concerns that we hold silently in our hearts.

Sit in silence for a moment. Then, process with these questions:

- What was this ritual like for you?
- Have you ever taken part in a ritual like this?
- Have you witnessed sharing like this during worship before? How was this similar or different?
- Have you ever talked with a friend before about your, or their, happy, sad, or worried feelings? What is different about sharing privately with one friend, and sharing together in our group with a Joys and Concerns ritual?
- What does lighting a candle and sharing a joy or concern have to do with caring? [Often we have deep feelings we need to share. Talking about a bad day can make us feel better. Talking about a good day brings back good feelings. When we hear about important events in people's lives, we feel closer to them. If we know they are sad, we can comfort them or can do something to help. For example, if a person shared that there was a death in the family, someone might cook a meal and take it to their family. If someone shared news they feel good about, we can congratulate them and share in their joy. In a community, we share the good times and bad together. We support each other because we love and care about each other.]
- Why do you think we sit in silence after someone shares their feelings or experiences? [Affirm that our silence shows that we are really listening. It shows we are willing to take some time to focus on that person and the news or feelings shared.]

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THIS MORNING... (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[This Morning...](#)" (included in this document) "
- Leader Resource 1, [Illustration - Greeting](#) (included in this document)

- LED battery-operated candles, one for each participant (from Activity 1)
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling it to the group.
- Prepare to tell or read the story to the group using the greeting illustration.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

The group hears a story about many different ways members of the congregation take care of each other.

Tell participants the story they are about to hear is full of different actions people take to care for each other. Then read or tell the story.

Then say that you will share the story again. This time, when someone in the story does a caring action, they may stand up (or raise a hand) and hold up a lighted candle. Pass out the LED, battery-operated candles used in Activity 1. Read the story slowly. Then, process the story with these questions:

- Name some of the ways people cared for each other in the story.
- Have you ever noticed any of those actions at the congregation? Have you done any of these caring actions yourself?
- What are some other ways we care for each other in our congregation?
- Why do we take care of each other in this congregation?
- How would you describe a caring person?

Choose an example of a caring action from the story—for example, Kamal sharing his hymnbook with a visitor, or the baby's mother telling Kamal she was sorry his friend Abby was sick—and ask, "How do you think the person being cared for felt? How do you think the person felt who did the caring action?"

Invite the children to think of a time they helped somebody, in a big or small way, either here at the

congregation or someplace else. Ask for volunteers to tell the group what they did and how it felt.

Affirm that you are glad that the participants are caring people.

Including All Participants

If standing will be difficult for any participants, ask the group to hold up their candles or shout, "I care!"

ACTIVITY 3: CANDLE DECORATING (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Sheets of beeswax
- Small cookie cutters
- Candles, at least one inch in diameter

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange with the worship committee, minister, and/or religious educator for the children to decorate candles for congregational use during a Sharing of Joys and Concerns or similar ritual. Make sure flame-lit candles may be used in the congregation's worship space, and that worship leaders are comfortable with the use of beeswax to decorate candles—some vegans may object.
- Obtain materials. Beeswax sheets may be available in a craft store; or, order online from a vendor such as [Candlewic](http://www.candlewic.com/Store/Category.aspx?q=c70) (at www.candlewic.com/Store/Category.aspx?q=c70). Look for cookie cutters small enough for shapes to wrap onto a candle, in various, appropriate shapes such as hearts or stars.
- Test this activity with the materials you plan to use. Make sure the cookie cutters will create beeswax shapes small enough to fit on the candles you have chosen. You will need to press the beeswax shapes firmly onto the candles for them to stick.
- Optional: Arrange for the children to speak to the congregation about why they decorated the candles and to place them at the altar during a worship service.

Description of Activity

Children decorate "caring candles."

Say that the group will do something now that will be a sign to others in the congregation that the children care.

Indicate the supplies and invite participants to cut out shapes from the beeswax to decorate the candles, then press the shapes firmly to the candles until they stick.

While children work, ask them to think about how we all experience good times and bad times. Think about times when someone cared enough about them to celebrate good news or to be with them when they were sad or worried. Maybe these decorated care candles will help comfort the people who will light them during joys and concerns. Knowing the children decorated the candles especially to show caring may help people feel loved in the community and better connected to other members.

If you have arranged for children to present the candles during a worship service, help them articulate what they can say.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together. Have them store their stoles in the place you have designated. Stoles should stay at the congregation and not go home with children.

FAITH IN ACTION: CELEBRATION KITS

Preparation for Activity

- Confer with worship leaders and your religious educator to gather suggestions for worship services that are appropriate for giving individuals a kit.
- Choose one or two simple craft activities for children to make items for kits, and obtain materials.
- Purchase additional items for kits, gift bags, and decorating materials. If possible, present this idea some days before leading this activity, so children will have an opportunity to brainstorm items to include.

Description of Activity

The group helps congregants celebrate good times.

Often, after sharing has happened in Joys and Concerns, people focus on supporting congregants going through difficult times. This is good. Yet, it is also nice to know that others join you in celebrating happy events in your life. Children can help members of the congregation recognize one another's joys by creating celebration kits.

Ask the group for reasons why someone might light a candle of joy. These include births, adoptions, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, recovering from an illness or accident, getting accepted into a school or program, and getting a new job, among other joys.

Brainstorm low cost items the kit could include to help a person celebrate. Consider:

- A congratulations card
- Party horns
- Mardi Gras beads or leis
- Brightly colored candy
- Small photo frame to hold a memento of their happy day.

Children can create congratulation cards featuring balloons or smiley faces, with the message "Thanks for sharing your happiness!" inside.

Put together items in small gift bags and tie the bags with ribbon. Tell the children who will receive the kits, and if appropriate, engage their suggestions. Keep in mind that the group cannot make enough for every joy shared every week. Perhaps it is given to children who share a joy at a particular multigenerational worship

service or to elders or people sharing during a service with an appropriate theme (caring, community, joy, etc.). If the congregation receives the idea of the kit well, perhaps a committee will undertake producing them regularly.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What are some lessons to learn for next time? How did the children interact? Was the theme of the lesson communicated clearly? Remember always to spend time with your co-leader reviewing future sessions for activities needing long-term planning.

TAKING IT HOME

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. — Leo F. Buscaglia

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we lifted up caring for members of our community as a sign of being UU. We showed that we care about one another by doing a Unitarian Universalist ritual of Sharing Joys and Concerns. In this ritual, we have a chance to speak about how we feel and know we will be heard, and loved, and to listen to one another. The ritual of Sharing Joys and Concerns symbolizes how we take care of each other, in good times and bad. There are many other ways we take care of people in our congregation and in the other communities to which we belong.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... ways your family helps care for others in the congregation.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... caring for your faith even when you are not at our congregation. Share ideas on how you could do this. Do you sing UU songs in the car? Do you say a grace to give thanks at meals? Do you light a chalice at home, or read stories by UU authors?

Family Adventure. One way to show caring for your UU community is to help care for the building where the congregation meets. Be family stewards of the building. Help host a family spruce up day. Think of jobs for people of all ages and abilities to do, so everyone has a chance to help take care of the building and grounds.

Family Discovery. Look for a new way to help take care of a family member. Maybe you can read a bedtime story to a younger sibling, or learn to make a parent's favorite beverage.

Family Ritual. Create a new caring ritual. Perhaps arriving home after religious education, your family lights a chalice and everyone shares at least one new thing they discovered about their faith today. This shows you care about learning about Unitarian Universalism. Or, try a new ritual to help people in your family pay attention to the caring that is already in your lives. Once a week, invite each family member to tell about a kind action they performed, a kind action they received, and a kind action they intend to perform in the coming week.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — CHILDREN'S CARING TEAM

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Name tags, markers, and heart stickers

Preparation for Activity

- Talk to parents about this idea first. You will need their support.
- Prepare a list of adults who might want to help. Start with past or current members of the congregational caring committee or team.

Description of Activity

Participants form a caring team.

Leadership in Action (LIA) activities provide opportunities for children to take the lead in an activity that engages with the congregation, and begin to see themselves as leaders in their faith.

Your congregation probably has a team or committee that cares for individuals and families when help is needed. Tell the children about this team. Ask if they would like to form a Caring Team for Kids. Brainstorm actions they can take to help kids who might need caring attention. For example:

- Making and mailing cards (Who doesn't like to get mail?)
- Visiting children who are sick or injured
- Offering to feed, walk, or play with pets when their owners cannot do it
- Help organize parties for new children or children who are moving away.

Though they may not be able to prepare dinners, they can make up snack baskets. If some ideas are impractical, help the group adapt them into an idea with the same intent that is more realistic.

Engage some adults aside from parents to help the caring team. Have the group make name tags together or find their congregational name tags before hosting a caring event; team members of all ages can place heart stickers on their name tags to help people identify them.

Publicize the Children's Caring Team. Let the congregation know the ways the team can help care for children experiencing hard times. Assign two or more adults to keep alert for news about children and others who might welcome care from this team.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SKITS (20 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Identify nearby spaces where casts can rehearse.
- Optional: If the congregation has a costume and/or prop box, secure it for this session.

Description of Activity

Participants perform skits of caring.

Invite the group to think about situations where someone has cared for them or they have cared for someone else. It can involve the congregation or other communities. Tell them they will have the opportunity to act out their examples. Ask them to raise their hand when they have an example. Call on the first child. Guide them to imagine their example as a play or skit. Invite them to choose other participants and assign them roles. Say that the child whose example will be performed is the "director;" the director should not have an acting role, and they must be sure to listen to the ideas of the children in the cast. Cast as many skits as you can. Make sure every child is involved with a skit, even if you have to add a character or two.

Bring each cast to a separate part of your meeting space, or to nearby spaces they can use to rehearse. Indicate where they can find costumes and props, and give them about five minutes for rehearsal.

Monitor rehearsals. Watch that the "directors" treat cast members with respect. You might remind children to show caring while working on a skit about caring. Also watch for stereotypical casting or behavior: Girls should not be the only ones needing help, boys can do more than lift and tote, and smaller, shyer children are not less able to demonstrate caring actions.

Reconvene the large group and let each cast present its skit. After each skit, lead the group to name who was helped and how.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 6: STORY: THIS MORNING...

At breakfast on Sunday, Kamal's mother reminded him that today it was their turn to be greeters at their congregation. Normally, Kamal loved greeting all the members and visitors who entered the building at his Unitarian Universalist congregation. It was fun to go early, be the first to arrive, and set up the greeter's table. Yet, today, he seemed less enthusiastic.

"What's wrong, Kamal?" his mother, Sherri asked.

"I was thinking about Abby. She won't be at the worship service today because she's still in the hospital. I'm going to miss her. This Sunday just won't be the same."

"I understand. It's hard to look forward to today when someone important to you is having a hard time. Would you like to sit this Sunday out? I can greet by myself, or ask someone else to help."

Kamal said, "No. People expect to see me there, so I better do it."

At the greeter's table, Kamal and his mother met with a smile every single person who came through the door. They answered questions from visitors. Kamal told a new little boy about the things he liked to do best at church. Sherri invited the boy's father to the next week's holiday party.

Dr. Reynolds brought a big vase of flowers she had arranged for the altar. Sherri held the door for her. Kamal picked up a flower that had fallen out and gave it to Dr. Reynolds. She asked him to pick a spot to put it back in the vase. "That's perfect, Kamal. I bet you would make a good flower arranger," she said. This made Kamal smile.

Sherri did not have to hold the door for Mr. Andrews. He waved "hello," then pushed the red button beside the automated door which opened for him to roll through in his wheelchair.

Everyone was busy. In the nursery, volunteers made sure there were diapers and wipes to take care of the babies. In the RE rooms, leaders were setting up supplies and snacks for their groups. In the sanctuary, the music director made sure the piano was in tune and a volunteer set up microphones, so everyone would be able to hear the service. Someone was making fresh coffee; they dumped the used coffee grounds and filters in the garden's compost bin.

When Kamal and Sherri sat down in the service, Kamal noticed that the visitors sitting beside them did not have a hymnbook. He offered to share his, so they could sing, too.

During worship, the service leader introduced the time for Sharing of Joys and Concerns. People lined up to light a candle and share important events in their lives. Kamal did not recognize the two women who went first. "This is our new son. We waited a long time for him to arrive from Russia, and it was worth it!" they said. Kamal whispered to his mother "We light candles for both joys and concerns, right? Could I light a candle for Abby?"

Kamal and Sherri approached the altar. Kamal said, into the microphone, "This candle is for my friend, Abby. She is sick and in the hospital, so she couldn't come today. Please keep her in your thoughts and prayers." And then he added, "And her family, too, so they don't worry too much." After the last candle, the minister calls for a moment of silence.

After worship, Kamal went to see the new baby. One of the baby's mothers let Kamal hold him, but then the baby began to cry and Kamal handed him back. The mother sang softly to quiet the baby. Then she said, "Kamal, we are sorry to hear about your friend. We hope she can come home from the hospital soon."

"Thanks," Kamal said. "I hope so too!" He realized that other people knew how it feels to have a friend who is sick, and he was glad he had shared. He thought to himself, "Next time, maybe I will have a 'joy' to share, and that will feel nice, too."

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 6: LEADER RESOURCE 1: ILLUSTRATION - GREETING

Illustration by Ginger Wyatt.

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/greeting.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/greeting.pdf) for printing.



FIND OUT MORE

Generation On, an affiliate of the multi-city Hands On Network, has a [Kids Care Club website](http://www.kidscare.org/) (at www.kidscare.org/) that lists service projects appropriate for young people to expand their circle of caring out into the world.

To help children becoming caring individuals, we need to develop their compassion and empathy. Hear a TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) by Buddhist teacher [Joan Halifax](http://www.ted.com/talks/joan_halifax.html) (at www.ted.com/talks/joan_halifax.html) on the nature of compassion and why we must cultivate it in our children.

The UUA's Tapestry of Faith curricula offer many activities and reflections to develop caring, compassion,

and empathy. Look in Moral Tales ([Session 8, Do Unto Others](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/tales/session8/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/tales/session8/index.shtml)), Toolbox of Faith ([Session 13, Love](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/toolbox/session13/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/toolbox/session13/index.shtml)), and the three children's curricula whose themes are love: [Love Surrounds Us](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/lovesurrounds/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/lovesurrounds/index.shtml), [Love Will Guide Us](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveguide/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveguide/index.shtml), and [Love Connects Us](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveconnects/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveconnects/index.shtml)).

SESSION 7: WE SHARE

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

*We are here that we might have life
and have it more abundantly,
so that we might share it with others.
Come, let us join together
as a generous people. — John. C. Morgan*

Children explore contexts in which they can practice sharing as sign of Unitarian Universalist faith. They discuss ways they share with family, friends, neighbors, the congregation, and the world. They understand that they are better at sharing now than when they were younger, and that this is a sign of maturity.

Children learn about the flower, water, and bread rituals many Unitarian Universalist congregations and discover how these rituals highlight sharing as a UU value. Use the Alternate Activities to tie this session into any communion rituals of your congregation.

GOALS

This session will:

- Examine how sharing plays a role in life with family, with friends, in the congregation, in other communities, and across the world
- Demonstrate that sharing is a way to be UU every day
- Introduce the concept of Unitarian Universalist communion as a ritual of sharing.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify themselves as people who know how and why to share
- Understand UU rituals
- Experience saying a grace over food as a ritual that affirms sharing

- Acknowledge sharing as a religious value and commit to sharing as a way to be UU every day.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Mine!	15
Activity 2: The Ritual of Communion	15
Activity 3: Story — Jesus Feeds the Multitude	15
Activity 4: Saying Grace	10
Faith in Action: Sharing Fun Times	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Helping with a Communion	
Alternate Activity 2: Leadership in Action — Planting Flowers for Flower Ceremony	
Alternate Activity 3: Shared Space	30
Alternate Activity 4: Communion Display	30
Alternate Activity 5: Clothing to Share	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Generation after generation, adults make commitments to help shape the characters of young people. What a gift to the world! As a leader of this program, you share of yourself with children in your congregation. What does this sharing mean to you? Why do you share yourself in this way? Who were important teachers in your life? What did they share that you still carry today?

Discuss these questions with a co-leader. Does teaching have the same meaning for them?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle. Write the Opening words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice, and recite together:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists
and members of the Signs of Our Faith
community.

Together to learn, together to share faithful
leadership, together to celebrate the traditions of
our faith.

Tell the group that today you will talk about sharing as a sign of our UU faith.

ACTIVITY 1: MINE! (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Simple items such as a toy, a book, or a blanket for role play

Description of Activity

Children role play sharing and not sharing. They discuss the value in sharing and sharing as a sign of their UU faith.

Ask participants if they have ever seen little children struggle over a toy or something else they will not share. Say that this is natural: When very young children want something someone else has, they do not understand why they cannot have it and they are focused only on themselves. Brainstorm scenarios where this might happen. You might suggest siblings arguing over sitting on a parent's lap, two children trying to play with the

same toy, fighting over whose turn it is to play a game, or a child with candy who gives some to one friend, but not to everyone. Let a few volunteers role-play scenarios of not sharing.

Now say, in these words or your own:

You are all getting older. You have learned to think not only about making yourself happy, but about making other people happy, too. You have had to learn to share. It is not always easy. Everyone has to learn to share, and keep relearning it, too—even adults sometimes have a hard time sharing.

Invite the group to demonstrate how they have learned, now that they are older, to share. Ask for volunteers to re-enact scenarios, this time with sharing instead of without. Then, ask for examples of what sharing looks like now, in their own lives as older children. Prompt:

- When was a time you loaned a friend or sibling a game, or a book?
- Have you sat in a crowded auditorium, or ridden a crowded bus, and had to share space with someone?
- Sharing can mean working together. Have you shared a job, like folding laundry or cleaning your room, with someone at home? Have you shared the work on a project at school?

Now say:

The older you get, the more ways there are to share. When you are a grown-up, you might share an apartment with someone. You might share a car that you can drive when it is your turn. You might have money of your own that you sometimes share with others. You will have jobs to do with other people, where you will share the work, and also the credit when you get it done.

Invite the children to role play sharing, as adults.

Ask:

- What is easy to share? What is hard?
- Is it harder to share something when you only a little of it?
- Can you tell us about a time that it was hard for you to share, but you did it?
- Can you tell us about a time someone shared with you, when you know it was hard for them to do it?

- What do you share with your family? With your friends or neighbors? Can you think of something you share with your town, or even the world? [Sidewalks and roads, public transportation, food grown on farms or fish caught in the sea, books from the library, air, water, our planet.]
- What is shared at our congregation? [Crayons, hymnbooks, chairs, food.] What would it look like if people at the congregation would not share? [If participants seem interested, role play congregants not sharing.]
- Do you think sharing is a way to be UU every day? Why or why not?

Affirm:

We share because sharing is one way we can make our world more fair, so everyone has something, as opposed to some people having a lot and others having nothing. We share because it usually more fun to share than to be alone. We share because sharing is one way we can take care of each other.

ACTIVITY 2: THE RITUAL OF COMMUNION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: Photos of communion rituals at your congregation
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Prepare to teach it to the group and lead them in singing. Or, invite a volunteer to come to this session and teach the song.
- Write "Flower ceremony," "Water communion," and "Bread communion" as headings on three sheets of newsprint. Draw flowers, water, and bread under the headings. If you have congregational photos of previous communions, add these to the newsprint. Leave room for a co-leader to write important words while you describe each communion ritual to the children.
- Read the descriptions below of UU communion rituals. Adapt the descriptions to fit the practices

of your congregation. Consult congregational worship leaders to learn more about your congregation's practices and (optional) to obtain photos to display.

Description of Activity

Participants learn a hymn and learn about UU rituals of sharing.

Teach Hymn 402, "From You I Receive."

Say, in your own words:

Why do people share? Because the world works better when we do. It would be very hard for every person to make and grow everything they need in life. Someone grows onions and carrots, and someone else makes bowls and spoons, and a third person works at the electrical plant that brings energy to your house to heat up your stove. Together, they can make a bowl of hot soup.

Another example of sharing happens at our congregational potlucks. Someone brings dessert, someone else brings vegetables, and another person might set up the tables and chairs. Have you ever been to a shared meal at our congregation? Did your family share by bringing a dish or setting up or eating?

There is another kind of sharing which is harder to see. Did you ever teach someone how to do something, or have someone else teach you? Have you ever told someone one of your special wishes, or one of your fears? Have you listened when someone else told you about something special to them? That is a kind of sharing too, when you share of yourself. In our families and at our congregation, we share more than just material things like food and furniture. We also share our hopes and dreams, our fears, our laughter, and our tears. We share what we have learned in school and what we have learned just from living. We share stories about ourselves, about people we know, and stories from all around the world. When we gather together in worship, we might share our joys or concerns, or feelings and ideas we think are important.

Today we will talk about rituals Unitarian Universalists can do in our worship services to symbolize sharing and how important it is to us. These are called rituals of communion.

Some Christian religions have a Holy Communion ritual. In Holy Communion, each person receives a wafer and either wine or juice, with a blessing from a worship leader, as a symbol for the connection they share with

Jesus. UU congregations do not have a Holy Communion, but many celebrate other types of communions. The most common ones are flower ceremony, water communion, and bread communion. Like the Christian Holy Communion, UU communion rituals are about sharing connections.

Share these descriptions of flower ceremony, water communion, and bread communion with the group. Ask your co-leader to write important words on the appropriate newsprint sheets as you talk.

Flower Ceremony

For flower ceremony, everyone brings a flower. Some people bring extra. All the flowers are gathered together and blessed. The flowers are a symbol for the congregation: Each one is unique, and all have a place in one big beautiful bouquet.

The flowers are different, but also have things in common. Some might come from a garden, some from a store. But every flower is a sign that the person who brought it loves their congregation and the people in it. They think the people of the congregation are as special and beautiful as flowers.

In the Flower Ceremony, everyone takes home a different flower than the one they brought. This action is a symbol for how we share with each other our beauty, our uniqueness, our very lives.

Flower ceremony was started in 1923 by Norbert Capek, a Unitarian minister from Czechoslovakia and has been celebrated in this country since the 1940s.

Ask:

- What kind of flower would you bring?
- The flowers may be very pretty, but should you take all the flowers when it is your turn? [No, because we share during flower ceremony.]
- What if someone is new and didn't know to bring a flower? What if they forgot or their flower was damaged on the way to worship? Should they still take a flower? [Yes. Other people always bring extra flowers for just such situations, so there will be enough.]
- What would you say to a visitor who was unsure about taking a flower? [Please take a flower! We are happy to share! Today, you are part of the congregation. Please let us share the beauty of this flower with you. UUs like to share.]

Water Communion

For water communion, people bring small amounts of water they have collected. One at a time, everyone

pours their water into one huge bowl which is placed in the front of the sanctuary. Sometimes waters are poured in silently; sometimes people tell where their water came from. Many congregations hold water communion at an Ingathering service after the summer, when it is the start of a new church year. Some people have traveled over the summer and they bring water from someplace far away. Other people bring rainwater from outside their home, or water from their kitchen faucet. Sharing our waters is a symbol that even though we are all different, unique people who have been all sorts of places doing many different activities, we come back together to share who we are and where we have been. Sharing our waters is a sign that we plan to nourish and refresh one another, as water has nourished and refreshed each of us. After a water communion, some congregations water the gardens with the water, or boil it and use it in another ritual to bless new babies.

Ask:

- What water would you bring? What container would you bring it in?
- You might have water from five different places and five stories to tell about collecting all that water. But should you spend minutes and minutes telling the congregation about your stories? [No, because we also share time at our congregation. Sharing time and taking fair turns is another way we are UU every day.]

Bread Communion

In bread communion, people bring different kinds of bread to share. Some bring breads that are part of their cultural heritage, like pita bread from the Middle East, or Irish soda bread. Sometimes people share stories about the bread during the worship service. People volunteer in the kitchen before the service, cutting and tearing the loaves into bite-sized pieces. The kitchen volunteers are lucky because they get to see all the different yummy breads brought in. The bread is blessed and baskets are passed around for everyone to take a piece. Breads around the world are very different, but, every civilization that has ever lived on the earth has made some type of bread. This communion reminds us that we all need food to live, that we must share our one earth which feeds us all. It also reminds us to share our unique gifts with one another, so all can be fed.

Ask:

- If you could bring any bread to a bread communion, what would you bring?

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Jesus Feeds the Multitude](#) (included in this document) "
- Copy of the story, "[Jesus and the Loaves and Fishes — A UU Telling](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Print both stories. One comes from Christian scripture and the other is a retelling by 20th-century Unitarian religious educator Sophia Lyon Fahs.
- Based on the amount of time you have and which discussion questions you think will work best with this group, decide whether to share one or both stories with the children. Familiarize yourself with the story(ies) you will read or tell and decide which questions you will ask the group.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Participants respond to wisdom from Christian tradition about sharing.

Read the story "Jesus Feeds the Multitude."

Ask:

- If Jesus had the ability to work miracles, do you think he could have simply produced tables full of food for the crowd? But instead, he told the disciples that they should feed the crowd. When the disciples objected, he asked them for whatever food they could produce, blessed it, and passed it back to the disciples to pass out to the crowd. Why do you think he did this? Do you think Jesus was trying to teach the disciples a lesson in sharing? What might that lesson be?

Then say:

One of our Unitarian Universalist teachers, Sophia Lyon Fahs, had a different way of telling this story.

Read the story "Jesus and the Loaves and Fishes — A UU Telling."

Then, ask:

- What was shared in the story this time?
- How was it shared?
- When the people heard Jesus thanking God for the little food shared by the boy, they offered to share, too. Why do you think they shared?
- What is the same in both stories? [Jesus showed that, because of sharing, there would be enough for everyone.]
- What was different? [The first story does not explain where the extra provisions came from; it seems magical. The second story explains that people shared with one another to make sure there was enough for all. / The first story shows that sharing is important. The second story shows how when people have a chance to share, we can make sure everyone has enough.]
- Was anything else shared, besides food? [Point out that the people gathered in order to learn from Jesus. Ask: What is he sharing? Is Jesus' sharing of stories and what he has learned about life and the sharing of a meal similar to what we do at our congregation?

Explain:

The first story comes from the Bible. In Christian scripture, there are many stories where Jesus performs a miracle. He does something that people cannot explain, like making food appear. Miracles are like magic. Some people believe these stories are literally true. But most Unitarian Universalists do not believe Jesus performed supernatural miracles. Whether or not you believe that Jesus performed miracles, we can still believe the stories told about Jesus have wisdom for us. Either way, this story about Jesus has good wisdom about sharing.

Conclude in these words, or your own:

There are many stories in the Bible where people share meals. Another famous story about Jesus is the Last Supper. This is a meal he shared with the disciples before he died. The Last Supper is the meal that Christian churches associate with the Holy Communion we mentioned earlier. During Holy Communion,

participants eat a wafer and drink wine or juice. These are symbols of Jesus' body and blood, which Christians believe he sacrificed to save humankind. Our UU flower, water, and bread ceremonies are not about remembering Jesus, but are about the things that are important to us as UUs: community, diversity, appreciating nature, remembering our families and honoring our different cultures. Our Unitarian and Universalist ancestors were Christian and some UUs today are Christian. We have Christianity to thank for the tradition of a communion, but we have created communion rituals that reflect what we love and hold dear today.

Who do you share food with? Family members? Kids at school during lunch? People you don't even know, by donating or serving food at a food pantry? How does our congregation share food?

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 4: SAYING GRACE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Snack food, plates, and napkins

Preparation for Activity

- Write on newsprint, and post:
We are here that we might have life
and have it more abundantly,
so that we might share it with others.
Come, let us join together
as a generous people. — John. C. Morgan
- Write a grace of your choice on newsprint, and post. Use one of these (from *Rejoice Together* (Skinner House), ed. Helen Pickett), or see the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA [WorshipWeb](#) (at

www.uua.org/worship/index.php), Session 11 of the Tapestry of Faith curriculum [Creating Home](#) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session11/index.shtml), or your own sources for more options:

We lift our hearts in thanks today for all the gifts of life. — Percival Chubb, Unitarian minister

May we have grateful hearts, and may we be mindful of the needs of others. — Source unknown

May we hold hands quietly for a moment...

Feeling love flow around us and through us,

Knowing that as we give love away

There is always more within. — Source unknown

- Optional: Before this session, invite families to write down for their child a grace that is used before meals at home. Plan to invite children to share a grace they have brought, as directed in this activity.

Description of Activity

Participants learn a UU reading to use as a grace.

Read the quote with participants. John C. Morgan is a Unitarian Universalist minister. Ask children what they think the quotation means. Ask, "Are you a generous person? In what ways? Say that being a generous person and sharing are ways to be UU every day."

Ask: "Why would we say a grace or a blessing before meals?" Explain that grace is another ritual. It is a special time to acknowledge how blessed we are to have food to eat. Some people say grace to thank God, Goddess, or the Spirit of Life. Some people remember and thank all the people who grew, processed, and prepared the food on our table. Some people say grace to express gratitude for the earth and how it feeds us, and to renew a promise to take care of our planet.

If participants have special graces they say, invite them to share them with the group.

Point out the grace you have prepared on newsprint and invite participants to read it aloud. Help participants serve the snack and say grace before they begin to eat.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle

- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint and post.
- Familiarize yourself with "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Prepare to teach it to the group and lead them in singing it—or, invite a musical volunteer to join you to teach the song.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that after each session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read aloud some of the activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Sing "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together. Have them store their stoles in the place you have designated. Stoles should stay at the congregation and not go home with children.

FAITH IN ACTION: SHARING FUN TIMES

Preparation for Activity

- Consult with congregational leaders to schedule a Game Day and share logistics planning.

Description of Activity

Children share games with the congregation.

Has your congregation ever designated a Sunday morning as Game Day? Sometimes religious educators will choose a Sunday on which they expect low attendance (like a holiday weekend or summer Sunday)

and declare a Game Day, when children and youth can play games during RE. The Signs of Our Faith community could ask the worship staff if one Sunday could be declared Game Day for the entire congregation. After the service, children invite everyone to stay for games. Stations can be set up outside and inside. Children and youth from other RE classes, as well as adults, can cover each station, leading a different game. Pick a balanced assortment of games: Some games that involve movement are fine, as long as not all the games require movement. Twenty Questions and Red Light/Green Light are good choices.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What have you learned that can help you plan and lead next time? Do participants appear to understand how symbols, signs, and rituals represent abstract ideas? If not, how can you be more explicit in future sessions? Did co-leaders allow adequate time for your own spiritual preparation?

TAKING IT HOME

*We are here that we might have life
and have it more abundantly,
so that we might share it with others.*

Come, let us join together

as a generous people. — John. C. Morgan

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we explored sharing as a way to be UU every day. We talked about UU flower, water, and bread communion rituals. We heard a story from Christian scripture about Jesus helping a crowd share loaves and fishes. We role-played good ways to share and learned hymns and a grace about sharing.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... how does your UU faith calls you to share? Does it affect decisions about whom you share with? Does it affect decisions about what and how much you share?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Take the time to notice and name sharing when you see family members doing it. Young children especially need praise and encouragement to continue sharing.

Family Discovery. How does your family share with the wider community and the world? Perhaps the adults write checks to various organizations they support. Do the children know about this? Who in the family volunteers to do community service? Is any student a reading buddy who shares their knowledge of reading and their time with other students? Keep track of the ways all family members share and what they share.

Remind yourselves that your family shares and is generous as part of your UU faith.

Family Game. We practice sharing at home when we take turns playing a game, enjoying a privilege, or doing a chore. Find ways to make everyday activities more fun by sharing. Think about chores. Is it possible to share chores and have more fun? Instead of one person doing the dishes, share the job: One person washes, one dries, and one puts away. If sweeping, one person handles the broom and another the dustpan. Sing or play music while working and take turns choosing the songs.

Family Ritual. Some families start their Thanksgiving meal by sharing what they are thankful for. Try this kind of sharing at meal times. What if, once a week, everyone shared about a new topic? One week you share your favorite food. Another week you share your favorite fairy tale. A different week you share your favorite family vacation memory.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — HELPING WITH A COMMUNION

Preparation for Activity

- Consult the congregational calendar for planned communion services.
- Ask worship planners and the religious educator if the children may help with the communion. Solicit ways children can help so they will have choices; some children may prefer not to be in the pulpit or in front of the congregation and could help with set-up, ushering, or clean-up.

Description of Activity

Participants assume positions of leadership in a communion service.

Leadership in Action (LIA) activities provide opportunities for children to take the lead in an activity that engages with the congregation. Through these activities, young people start to see themselves as leaders of their faith.

Tell the group about the scheduled communion service and invite them to help. Some participants may know how they would like to help. Others might need your suggestions. Present options to please both the more extraverted children (helping to tell a story, passing bread baskets) and the more introverted (setting up, cleaning up).

After the communion, talk with participants about their favorite parts of the service. What was being shared

during the communion ritual? Why did people share it? Was the sharing symbolic? If so, what did the flowers/water/bread/other object represent or symbolize? Ask them how it felt to take a leadership role and if they would like to help with worship again in the future.

Including All Participants

Pay particular attention to any children with special needs who might need roles modified in order to participate fully. Consider assigning roles to pairs or triads to share responsibility and provide back-up if a child misses the service.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — PLANTING FLOWERS FOR FLOWER CEREMONY

Materials for Activity

- Assorted flower seeds
- Soil pellets and small pots, seed starter trays, or small pots and bags of soil
- Congregational directory
- Optional: Smocks to protect clothing

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange with worship leaders for the children to provide seedlings for every family attending the scheduled flower ceremony. Arrange for the children to address the worship gathering to explain their gift.
- Schedule this activity at least four weeks before a flower ceremony. Let families know that the group will be planting, so they can dress children appropriately and alert you about any allergies or other concerns.
- You will want to prepare enough seedlings for every family unit to receive one. Remember that a family can be one person or several. Go through the directory and count family units. Watch out for spouses that have different last names and therefore may be listed twice. Add the number of regularly attending families not in the directory and expected visiting families (ask your Membership Committee for help estimating, and make sure that anyone who attends alone is counted as a family unit). This is how many seedlings you will need. Some seeds may not sprout, so plan to plant at least ten more than you think you need.

- Calculate the cost of the activity and make sure funds are available. When you purchase materials, consider asking retail stores for donations or discounts.
- Identify a place to leave the seedlings where they will not be disturbed but can be regularly visited for watering and care. Recruit the religious educator, congregational administrator, or another adult who is regularly in the building to help nurture the seeds.
- Cover work tables with newsprint, and set out materials.

Description of Activity

Children prepare offerings for flower ceremony for the entire congregation.

Leadership in Action (LIA) activities provide opportunities for children to take the lead in an activity that engages with the congregation. Through these activities, young people will start to see themselves as leaders of their faith.

Invite children to prepare seedlings to offer during flower ceremony. Demonstrate how they will plant seeds and offer help, as needed. Optional: Offer children smocks to protect their clothing.

After planting, water seeds and set them in a place where they will not be disturbed. Help the group remember to water and check on them regularly.

During the flower ceremony, as a group, tell the congregation about your work and why the group wanted to give every family a flowering plant. Make sure all plants are taken home by someone, planted on congregational grounds, or given to an organization that can use them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SHARED SPACE (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Art materials

Preparation for Activity

- Find out what other groups share the meeting space and how to contact leaders of this group or groups.
- Have a few ideas for decorating the common space that you can suggest to the other groups' leaders. For example: You might paper the door with welcoming art. If another UU group meets in the space, you might make a special chalice for this group. If a holiday is approaching, the

children could make a large holiday card, or they could make a Thinking of You card.

Description of Activity

Is the space where Signs of Our Faith sessions are held shared with other groups? You might share space with an adult religious education program, yoga or meditation class, a preschool, or a civic organization. Children acknowledge shared space by creating a sign of welcome.

Tell the children about a group that shares the space. Invite children to create decorations to welcome the other group. Make sure the children's artwork or card mentions how nice it is to share space with the other group. Help the children think of specific comments such as "Thanks for putting the furniture back the way we like it" or "Thank you for adding the pretty rug."

Bring the creation to the attention of the leaders of the other group to make sure they see it. If the other group responds, share the response with the Signs of Our Faith community.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: COMMUNION DISPLAY (30 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Locate a congregational bulletin board or another place to post a display. Seek permission from congregational leaders or staff, as needed.

Description of Activity

If your congregation has a communion scheduled soon, invite participants to create a display to advertise the event and demonstrate what the communion means to them. Decorate the display with photographs from the congregation's past communions, photographs cut of magazines, and artwork from participants.

For example, a flower ceremony display might include "Multigenerational Flower Ceremony" and the day, date, and time of the event in the center of a piece of poster board. Beneath, you might add short instructions, such as, "Bring a flower from your garden or a store. Take a flower home. All are welcome to participate." Around the sides, children can draw or write about their favorite flowers, why they like flower ceremony, how they helped plant a garden at home, what we share when we share symbolic flowers in our congregational worship, or why they think we exchange flowers during the ceremony. Decorate with photographs of flowers from seed catalogs and drawings by the children. Post it in a high traffic area at least two weeks before the service.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 5: CLOTHING TO SHARE

Preparation for Activity

- Consult with the congregation's Social Action committee and congregational leaders to select an organization to work with and to arrange logistics for collecting and delivering used clothing. Your community is like to have an organization that helps people who are homeless and have difficulty keeping clothes nice, one that engages developmentally disabled people to spruce up and display used clothing for the public to purchase at low prices, or a specialized agency such as one that provides professional clothing to help women look their best for job interviews.
- Invite the organization to send a representative to give a ten-minute presentation to the children. Prepare the speaker to describe who needs the clothing, why, and how the donated clothing will be used.

Description of Activity

Participants lead the congregation to recycle families' unused or gently used clothing to share with neighbors.

Say, in these words or your own:

Sometimes, in a family, younger children wear clothing that their older siblings have outgrown. Sometimes we call these items "hand-me-downs." To some, that might sound like a bad thing, but actually, it is a good practice: reusing clothing helps our environment. It does not make sense to throw away perfectly good clothes.

You can share clothing with people who are not in your family, people in need of more or better clothing. Our congregation could hold a clothing drive and we can help. Are you interested?

Introduce the guest speaker. Invite them to explain the need for donated clothing and what types of clothes to collect.

Allow the children to ask questions.

Point out that the group has learned what kind of clothing other people need. Ask:

Has someone ever shared something with you that you did not want or need? How did that feel? Should we donate items that we want to get rid of or should we find out first what is needed and then see if we have it to give?

Engage the children to help with these tasks:

- Set up boxes or baskets for collection; make signs to post on collection boxes.
- Post flyers and write announcements for congregational newsletter, website, and orders of service; information should specify needed items and the condition they must be in.
- Make a plan for who will collect, sort, and deliver the donations.

After the speaker's presentation, or later, such as while sorting donations, process the activity with these questions:

- How is our clothing collection project an example of sharing?
- Why does it help the earth when people share clothing?
- Why do we suggest the items people should donate? If people just wanted to donate all the clothing they no longer need, is that still sharing? When you want to share something besides clothes you no longer need—like a book, or a snack, or a hug—how can find out if the other person wants or needs it?

Thank the children for sharing and for living their UU values every day!

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 7: STORY: JESUS AND THE LOAVES AND FISHES — A UU TELLING

From *Jesus, The Carpenter's Son* by Sophia Lyon Fahs
(Boston: Beacon Press, 1945).

Jesus had not been speaking long—at least so it had seemed with all who were there, yet the day was now almost wholly spent. As the afternoon shadows crept over the hillside the air had begun to chill.

Two of his disciples stepped quietly up to Jesus and said: "Send the crowd away so that they can go into town before it is too late and buy food for themselves."

But Jesus answered: "Is there need for them to go away? Can we not give them food?"

Philip answered in amazement: "Shall we go and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread and give them to eat?"

"How many loaves are there here among us?" asked Jesus.

A lad, overhearing Jesus' question, stepped forward. "I have five loaves and two fishes. You may divide them."

Jesus smiled and, beckoning the boy to come nearer, he stood with uplifted arms and in a strong voice spoke a prayer of thankfulness to God.

For a few moments afterwards, there was complete silence. Men and women looked wonderingly at each other as if to say: "What are these few loaves and fishes among so many people?"

But presently others in the crowd brought out baskets and bags. All who had shared generously with those who had not. Before long, everyone had eaten heartily and still there was bread untouched. The crowd seemed refreshed and lighter in spirits as their friendliness grew.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 7: STORY: JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDE

Mark 6: 34-44 from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*.

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

FIND OUT MORE

Jesus and the Loaves and Fishes

The popularity of this story is evident by the number of organizations named Loaves and Fishes, including a [food pantry](http://www.loavesandfishes.org/) (at www.loavesandfishes.org/) in Charlotte, NC and a [Meals on Wheels for seniors](http://feedseniors.org/) (at feedseniors.org/) in Portland, OR. This session includes the version of this story from the Book of Mark in Christian scripture. Read other versions in [Matthew 14:13-21](#) (at bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Matthew&verse=14:13-21&src=%21), [Luke 9:10-17](#) (at bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Luke&verse=9:10-17&src=%21) and [John 6:5-15](#) (at bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20John&verse=6:5-15&src=%21).

This session also provides a version from *Jesus, The Carpenter's Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1945), Sophia Lyon Fahs' retelling of the life of Jesus, through a Unitarian lens. [Read the entire book](#) (at books.google.com/books?id=8H0hqUJovnoC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) on the Google Books website.

Sharing

This *Psychology Today* blogpost, [Sharing Among Children](#) (at www.psychologytoday.com/blog/evolved-primate/201002/sharing-among-children), by Daniel R. Hawes analyzes results from a small experiment with children on sharing. Hawes describes two distinct steps in the sharing process—deciding whether or not to share

and then deciding how much to share—and affirms that children share more as they age or, as the article states, learn more "prosocial behavior" as they get older.

Communions

Search the UUA's [WorshipWeb](#) (at www.uua.org/worship/index.php) for chalice lightings, readings, and sermons for flower, water, and bread communions.

Norbert Capek, a Unitarian minister in Czechoslovakia, created the Flower Ceremony, and his wife, Maya, introduced it to the United States. Read about [flower communion](#) (at www.uua.org/beliefs/congregationallife/worship/holidays/195561.shtml) on the UUA website or a short biography of [Norbert Capek](#) (at www25-temp.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/norbertcapek.html) in the online Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography. A Tapestry of Faith workshop in the curriculum for youth [A Place of Wholeness](#), (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/index.shtml) also explores the flower ceremony and its theme of hope.

Graces

A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers, by Eliza Blanchard (Boston: Skinner House, 2008) includes graces for meals, as does the UUA pamphlet, [Family Prayers](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=576), by Irene Praeger.

SESSION 8: MEMORIAL RITUALS

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

I would like to believe when I die that I have given myself away like a tree that sows seed every spring and never counts the loss, because it is not loss, it is adding to the future life. It is the tree's way of being. Strongly rooted perhaps, but spilling out its treasure on the wind. — May Sarton, American poet and novelist, in Recovering: A Journal

The children learn that religions and cultures honor a death in different ways which are shaped by different beliefs about death and what comes after it. They learn that a Unitarian Universalist memorial ritual is created by family, friends, and a minister to show our reverence for life; our intention to remember our loved one so that something of them will live on; and our feelings about the loss of the loved one's physical presence.

Unitarian Universalism holds that how we live our lives is a more important question than what happens to us once we die. This session encourages children's questions about an afterlife, while teaching that our faith does not give us a specific answer. If children express beliefs about a heaven, simply say that people have different beliefs about an afterlife and we do not need to agree on this. We do agree that it matters how you live your life. We agree that the people who knew and loved you and whose lives you touched will remember you long after you die.

Be prepared for a participant who has recently experienced the death of a loved one. Ask your religious educator and the children's parents or caregivers about any particular issues or reactions you should anticipate. You might have a minister or chaplain join the group for this session.

The session tells the Christian story of Jesus' death and resurrection from the perspective of the seminal Unitarian Universalist religious educator Sophia Lyon Fahs. The story affirms that when someone important to us dies, their spirit lives on, inside and among us. Be ready to clarify, as needed, that Unitarian Universalism draws on Christian teachings for wisdom, but does not espouse a literal resurrection of Jesus.

In Activity 4, Remembering Our Loved Ones, participants share pictures of loved ones who have died. A week before the session, ask parents to talk with their children about their remembrances of a loved one who has died and to give children a photo to share. Some children may want to remember a pet that has died; that

is fine. As an alternative, parents can give their child a picture of a well known person whose memory is important to the family.

GOALS

This session will:

- Teach that revering life is a way to be UU every day
- Demonstrate or explain several ways UUs demonstrate their faith when a loved one dies
- Identify rituals concerning death from a variety of religions and cultures
- Create an opportunity for participants to talk about their experiences with death in general and memorial rituals in particular.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Create a memorial ritual
- Understand that death is a part of life
- Understand that while Unitarian Universalist memorial rituals vary, all share the goals of helping us (1) acknowledge our loss and (2) celebrate the loved one's life—indeed, all life—as sacred
- Discover rituals and signs their UU congregation uses when someone dies
- Explore the concept of a person living on after their physical death in other people's remembered experiences of them, through a story of Jesus.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: The Story of Easter	10
Activity 2: Ritual Matching Game	15
Activity 3: Second Emblem	10
Activity 4: Remembering Our Loved Ones	15
Faith in Action: Memorial Photo Frames	25

Closing

5

Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action –
Memorial Garden

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment to recall memorial rituals you have attended or planned. Think about why you felt it was

important to participate in a funeral and/or memorial service. Did you find comfort in sharing the ritual with others? If these memories cause you pain, acknowledge it, and release it for the time you are leading this session. Take a deep breath and think of times and ways memorial rituals have been positive affirmations of your faith and sources of comfort.

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: If children will wear stoles during the session, make sure you have extra stoles for visitors. A child who has begun to attend regularly can add their initials to a stole during today's session.

Description of Activity

If the children wear stoles for Opening and Closing rituals, distribute stoles. Invite the children to put on their stoles. Offer any visitors a stole and explain that they may wear it during the Opening time and the Closing time if they wish. Remind the children their stoles are a sign that everyone in the group is a worship leader.

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice together. Lead the group to say these Opening words:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together, we celebrate reverence for all life by honoring the dead. Together, we celebrate their lives and comfort one another for our loss.

Remind participants that as Unitarian Universalists, we revere life; if the group has done Session 5, remind them of an activity they did together which made this point. Then say:

Because life is sacred, the end of life is an important event. Today we will talk about the end of life, death.

Ask children to think of words or phrases that describe death. Prompt if needed: passed, gone to heaven, no longer with us.

Say, in your own words:

Some religions give people an answer about what will happen after they die. Our Unitarian Universalist religion does have an answer about that. Unitarian Universalists come to our own beliefs about what happens after we die, and we may each believe different things. One thing all Unitarian Universalists DO believe is this: How you spend your life—your time here on earth—is important.

After someone dies, we remember what they were like, and how we loved them, and the good things they did. We use our memories to keep our connection with someone, even though they have died.

ACTIVITY 1: THE STORY OF EASTER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of "[The Story of Easter](#)" (included in this document) "
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling or reading it to the children.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Invite the children to sit comfortably. Let them know that they will hear a story about Jesus, an important teacher from two thousand years ago, and what happened after he died.

Optional: If it is Easter time, and especially if your congregation offers an Easter service that celebrates the life of Jesus, offer some context for the story. Say:

Jesus is the key figure of the Christian religion. Many Christians believe that Jesus was different from other humans, that he was the son of God. Many Christians believe that after Jesus died, he was resurrected, that is, he came back to life. Some Christian Unitarian Universalists believe that, too, while some Unitarian Universalists believe Jesus was an important teacher, but do not believe he was different from other humans and do not believe he came back to life after he died. As a prophetic leader, Jesus—his teachings and the example of how he lived his life—is an important part of our religious education program. At Easter time, we celebrate the life of Jesus long ago, and the way his spirit is still with us, in our memory of his kindness and wisdom.

Read or tell the story.

Process with these questions:

- What do you remember most about this story?
- What do you think Jesus' followers remembered most about him?
- Is there someone in your family whom you never met that other relatives talk about and remember? Perhaps a great-grandparent or great-aunt or -uncle or a distant cousin?
- Why do you think holding on to memories is so important when someone dies?

Affirm that when someone dies, it is part of our Unitarian Universalist faith to have a memorial service that celebrates the person's life.

If your congregation honors Jesus as part of marking the Easter holiday, you might say:

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations remember Jesus. Because he was an important, wise teacher, we celebrate his life when it is Easter time. At other times, our congregation may celebrate other famous people whose wisdom helped make the world better.

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening to a story or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 2: RITUAL MATCHING GAME (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Ritual Matching Game](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1.
- On a sheet of newsprint, list Muslim, Unitarian Universalist, Hindu, Catholic, and Jewish. Post the newsprint.

Description of Activity

Say, in these words or your own:

Different religions have different beliefs about death. And so, different religions have different rituals and signs they use when someone dies.

Read aloud the names of the religions listed on the newsprint. Tell the group you will describe some religious rituals for a death, and they are invited to match the ritual with the faith that practices that ritual. Point out that our Unitarian Universalist faith is included. Ask the children to listen to the whole ritual before calling out their guess.

Read the ritual descriptions from Leader Resource 1, except the UU description. After each description, allow answers and then give the correct answer. Point out that while these rituals are common in the religion, not all people of the religion practice the same rituals the same exact way.

Explain terms as needed. For example, "cremation" is a ritual where the body of the one who has died is burned in a special fireplace until it is just ashes; some families will scatter the ashes in a place that was important to the person who died. Or, they might keep the ashes in a special jar (an urn) in a religious place or a place very special to the person who died.

Along the way, allow volunteers to share their personal experiences with the rituals or religions you mention.

Once you have described all the rituals except UU, ask:

- What surprised you about a ritual in another faith?

Now say:

UUs do not have a rule about a ritual for a death. Most UUs, but not all, want a memorial service to be held after they die. Sometimes UUs make plans before they die about how they

want their memorial service to be. We believe there are many ways we can gather to celebrate a life that has ended and to share our feelings of sadness and loss.

Read the description of a UU ritual from Leader Resource 1, and/or share in your own words:

UUs may share photos of the person who died, and mementos from their life. Relatives and friends may take turns telling stories. The service might include favorite music and hymns of the person who died. The people who come to the memorial service might be given a printed Order of Service that includes an obituary, which tells some of the highlights of a person's life.

Sometimes people are sad because they miss their loved one. Sometimes people laugh while remembering fun times. It is natural to have all kinds of feelings after someone we cared for dies.

After the service, refreshments are often served. People eat and drink and socialize, keeping the loved one's memory alive by sharing stories about that person.

If these topics have not come up, prompt:

- Have you ever attended a UU memorial service? What was it like?
- Have you ever attended a memorial service or funeral from a different faith tradition? If yes, what faith tradition? What was the experience like?

If your congregation has specific memorial rituals, mention them. Explain that every religion has traditions about funerals and memorials. Ask the group why they think this is so.

Conclude:

Unitarian Universalists come together when someone has died to comfort each other and also to celebrate and remember their life. Each faith tradition has a ritual that helps to comfort those who survive and helps them share their prayers for the memory of the one who has died.

ACTIVITY 3: SECOND EMBLEM (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Stoles
- Craft materials

- Optional: Leader Resource 3, [Second Emblem](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print copies of Leader Resource 3 and cut out a Second Emblem image for each child, including extra for newcomers. Alternatively, copy for all participants an emblem of your own design that symbolizes "looking for signs in my relationships."
- Optional: Gather and set out craft materials for children to create their own emblems for "signs in my relationships." This emblem might simply say "You + Me" with room for children to decorate around the words. Find suggestions for guiding this process in the Before You Start section of this program's Introduction.

Description of Activity

Children add an emblem to their stole.

This emblem represents "looking for signs in my relationships." It is based on the experiences children have had in the second unit of this program (Sessions 5-8).

Lead children to make emblems (optional) and attach the emblems to their stoles.

Have children help put away the craft materials they have used. Invite them to set their stoles nearby to wear during the memorial service—the next activity.

ACTIVITY 4: REMEMBERING OUR LOVED ONES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Memorial Ritual — Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document)
- A table for a memorial altar, an attractive cloth, and one or more battery-operated, LED candles
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Paper and pens/pencils
- Stoles
- Optional: Additional items for table, such as flowers
- Optional: Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* and/or *Singing the Journey*
- Optional: Handout 1, [How Do We Remember?](#) (included in this document)

- Optional: Orders of service from a Unitarian Universalist memorial ceremony held at your congregation

Preparation for Activity

- Alert the religious educator about this activity as it may be emotional for some children. If possible, have a minister, religious educator, or lay chaplain attend the session.
- Download and adapt Leader Resource 2, Memorial Service — Letter to Parents. Email the letter or call parents/caregivers a week before the session.
- Using Handout 1 as a guide, choose elements to include in the memorial ritual.
- Prepare a song the group can sing as part of the service—ideally, a song with a peaceful feeling that the children already know. For example, they might hum the tune to "Spirit of Life," or another tune in your congregation's repertoire.
- Find or write opening and closing words. Opening words might be, "We will take time to remember loved ones who are no longer with us. I will light this chalice as we begin our memorial ritual." Closing words might be, "These who have gone before us have blessed us with their presence. We treasure the memories of their lives, with joy and sometimes sadness. Though we may miss them, we are thankful for the legacy they leave behind. We are grateful for their lives." To find alternate opening words, closing words, readings, and hymns, you can try the online [UUA WorshipWeb](http://www.uua.org/worship/index.php) (at www.uua.org/worship/index.php), the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition* and its supplement, *Singing the Journey*, or Carl Seaburg's [*Great Occasions: Readings for the Celebration of Birth, Coming-of-Age, Marriage, and Death*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=607) (Boston: Skinner House, 1984).
- List the elements you have selected on newsprint under the title "Order of Service," and set the newsprint aside.
- Prepare a memorial table. Leave room for children to place pictures of loved ones and special remembrance items.
- Have paper and writing implements ready so you can invite any children who did not bring a photo or item to write the name of a person or pet they wish to memorialize.

Description of Activity

Tell the group they will design and take part in their own Unitarian Universalist memorial ritual. Children will have an opportunity to share a memory of the person, or pet, they will remember. Invite children who did not bring a picture or an item to use pencil and paper to write the name of a person or pet they loved who has died. If any children need a suggestion, invite them to memorialize a well-known person whose legacy is known to them—for example, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Helen Keller, or Amelia Earhart—and help them write the name on a slip of paper.

Distribute Handout 1, How Do We Remember? Review it with participants. If you have a copy of the Order of Service from a UU memorial service, pass it around and point out different components of the service.

Post the Order of Service you have prepared on newsprint. Explain the different elements. Remind the children that they are all worship leaders and ask for volunteers to help lead various elements. Explain to the volunteer worship leaders what their roles will be.

Invite children to put on their stoles. Lead the memorial ritual.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint and post.

Description of Activity

Optional: If children wear stoles for every Opening and Closing, distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Ask participants to share these fun activities with their parents and try them with family or friends.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Invite the group to pass a blessing around the circle. Say you will each, in turn, address the person next to you by name and say "It is a blessing to remember together." Model by addressing the person on your left: "Patricia, it is a blessing to remember together."

When everyone has blessed a person next to them, extinguish the chalice together.

FAITH IN ACTION: MEMORIAL PHOTO FRAMES (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Wood frames, plain with wide border for decorating
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Newspaper to cover work tables
- Acrylic paint (various colors), paintbrushes, and bowls of water
- Permanent markers
- Smocks or large tee shirts to protect clothing
- Optional: Animal and/or paw print ink stamps

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain wood photo frames and other needed supplies at a craft store.
- Identify a congregational leader, such as a minister or the chair of a Caring Committee, who can receive the decorated frames and distribute them to members who have lost a beloved pet. Alternatively, arrange to give the photo frames to a local pet cemetery or veterinary office.

Description of Activity

Participants create frames for pictures of beloved pets that have passed away.

Ask participants if they have ever experienced the death of a pet. If any have, invite volunteers to name anything that made them feel better when they were grieving over their loss. Ask if looking at photographs of their pet felt comforting. What about times when other people expressed their sympathy? Invite the children to give both of these kinds of comfort to people in the congregation, by making them a frame to hold a photo of the pet that has died.

Lead the group to decorate photo frames. Work with the group to craft an expression of sympathy for children to

write on the back of the frames, and post the message on newsprint for children to copy. Ask the children to sign their names or initials on the back of frames they decorate.

Give the frames to the congregational representative who can offer one to any member who has lost a pet. Ask them to say the frame is a gift from the children in the Signs of Our Faith community, to anyone who wishes to keep the memory of a beloved pet that has died.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What have you learned that you can apply in the future? How did the children interact? Did everyone in the group display compassion, caring, and awareness of the sensitivity of this topic? If any issues or activities seemed especially difficult for any of the group, alert the religious educator. Assign co-leaders any advance preparation needed for the next session.

TAKING IT HOME

I would like to believe when I die that I have given myself away like a tree that sows seed every spring and never counts the loss, because it is not loss, it is adding to the future life. It is the tree's way of being. Strongly rooted perhaps, but spilling out its treasure on the wind. — May Sarton, American poet and novelist, in Recovering: A Journal

IN TODAY'S SESSION... children learned that our reverence for life shapes the rituals we, as Unitarian Universalists, use to honor people who die. We talked about memorial rituals and enacted one. The children heard a story of the death of Jesus and what happened afterward, adapted from a story by the late UU religious educator, Reverend Sophia Lyon Fahs. The story emphasized that by remembering those we love who die, we ensure that their spirit lives on although they are physically gone. The group learned about memorial rituals in different faith traditions and explored some ways Unitarian Universalists have memorials.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... the congregational contributions of deceased members. Did a departed member plant a garden? Were some late members involved in the Civil Rights movement or another justice cause? Did a member who has died begin a tradition the congregation continues today? Help keep their memories alive by sharing stories with the next generation.

Family Discovery. How has your family memorialized loved ones who have died? Discuss a memorial service or funeral the family attended, and talk about the ways that engaging in the ritual with others was a source of comfort. Or, did someone in the family feel they wanted to be alone to remember and mourn in their own way? Talk about making space for all kinds of memorials.

Family Ritual. Has your family owned pets that have died? If you can, visit a beloved pet's burial place or gather around a container that holds its ashes, and sharing stories about the pet. Do you have new pets? Point out that we can honor the pets we have loved in the past by taking good care of the pets we have now. Passing along the love you learned from the past pets is a good way to honor their lives.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – MEMORIAL GARDEN

Materials for Activity

- Hardy flowers and/or plants in pots
- Garden tools (ask congregants to borrow planting supplies).
- Construction paper
- Markers and crayons of various colors

Preparation for Activity

- Meet with someone who is in charge of buildings and grounds. If there already is a memorial garden or cemetery on the congregation's property, ask about how the group can best add flowers, or help with a seasonal clean-up, if that is more appropriate and needed.
- Find out the answers to the first set of bulleted questions in the Description of Activity, so you can lead an informative discussion with the children.
- Obtain some hardy, potted flowers or plants that will thrive outdoors in your local climate.
- This activity may take longer than traditional Sunday morning permits. Arrange to either meet earlier and for longer, or on a different day altogether.

Description of Activity

Participants create or help maintain a congregational memorial garden.

Leadership in Action (LIA) activities provide opportunities for children to take the lead in an activity

that engages with the congregation. Through these activities, young people begin to see themselves as leaders of their faith.

With the children, create a multigenerational activity that will either start something new in the congregation, or help maintain and enhance an existing memorial garden or cemetery. Lead a discussion about the importance of remembering and honoring those who came before us, and your congregation's traditions for doing so. You might use these questions:

- Does our congregation have memorial services? When was the last one?
- Does our congregation have a memorial garden?
- Does our congregation have a cemetery? If yes, how old is it? Who is buried there?
- Does our congregation have a memorial plaque where the names of deceased members are listed? If yes, who is responsible for adding the names, when the time comes? If not, is this something we can work on creating?
- In what other ways does our congregation remember and honor the dead?
- Why do we have memorials to those who passed away?

Introduce the memorial garden project with these words or your own:

The people in our Unitarian Universalist congregation take care of our place which has been taken care of by others before us. As a way of thanking them and honoring them, we will contribute to the memorial garden.

Lead the children to talk about how to prepare for this activity. What are the steps needed? Ask for volunteers to help with each aspect of the planning. Who would like to speak to the congregation's staff or committee in charge of buildings and grounds? Who would like to help make flyers? Who would like to ask the minister for time during the service to make an announcement?

Encourage participants to choose a way to show leadership. Invite them to do as much of the announcements and engagement with congregational leadership as is comfortable for them. Have participants make signs to post in the congregation to advertise the project and ask for help gathering supplies and plants. Children can ask congregational leaders to announce, print, or post online a request for supplies such as plants, flowers, dirt, and garden tools. Make sure an

adult leader partners with participants who volunteer to approach or work with congregational adults.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 8: STORY – THE STORY OF EASTER

Adapted from *Jesus, The Carpenter's Son* by Sophia Lyon Fahs (Boston: Beacon Press, 1945).

Jesus was a great teacher long, long ago who preached God's love. Jesus taught that we should care for the poor and forgive people who hurt us. In his lifetime, Jesus influenced many people to love one another as they loved God. Twelve of those people were called the disciples of Jesus. They traveled with Jesus and listened to him preach day after day.

In Jesus' time, the Roman leaders and the Jewish leaders did not like him. They were afraid he would lead a rebellion and upset the way things were. As Jesus became more popular, the leaders planned to kill him. One of Jesus' disciples, named Judas, betrayed Jesus and helped the leaders with their plan.

The night before Jesus died, he was celebrating the Jewish holiday of Passover. He celebrated at a Seder with the twelve disciples. The next day, Jesus was arrested, and then he was killed.

What happened after Jesus died began the religion we know as Christianity. Many Christians believe that after Jesus was killed, he rose from the dead to go to heaven.

Unitarian Universalists see this story differently. Many years ago, a religious educator named Sophia Fahs, explains in a UU way what happened after Jesus died. Here is how Reverend Fahs told it:

The people who followed Jesus were brokenhearted after he died. They struggled to understand why God had allowed their teacher to be killed. Surely someone so connected to God, so overflowing in goodness, did not deserve the punishment of a criminal or rebel. As these men and women gathered day after day in each other's homes, they began to recall the wonderful experiences they had had with Jesus. They told one another of times when Jesus was wise, and times when Jesus was kind. The very tone of Jesus' voice and the look on his face would come back to them so vividly that

it seemed, sometimes, as though Jesus were again right there with them.

Some of the people had dreams in which Jesus seemed so real that the dreamers could not tell whether they had been asleep or awake when they saw him. Some declared positively that they had seen Jesus again. He had talked with them! The rumor spread that Jesus had actually come out of his coffin, that two of his disciples had seen him, and that several of the women had talked with him; they would see him only for a few moments, and then he would mysteriously disappear again.

Finally, several of them dreamed they saw Jesus rise up from the earth—higher and higher—until he disappeared entirely. They believed he had gone to heaven to be with God. And after that, their dreams of seeing him and talking with him stopped.

People who had these experiences believed that Jesus was different from other people. Some believed that Jesus was so holy and great that he would come back to earth and save the world. That is one reason Christians call Jesus "the Savior."

The years passed by. The people who knew Jesus died. Their children and their children's children also died. But Jesus did not come back. It has been over two thousand years and Jesus has still not come back. There are those who still hope he will come back to life again.

Others, including Unitarian Universalists, believe that this Jesus will never again live on earth. His body is not coming back. But, his spirit never needs to die. His spirit is in his words and deeds which still give us wisdom today. For example, when he was alive, Jesus taught The Golden Rule: Treat others the way you want to be treated. Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, where he said that people who are poor, hurt, and struggling are loved by God and therefore, we must love them, too.

When someone's physical body dies, the people around them who loved and valued them will keep their memory alive—just like the followers of Jesus have remembered his teachings and his spirit, long after his death.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 8:

HANDOUT 1: HOW DO WE REMEMBER?

A Unitarian Universalist memorial service might include:

- Saying opening words
- Lighting candles
- Sharing a moment of silence
- Sharing memories of the loved one who has died
- Singing a hymn together
- Listening to music that was special to the loved one
- Saying goodbye
- Saying closing words

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 8:

LEADER RESOURCE 1: RITUAL MATCHING GAME

Muslim

Loved ones observe a three-day mourning period.

Body is buried within 24 hours and with only a white sheet.

Catholic

Funerals involve three parts: vigil, mass, and burial. Sometimes, but not always, mourners view the body in an open casket. In some cultures, the vigil is called a wake and involves food, drinks, and sharing photos and stories of the person who has died.

Body is buried.

Hindu

Scriptures are read from the Vedas or Bhagavad Gita.

The chief mourner, usually the eldest son or male relative, will light some kindling and circle the body, praying for the wellbeing of the departing soul.

Body is cremated.

Jewish

Body is buried within 24 hours.

After the funeral, mourners observe a seven-day period called "shiva." Observers cover the mirrors in their homes. They make a rip in their clothing or pin to their clothes a black ribbon with a tear in it, to symbolize their loss.

Unitarian Universalist

A memorial service or funeral is developed by family, friends, and a minister to honor the memory of that individual. The ritual may include music the person liked. People will take turns speaking about their memories of the person.

Family chooses if a body is buried or cremated.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 8:

LEADER RESOURCE 2: MEMORIAL RITUAL – LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents,

When we meet on [DATE], the Signs of Our Faith group will talk about Unitarian Universalist memorial rituals and enact a ritual together. Our ritual will emphasize that after death, deceased people and pets live on in our hearts and memories and through the love they have shared.

To be part of creating our memorial ritual together, your child is invited to bring a picture or other item to place on our table that helps them remember a loved one (human or animal) who has died. They will have an opportunity share the name of and, if they wish, a few words about the deceased person. In lieu of a family member, friend, or pet, you are welcome to prepare your child with a photo and information about a well-known person whose life and death affected your family.

If you have any questions about how this topic will be handled, or what else we will do during this upcoming session, we encourage you to contact one of us.

Yours in Faith,

[Co-leaders]

[Co-leaders' contact information]

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 8: LEADER RESOURCE 3: SECOND EMBLEM

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/second_emblem.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/second_emblem.pdf) for printing.



FIND OUT MORE

Bereaved Children and Teens: A Support Guide for Parents and Professionals, by Earl A. Grollman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), compiles the wisdom of 14 experts in a comprehensive guide to helping children and adolescents cope with the emotional, religious, social, and physical consequences of a loved one's death. *Talking about Death: A Dialogue between Parent and Child*, by the same author, is a compassionate guide for adults and children to read together which features a read-along story. It answers children's questions about death and provides a list of resources and organizations that can help.

The Grieving Child by Helen Fitzgerald (New York: Fireside, 1992) offers guidance on how to explain death

to children and includes sections on visiting the dying and attending a funeral.

For help in guiding children to find their own answers to a variety of topics, including death, read *Small Wonder* by Jean Grasso Fitzpatrick (New York: Penguin, 1995).

The Tenth Good Thing about Barney by Judith Viorst (New York: Atheneum, 1987). This classic book for school-age children tells how a little boy copes and finds meaning when his cat dies.

A good source for readings for memorial services is Carl Seaburg's [Great Occasions: Readings for the Celebration of Birth, Coming-of-Age, Marriage, and Death](#) (Boston: Skinner House, 1984).

SESSION 9: LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF COMMUNITY

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured. — Kurt Vonnegut

In this session, participants consider the importance of the communities to which they belong, especially their congregation. They discuss ways to support the congregation and other communities, and learn about the ritual for accepting new members into the congregation.

Activity 3, Find the Simorgh, is a game that is better in large spaces. If there is a space — outdoors or inside — you could use, reserve it and plan to include time to move into and out of the space.

GOALS

This session will:

- Show that supporting communities to which you belong can be a sign of our faith
- Suggest ways to support communities, especially the congregation
- Identify community rituals.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand the congregation as a community to which they belong
- Play a game about building community

- Create a new community ritual.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	3
Activity 1: Story — Journey of the Birds	10
Activity 2: Bird Art	20
Activity 3: Find the Simorgh	10
Activity 4: Community Rituals	15
Faith in Action: Children As Part of the Congregational Community	
Closing	2

Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action: Welcoming Children of New Members

Alternate Activity 2: Leadership in Action: Performing the Story

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Think back to your first experience with the congregation, even if you have been here since birth. What was your impression of this community? What made you feel you would like to join it? What gifts have you brought to enrich the community? Your leadership in this program is a gift, and it signifies that you are a congregational leader. What does the opportunity to be a leader in this congregation mean to you?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle. Write the Opening words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice, and recite together:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together we join in a community where we may bring our whole, divine self. Together, we nurture and support this community so it can be a home for us and for others.

Remind participants that in other meetings they have learned about signs of our faith an individual might show by the choices they make and by how they interact with other people. Say that now the group will begin to look for signs of faith that communities of people can show—starting today with the community that is the congregation.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — THE JOURNEY OF THE BIRDS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[The Journey of the Birds](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: [Hoopoe coloring page by Jan Brett](#) (at janbrett.com/mural_hhl/mural_hhl_hoopoe_bird.htm), and crayons

- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling it to the group.
- Optional: Print the coloring page and copy it for all participants. Plan to distribute it, with crayons, so they can color while you tell the story.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Tell or read the story. Then, process with these questions:

- The birds took a journey to find a leader for their community, the Simorgh. What did they find at the end?
- Along the journey, the birds supported each other. They grew closer as a community. In the end, they discovered that their community was strong. What are some of the communities to which you belong? Which ones are most important to you? Which ones feel strong? Why?
- Our congregation is a community that supports us in many ways. Think back to the signs of our faith we have talked about in other meetings: leadership, seeking knowledge, growing in faith, celebrating life, caring, and sharing. How does our congregation help us show these signs of our faith? [We share joys and concerns with each other; we ask Big Questions in RE; we celebrate lives at their beginning with child dedication, along the way with Coming of Age and wedding ceremonies, and at their end with memorial services; we are given opportunities to be leaders.]
- What other gifts do we receive from belonging to the congregation? [Making new friends, talking

about what is important to us, connecting us to something other than ourselves, and fun.]

- What do you like best about belonging to the congregation?
- What are signs that we are members of this community? [Name badges, tee shirts, showing up on Sunday morning, participating in other events, bumper stickers, signing the membership book.]

ACTIVITY 2: BIRD ART (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Materials and supplies for art project and (optional) display

Preparation for Activity

- Decide on a project. Plan for the children to collaborate on a display, such as a mural, a mobile of paper birds, or a bulletin board or display case filled with bird masks, or to make individual projects to take home.
- Select one or more artistic media for the children to use. If you will have time, consider paper mache, which must dry before it can be painted, or origami, for which you will need instructions and enough time for children to master the technique so they will be pleased with their creations.
- Identify a place to display the children's work. Obtain any permissions, assistance, and supplies you will need.
- Consider inviting a guest artist to this session.

Description of Activity

Children recreate the story "Journey of the Birds" using an artistic medium.

Introduce the project. Explain what the children will do and where their art work will be displayed (or that they may take it home).

Encourage the children to choose a specific bird from the story to represent. Guide them to give their birds the qualities they demonstrated in the story: "How can you show that your owl is smart? That your hoopoe is a hopeful?" Point out that all of the children are making birds, yet each bird is unique.

If you have time after children complete their art work, invite them to retell the story using the items they created.

ACTIVITY 3: FIND THE SIMORGH (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange an open space for playing this game. If the space is small or safety is a concern, plan for children to move about on the floor instead of walking.

Description of Activity

Children play a game where they move from being alone to finding community.

Invite participants into the open space to play Find the Simorgh. Ask everyone to sit (or stand) in one spot where they are not touching anyone else, and close their eyes. Say:

I am going to whisper in one person's ear, Simorgh. That person is the Simorgh and may open their eyes. Then I will invite everyone to begin moving around, in search of fellow travelers. I ask you to move slowly, and carefully, because your eyes will still be closed.

When you meet (or bump into) someone else, ask "Simorgh?" If they are not the Simorgh, they should reply by asking you "Simorgh?" Since neither of you have found the Simorgh, you must both keep traveling on your search.

If you ask "Simorgh?" and you have found the Simorgh, they will not reply. Then you know you have found the Simorgh. The Simorgh will take the traveler's hand and the traveler who has found the Simorgh can open their eyes. Now both of you are the Simorgh.

Keep playing until everyone has found the Simorgh. When everyone has become the Simorgh, you may all yell "Simorgh!" and raise your hands high in the air.

If there is time and interest, play again.

After the game, ask:

- How was this game like the story?
- How is the game like a community?
- Why did the Simorgh not answer when you encountered them? [Because the Simorgh is not complete—not really the Simorgh—until all the members are connected.]

Including All Participants

To fully include children with limited mobility or vision, use a smaller space and have everyone sit closer than

arm's length to one another. Have children reach out to find the Simorgh, instead of traveling.

ACTIVITY 4: COMMUNITY RITUALS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles

Preparation for Activity

- Write the Opening words used in this session on newsprint, and post.
- On another sheet of newsprint, write the Closing words for this session, and post.
- Post a blank sheet of newsprint.
- In the Description of Activity, read the options for rituals the group might design. Decide whether you will present these options (and/or others) and let the children choose, or simply tell the group the ritual they will design.

Description of Activity

Children create a ritual to use in future sessions.

Say:

Our Signs of Our Faith group is a community within the larger community of our congregation. The congregation has many rituals. What rituals does our Signs of Our Faith community have?

Affirm rituals, including your Opening and Closing rituals and the telling of a story at every gathering. Do children have a snack each time they meet? Do they receive a Taking It Home handout? If the children spend time in the congregational worship service each time they meet, perhaps for a Time For All Ages, mention this.

Now say, in these words or your own:

A ritual is an action done the same way every time. However, it is fine for a group to make changes to a ritual. Sometimes a change can help us connect with why we do the ritual in the first place. Sometimes new people in a group have ideas that can make a ritual more meaningful for them as well as for others in the group. Changing a ritual together can make everyone in the group feel even more like they belong.

Lead the group to create a ritual. Solicit suggestions, adding yours if needed. Use newsprint to record ideas. Guide a consensus process. Write the new ritual on paper to share with all co-leaders and the religious

educator; make a note of any new materials that will be needed and assign a co-leader to obtain them before the next session. Lead the children to practice the new ritual.

Option 1: Ritual for New Participants in the Signs of Our Faith Group

Children create a simple ritual for new members. It could be signing a scroll and receiving a stole, followed by everyone present introducing themselves and saying, "Welcome." Practice the new ritual by "inducting" all the children who are present. Make sure you tell your fellow session leaders about the new ritual so it will be included in future sessions.

Option 2: New Opening and Closing Rituals

Invite the group to change the Opening and Closing rituals. Remind children that the Opening signals the community coming together and the Closing signals the temporary breaking apart of the community until the next meeting. New rituals need to honor this coming together and going apart. Encourage the children to include their stoles in a new ritual.

Option 3: Ritualizing Snack Time

If the group has a regular snack, brainstorm ritual elements to add. Could they say a grace? Sing a clean-up song? How is the snack usually served? Does one person serve the entire community with participants taking turns? Does everyone serve the person on their right? Would the group like to decorate special plates to hold snack?

CLOSING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors
- Optional: Items needed for a new Closing ritual (Activity 4, Community Rituals)

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together. Have them store their stoles in the place you have designated. Stoles should stay at the congregation and not go home with children.

FAITH IN ACTION: CHILDREN AS PART OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNITY

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Leader Resource 1, Six Pillars
- Writing instruments
- Simple prizes

Preparation for Activity

- Read [Six Pillars of Balanced Youth Ministry](http://www.uua.org/documents/yaya/six_pillars_yth_min.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/yaya/six_pillars_yth_min.pdf) on the UUA website, so you understand each pillar. For each pillar, prepare realistic examples of ways children this age can engage in the life of the congregation.
- Obtain simple prizes, such as packets of modeling clay, wand bubbles, or small puzzles.
- If the group is large enough (12 or more), plan how you will form small teams (two to four children) to each focus on one of the six pillars. Print the Leader Resource. Make extra copies of some of the pages if you will have more than six teams. Plan the rules for teams to compete for prizes. For example, you might challenge each team to raise their hands when they have two items for a pillar, and thereby earn a prize. If the group has fewer than 12 participants, you might have two or three teams each focus on three or two pillars, or skip the competition and lead a whole-group brainstorm on all the pillars, instead.

- Optional: Post six sheets of newsprint. Title each with one of the pillars: Worship, Learning, Leadership, Involvement in the Congregation, Social Action, and Building Community. On each page, you might draw the outline of a pillar, to fill with the ideas children contribute.
- Optional: Invite families to contribute photos that show children engaged in activities that correspond with each pillar. Create a photo display in your congregation. Use the title "Six Pillars" and the pillar images in Handout 1 in the display.

Description of Activity

Participants identify ways children participate in the congregational community. They understand pillars as a metaphor for the many, different, individual acts of involvement and engagement that support a faith community and strengthen the faith and connection experienced by the individuals.

Say, in these words or your own:

There are many ways young people can be involved in their faith community—their congregation. Some UUs say there are six ways, and they are sometimes called the Six Pillars. On a building, the pillars are thick posts that help hold the building up. In a faith community, pillars are different kinds of actions individual people do that can help support that community. I think children your age can be involved in some of the pillars in our congregation. Let's see which ones we are already involved with.

Show the children the papers with the names of the pillars (from the Leader Resource) or indicate the newsprint sheets you have posted. Tell the group you want them to find examples of the six pillars in the activities children do with the congregation. Explain the pillars if needed, but try not to give examples! Form teams. Give each team the same number of sheets from Leader Resource 1. Distribute writing implements.

Help all teams finish by making suggestions or playing charades for answers. When all teams have finished—or if you are doing a large group brainstorm—use the newsprint sheets to briefly document the examples they have generated. Note that many activities can represent more than one pillar.

The ways children participate will be unique to your congregation, but may include:

- Worship: Attending worship services, listening to a Story for All Ages, singing in a choir, lighting the chalice, holiday pageants

- **Learning:** Attending a religious education program, talking with their family about what they did in RE, reading the Family pages in UU World, finding out about UU ancestors, mentoring a younger child, interviewing a congregational elder
- **Social Action:** Helping at a soup kitchen, collecting food or clothing, helping to distribute boxes or collect money for Guest at Your Table, doing Trick or Treat for UNICEF, attending a rally or protest with their family or congregation, doing a Faith in Action activity from this or another Tapestry of Faith curriculum
- **Building Community:** Playing with others in a playroom or playground at the congregation, regular attendance in the religious education program, attending congregational events such as a Halloween party or Solstice ceremony, joining a parent/child book group, inviting friends to visit the congregation
- **Leadership:** Lighting the chalice in a worship service, being a Sunday morning greeter, picking up trash or doing other tasks to keep the building and grounds neat and clean, any of the Leadership in Action activities from this program
- **Congregational Involvement:** Being a greeter, participating in worship services, singing in a choir, distributing the order of service, setting up tables and chairs for potlucks, spending time with youth and adults at coffee hour, getting to know the staff, participating in Joys and Concerns, participating in Child Dedication services and other special services.

Variation

Collect, or take, photos of children doing a few activities for each pillar in the congregation. Post six newsprint pillars on the wall and invite children to match the photos to the pillars.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Think back to the first meetings of the Signs our Faith group. How has the group changed? Has it coalesced into a community, as you may have hoped it would? Does the group welcome visitors and new members? At this point in the program, how can you help the group feel more like a community? Review the next session for advance preparation. If the children designed a new ritual in Activity 4, decide who will share necessary information with the religious educator and any other co-leaders.

TAKING IT HOME

What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured. — Kurt Vonnegut

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we discussed communities. We identified the communities to which we belong, including our UU congregation, and thought about what makes a community strong. We heard a story, based on an ancient Sufi poem, about a group of birds that discovered that sharing their own individual gifts held them together as a strong community. We played a game called Find the Simorgh and planned a ritual for our Signs of Our Faith community to use.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... the story, "The Journey of the Birds." Online, you can [listen to author Peter Sis](http://www.npr.org/2011/11/16/142396491/in-birds-sis-makes-a-dream-world-for-grown-ups) (at www.npr.org/2011/11/16/142396491/in-birds-sis-makes-a-dream-world-for-grown-ups) speak with National Public Radio about his emigration from Czechoslovakia and his illustrated book, *The Conference of the Birds* (New York: Penguin, 2011), which tells a more detailed version of our story. Compare the two versions. How are they different? How are they the same?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. As a family, choose an intentional action to welcome new congregational members. Invite them to a meal or an outing. Ask if you may sit with them during a worship service. Remember that the congregation is not the building—it is the people who come there to be together.

Family Adventure. How is your family involved in your neighborhood or city? What new ways could your family support and engage in the community where you live? The American Planning Association [website for children about communities](http://www.planning.org/kidsandcommunity/) (at www.planning.org/kidsandcommunity/) includes Crazy City Stories and a scavenger hunt that guides children to explore the place where they live. Find local projects through your congregation or a civic institution such as your city/town hall, community center, or public school district.

Family Ritual. Have you ever meditated on or prayed for world peace? How about peace in your neighborhood? If your family prays, meditates, or says grace, include your local community in meditations or prayers.

Teach your family and friends to play Find the Simorgh (Activity 3).

Leadership Suggestion. It is important for leaders to be well informed. Find out more about Sufism, an aspect

of Islam. Start with an article on the [History for Kids](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/islam/religion/sufi.htm) (at www.historyforkids.org/learn/islam/religion/sufi.htm) website, or with a book of poetry by [Rumi](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1727) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1727).

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – WELCOMING CHILDREN OF NEW MEMBERS

Description of Activity

Work with the group to plan a reception for the children (or families) of new members. Children in the Signs of Our Faith group can show new children around the congregation, share memories of their favorite experiences, and pair with new children as worship buddies.

Schedule the welcoming for as soon after families join the congregation as possible. Serve refreshments.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – PERFORMING THE STORY

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[The Journey of the Birds](#) (included in this document) "
- Paper invitations or blank cards, and writing implements
- Snacks
- Optional: Music and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how, when, and for whom you will present the story as a play—for example, during worship as a Story for All Ages, during a Children's Chapel, at a congregational retreat, or as a stand-alone program, perhaps on a Sunday after worship, perhaps just for the children's parents and families at a specially scheduled time. You may wish to generate several options and plan to have the children help decide.
- Write a script based on the story "The Journey of the Birds." Plan roles, on-or off-stage, for all the children. This play can include an infinite number of birds. Gather costumes and props appropriate to the type of presentation you plan.

Description of Activity

Invite the group to perform the story. Explain the presentation date/time, venue, and audience you have planned—or, present the group with options and lead them to choose.

Share the script you have prepared, and any costumes and props. Cast the parts, and rehearse. Offer "backstage" roles to children who do not want to act.

After the performance, engage the audience in a short discussion with these questions:

- This play is based on an ancient Persian poem, "The Conference of the Birds." Have you heard the story before?
- What is the moral?
- Is our congregation like the bird community? In what ways? How is it different?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: WE ARE THE ONES

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[The Journey of the Birds](#) (included in this document) "
- Recording of the song "We Are the Ones (We've Been Waiting For)" by Sweet Honey in the Rock, and a music player
- Optional: Scarves

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a recording of the Sweet Honey in the Rock performing "We Are the Ones" (2:51). You can purchase the song from an online music store such as iTunes. Set up and test the music player. Cue the song.

Description of Activity

Children relate to the story "The Journey of the Birds," through dance.

After children have heard the story, say, in these words, or your own:

The birds realized they had all the qualities they needed to build a strong community. Because of all their different, individual gifts and their willingness to help one another, they were enough—they did not need a leader from outside their community. A song "We Are the Ones" expresses this sentiment.

Invite children to move to the music, by:

- Dancing free form

- Dancing with scarves
- Pantomiming the story

Encourage them to dance their own, individual gifts and how they can share their gifts to help others in the group.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 9: STORY: THE JOURNEY OF THE BIRDS

Inspired by the ancient epic poem, "The Conference of the Birds," by the Persian Sufi Muslim writer Fariduddin Attar.

Once upon a time, all the birds in the land decided they needed a leader for their community. A leader, they thought, would make their community stronger. Representatives of all the bird species gathered to discuss finding a leader.

"A leader will tell us the right things to do," said the robin.

"Our leader must be wise," said the owl.

"A leader must believe we each are important, big and small," said the sparrow.

"I want the leader to be caring, like a friend," said the dove.

"Yes, the leader help us share and get along better," said the jay.

"The leader must make us feel safe," said the hawk.

"I know where you can find such a leader," said the hoopoe bird. "It is the Simorgh and it lives far from here."

The birds were very excited. They said they were willing to go anywhere to find such a leader. "It might be dangerous," said the hoopoe. A few birds looked troubled, but all the birds voted to go find the Simorgh.

The hoopoe took off and all the birds followed.

They flew at night. They flew in sunshine. Days and days passed. Some birds got tired and left the group. Other birds were filled with doubt. How did they know the Simorgh really existed? Only the hoopoe had ever heard of this bird. Some of the doubters dropped out, but others kept flying.

One valley was filled with fiery mountains. All the birds were afraid.

"I'm too small to make it over that mountain," lamented the sparrow.

"No, keep flying. We can make it together. We will help you." And they did.

The strong flyers helped the weaker flyers. The birds with good vision helped find food for the group. Along the journey, the birds learned how to better respect, share and care for each other. It seemed that every bird had something special and unique to offer that made the journey easier.

Finally, the hoopoe announced, "We are here!"

The other birds look around in anticipation. "Where is the Simorgh? We don't see it!" they cried.

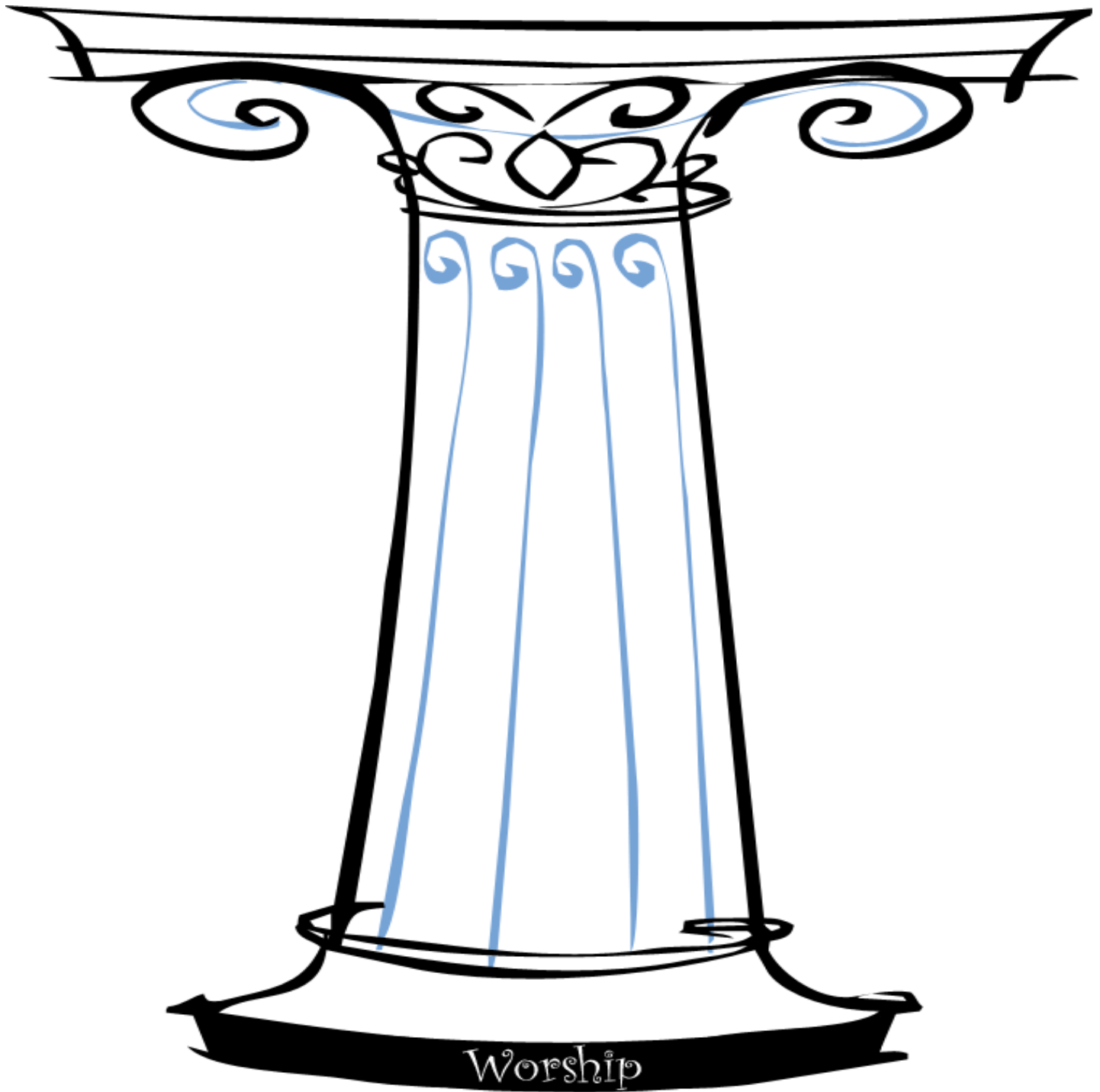
"Come. It is over here," said the hoopoe.

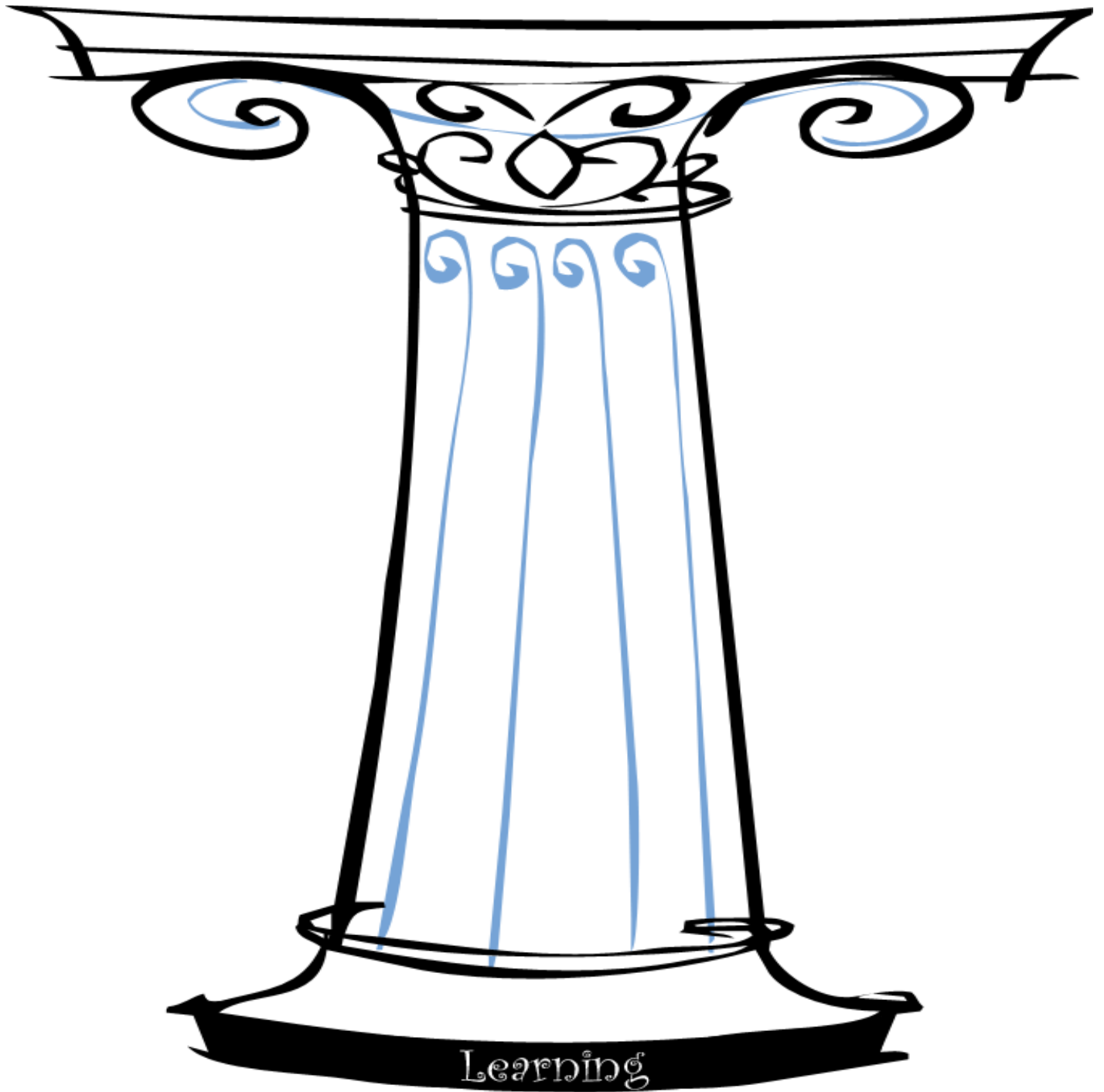
The birds stood beside hoopoe and realized they were on the edge of a lake. They looked in... and saw their own reflections. Then, they understood.

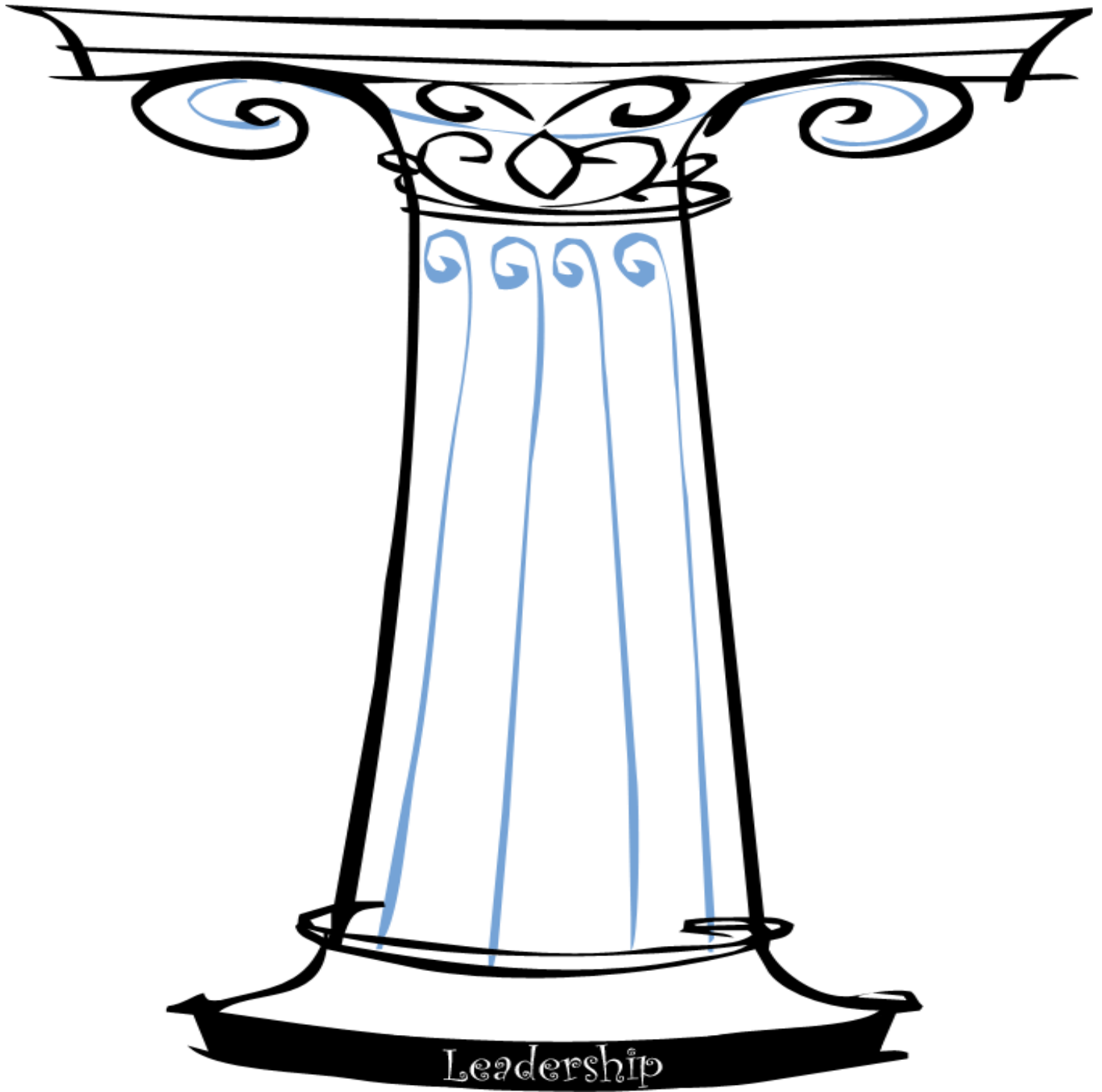
The Simorgh was not another bird. The Simorgh was all of them, and all of them were the Simorgh. They remembered that each of them had something good and strong and special inside of them and that each bird had gifts to bring to the community. They were all that was needed to keep the community strong. They knew now that together they could do anything.

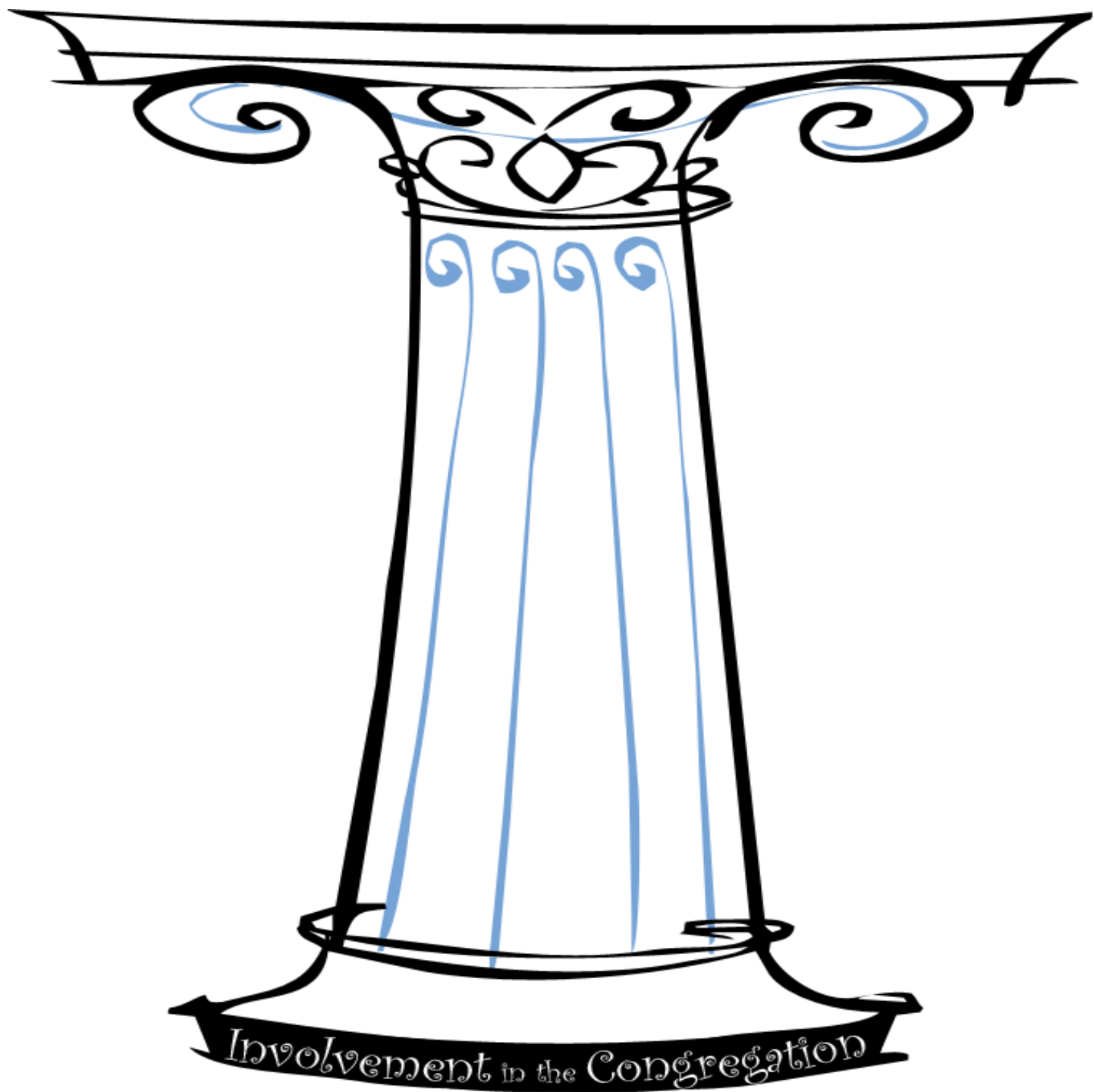
SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 9: LEADER RESOURCE 1: SIX PILLARS

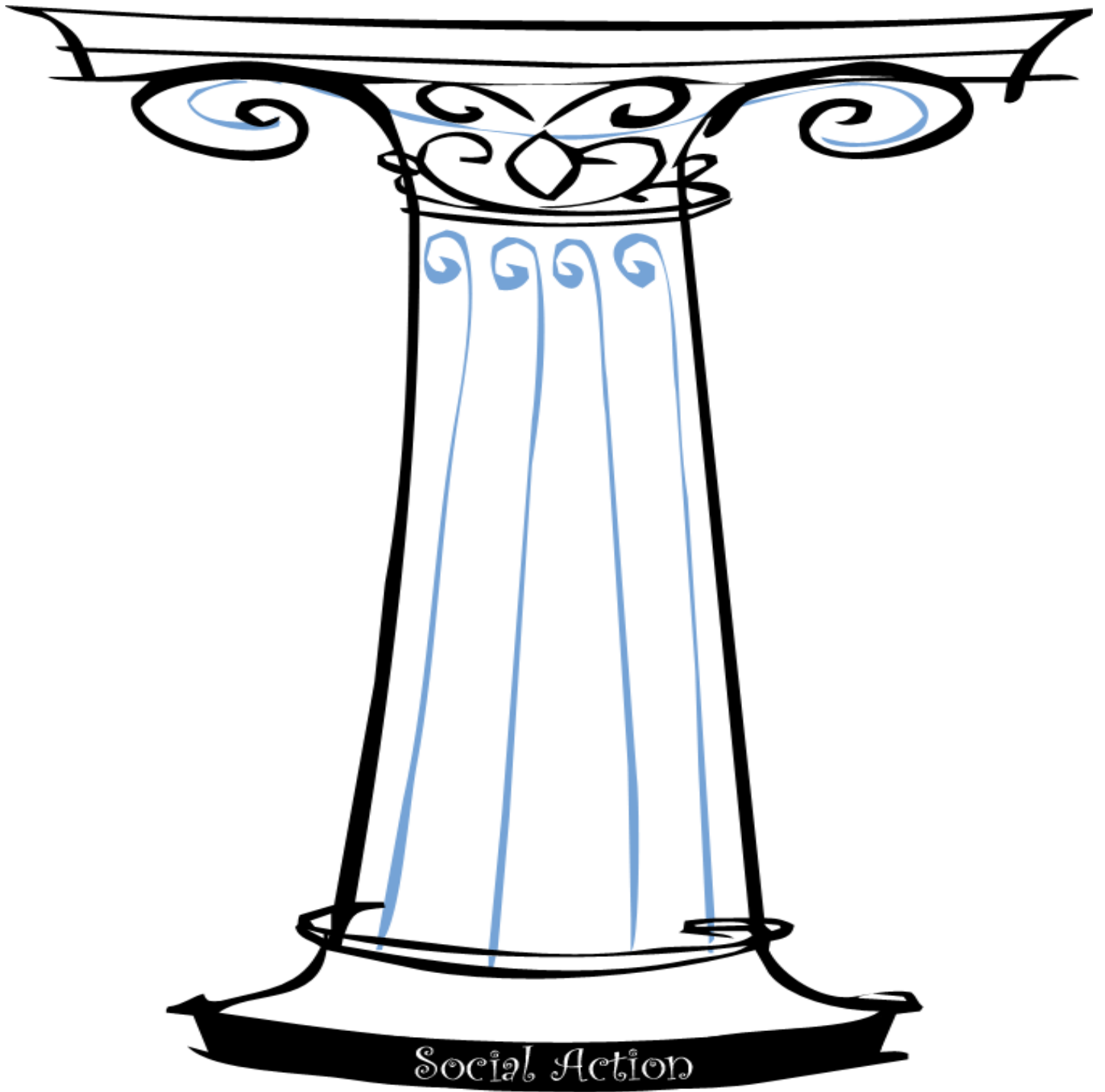
Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/pillars.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/pillars.pdf) for printing.













FIND OUT MORE

On YouTube, watch this [cartoon version](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJgNrGoRwT4) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJgNrGoRwT4) of "The Conference of the Birds." The Persian Sufi Muslim Fariduddin Attar's original poem is long, complex, and more spiritual than the story in this session. Read about the poem and the poet at the [blog](http://wahiduddin.net/mv2/X/X_3_4.htm) (at wahiduddin.net/mv2/X/X_3_4.htm) of contemporary Sufi author Hazrat Inayat Khan.

An article about the basic beliefs, history, and practices of Sufism, an aspect of Islam, can be found on the [BBC Religions webpage](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sufism_1.shtml) (at www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sufism_1.shtml).

The UUA Bookstore offers [Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1274) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1274): *A Treasury of Islamic Wisdom for Children and Parents* by Sarah Conover (2010).

SESSION 10: SIGNS OF WELCOME

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Those of us who have come through the great doors, who have made of this place the soul of Sunday on our spiritual journey, share a commitment... to radical hospitality. This is the heart of our faith: love, service, justice, peace.
— Rev. Kim K. Crawford Harvie, Unitarian Universalist minister

Welcoming others is a sign of our Unitarian Universalist faith. In this session, the children hear a story based on a Hawaiian tale in which Pele, the goddess of fire, visits two families in disguise to teach a lesson of welcoming. They sing and discuss "Come, Come, Whoever You Are," a popular Unitarian Universalist hymn based on words of the Sufi mystic, Rumi. Participants share personal experiences and brainstorm ways to make the group welcoming and accessible to everyone.

GOALS

This session will:

- Identify "welcoming others" as a sign of our Unitarian Universalist faith
- Introduce "Come, Come, Whoever You Are," a popular Unitarian Universalist hymn
- Demonstrate actions and behaviors that can create a more welcoming and accessible environment
- Lift up two UU Sources, world religions (Sufi Islam) and Jewish teachings.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify being welcoming as a way to be UU every day
- Experience the hymn "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" and a story of the biblical prophet Elijah

- Share personal stories of being welcomed and being shut out
- Recognize and commit to actions and behaviors that are signs of a welcoming and accessible environment, by creating a welcome ritual for the group to use in future meetings.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Story — A Calabash of Poi	5
Activity 2: Shut Out	10
Activity 3: Song — "Come, Come, Whoever You Are"	15
Activity 4: The Welcome Challenge	15
Activity 5: Creating a Ritual of Welcome	10
Faith in Action: Welcome Flags	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Learning in Action - Making Name Tags for Members	30
Alternate Activity 2: Learning in Action — Leading a Round in Congregational Worship	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Reflect on the times you felt welcomed, particularly when you were a child. When did you feel truly wanted? When did it feel false, or overdone? If you have a short, appropriate story to share about being shut out or welcomed, prepare to share it with the group.

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- If the group designed an Opening ritual in Session 9, set out materials you need to lead it. Alternatively, prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.
- Later in this session, you will talk about how you greet participants. Choose words and actions to use consistently in this session to greet participants—for example, with a simple "Hi" and a handshake.
- Optional: If children will wear stoles during the session, make sure you have extra stoles for visitors. A child who begins to attend regularly can add their initials to a stole in Session 12 or 16.

Description of Activity

As participants enter, greet each child in the same manner.

Lead the Opening ritual designed in Session 9, Activity 4. Or, use this Opening ritual:

If the children wear stoles for Opening and Closing, distribute stoles. Invite the children to put on their stoles. Offer any visitors a stole and explain that they may wear it during the Opening time and the Closing time if they wish. Remind the children their stoles are a sign that everyone in the group is a worship leader.

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice. Lead the group to say these Opening words:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together, we demonstrate our open hearts by welcoming new people into our community.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — A CALABASH OF POI (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[A Calabash of Poi](#)" (included in this document) "
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling or reading it to the children.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Gather the children to hear the story "A Calabash of Poi." Read or tell the story.

Then, process with these questions:

- What do you remember most about this story?
- Why did Pele disguise herself?

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening to a story or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 2: SHUT OUT (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Think of two short, personal anecdotes you can share, if needed, to prompt or affirm the children—one about being left out or unwelcomed, and one about an action you did to welcome someone else. Be ready to say how you felt in each situation.

Description of Activity

Tell the children that now you would like them to talk about their own experiences. Have they ever felt like Pele when she asked the first family for food, and they said "no?" Say:

Just about everyone has had a time when they felt shut out of a group. I know it has happened to me. Can you think of a time when it happened to you? When did you feel left out, or unwelcomed?

Invite children to share stories about times they felt shut out, left out of groups, or unwelcomed. Some examples might include not being picked for a team, feeling left out when a younger sibling is born, or not being invited to a party or to play a game with others. If the group is slow to share, offer your anecdote.

Encourage each storyteller to say how they felt. Acknowledge that being excluded can be painful. Assure them that everyone is left out sometimes, and many times people do not mean to be unwelcoming to each other. Sometimes, we are busy with our friends or a project we are doing, and we do not notice someone new. You might say:

Sometimes when we feel very comfortable someplace, we don't think about how a new person might feel coming into that same place for the first time. But, as Unitarian Universalists, we want to try to remember to welcome others whenever we have a chance to.

Now ask for stories of times the children were welcomed into a group or a situation. Ask what someone did or said to welcome them. Ask how they felt. Acknowledge that it makes us feel good when we are welcomed. You might say:

How does it feel when we welcome others? We feel friendly and loving, and that is a good way to feel.

ACTIVITY 3: SONG — "COME, COME, WHOEVER YOU ARE" (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: Computer with Internet access or a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Read the Description of Activity. Decide how much time you can give the unpacking of the song and assess how the dance component will work with this group of children, and plan accordingly.
- Write the words to "Come, Come, Whoever You Are," Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, on newsprint, and post.
- If you do not know "Come, Come, Whoever You Are," familiarize yourself with [the tune](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QTB1AgVpZM) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QTB1AgVpZM). You can also [listen to the song](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zx1xpz18w&feature=related) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=zx1xpz18w&feature=related) sung as a round by members of Bull Run (Virginia) Unitarian Universalists. Optional: Invite a skilled musical volunteer to help teach the song and/or help you incorporate movement into this activity. The Tapestry of Faith resource [Making Music Live, by Nick Page](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/resources/music/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/resources/music/index.shtml), offers practical guidance to help you lead songs, with or without movement, in a Unitarian Universalist religious education setting.
- Optional: If you have time, plan to teach the children to sing "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" as a round. See Alternate Activity 2, Leadership in Action — Leading a Round in Congregational Worship if you wish to extend the children's engagement with this song.

Description of Activity

Participants learn "Come, Come, Whoever You Are," Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, and identify ways the lyrics express Unitarian Universalist values related to welcoming.

Ask:

- When you entered the room today, what ritual did we exchange? [A greeting.]
- Why do we greet people?

- What are some ways we greet people? [Invite the children to demonstrate, by greeting each other and co-leaders.]
- How do you feel when you enter a room and someone greets you? [Affirm that greeting people is one way to make them feel welcomed. When we welcome someone, they feel we want them to be with us, to be part of our group or community, to feel at home.]
- Sometimes we greet someone when we first meet them, but maybe we can do more to make them feel welcomed. After a greeting, what more can we do to welcome someone? [Prompt: What might you do or say to make a visitor feel comfortable at your home? What could you do to make a new child at school or in your neighborhood feel like they belong? How do we welcome people here at the congregation?]

Invite the group to sit comfortably. Sing "Come, Come, Whoever You Are," Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition* softly, one time through. Ask if any children know the song. Invite those who do to sing it with you a second time. Tell the group that the words in this song were written by Rumi, a Sufi mystic who lived hundreds of years ago. The tune is by a UU minister, Reverend Lynn Ungar. Say:

Think of this song as an invitation asking people to come into this space. Does it sound inviting to you?

Talk through the words of the song, using the newsprint you have posted:

Come, come, whoever, you are. Say:

These words tell us who is welcome when we sing this song. Who is welcome? [Affirm that everyone is welcome.]

Wanderer, worshipper... Say:

These words say more about who we are going to welcome. It could be someone just wandering by. It could be someone who wants to join us in worshipping together, like we do at our congregation. It could even be someone who might only want to visit one time, or stay just a little while and then leave. That person is welcome, too.

Lover of leaving. Say:

This part can be confusing. What do you think the author of these words meant? If someone loves to "leave" then is it important that they always have a place to return to? Is our congregation and faith that place? [Affirm "yes."]

Ours is no caravan of despair. Say:

Do you all know what a caravan is? A caravan is a procession of people, animals, or wagons or cars traveling together in a line. "Despair" is feeling sad or unsure of what to do. Our UU faith is not a caravan of despair, but a caravan of joy and love.

Come, yet again come. Say:

These words say we want people to come not just one time, but any time they want to join us. We will welcome them each time.

Tell the group that many UU groups like to sing this song together. Ask: Why do you think Unitarian Universalists like us think it is important to welcome people? Affirm that our first Principle says everyone has value and deserves to be treated with respect. When we act in a welcoming way to someone new, that is a sign that we respect that person, and we are living our first UU Principle.

Now lead the children to sing the song again, this time using their bodies to act out how the song welcomes others to feel like a part of our group. Say:

Let's sing the song again, as a real sign of welcoming. This time, let's use our bodies to show signs of welcoming, too.

Encourage children to use gestures that are signs of welcome, such as waving "hello" and using arms to motion someone closer.

ACTIVITY 4: THE WELCOME CHALLENGE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chairs for all participants, plus one extra chair
- Optional: A welcome mat

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange chairs in a circle—one for each participant, plus one extra. If the group normally sits in a circle on the floor, plan how you will designate an "extra seat" on the floor.
- Take a careful look at your meeting space. Make sure it models accessibility; for example, are paths clear for a child who might use a wheelchair or crutches?
- Optional: Obtain a welcome mat, or make one by writing "Welcome!" on a sheet of newsprint.
- Optional: Visit the UUA website for information on [making congregations more accessible](http://www.uua.org/accessibility/congregations/27136) (at www.uua.org/accessibility/congregations/27136).

shtml). Prepare suggestions to share with the children.

Description of Activity

Gather children in a circle, leaving one empty chair. Ask, "Who is this chair for?" Take responses. Affirm that it could be for anyone who might wish to join our group.

Ask if anyone has attended a Passover Seder. Explain:

A Seder is a meal shared at the Jewish holiday of Passover. Often, families set an empty chair at the table for the prophet Elijah. A chair for Elijah means a chair for anyone, as Elijah is known to come in disguise—like the Hawaiian goddess of fire, Pele—to see if people will welcome him. Some groups set up an empty chair to represent people who are not yet part of the group, but may join them someday. The chair reminds the group to be always welcoming.

Tell the children they will have a chance to imagine who might sit in our empty chair, and how they could welcome that person. Give an example: What if the person did not speak English? Could they make that person feel welcome? What signs would they use to welcome that person?

Now ask, "What if the person could not see very well?" Would they need to welcome them in a different way? How?

Tell them that the congregation spends a lot of time trying to make all the programs at the congregation welcoming and accessible. Ask if anyone can tell you what "accessible" means. Help children understand that accessibility is about making sure everybody can participate—children, youth, elders, people who have different abilities and maybe use a wheelchair or a hearing aid, people who speak different languages, people who have never been to a UU congregation before and might not know what we do here.

Variation

Place a welcome mat in the circle. Tell the group you will describe a child who might sit in the chair. Ask children to raise their hand as they think of a sign of welcome they might offer that child. As you call on a child, have them state their idea and ask the group what they think. When the group affirms the idea, invite that child to come to the welcome mat. Help children contribute so different participants generate a few ideas for welcoming each child you describe. It is okay to repeat ideas for welcoming different children—for example, "Greet them" fits any situation. You can also ask children to name things NOT to do—actions and words that would not be

welcoming. Aim to have each participant come to the welcome mat at least once.

Use these examples, plus your own. You might invite children to describe different children, too:

- A non-English speaking child
- A child who has just moved to the neighborhood
- A child who is visually impaired
- A child who has never been to a UU congregation before
- A child who uses a wheelchair or crutches
- A child who does not or cannot speak
- A child who misses their parent
- A child who you recognize because they are also new at your school

To conclude, say, in your own words:

Some of the children we described are said to have "special needs," but sometimes we all have special needs: If I am in a new place and feeling scared or lonely, I need to be welcomed in a different way than if I am familiar with this place and all of you. We are welcoming when we do not make assumptions about what a person can do, likes to do, or what they need. If an activity called for cutting out shapes from paper, what would be the best thing to do to be welcoming to a child who does not see well: Cut it out for them, or ask if they need any help? [Take responses. Affirm that it is best to ask if help is needed and what that help might be, instead of assuming help is needed and/or doing something a person might not want us to do.]

Making our congregation accessible and knowing respectful ways to welcome different people here are two important ways to be welcoming. These are ways we can be UU every day.

Including All Participants

If the group includes a child with a disability or one who belongs to a minority or historically marginalized group, do not describe their attributes or limitations as part of the game or call the child out in any way during the activity.

ACTIVITY 5: CREATING A RITUAL OF WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Description of Activity

Participants design a ritual for the Signs of Our Faith community.

Say:

Now that we have talked about some reasons and some ways to be welcoming, let's think of some ways we can welcome children who are new to our group. What are some simple things we can do here, when we meet together, to make a visitor or new member of the Signs of Our Faith community feel welcome? What actions are welcoming?

Encourage contributions and list ideas on newsprint. As needed, offer these suggestions:

- Helping a new child create a name tag
- Asking a new child what name or nickname they prefer to be called
- Giving a new child directions to the bathroom and water fountain
- Simply saying, "Welcome, [new person's name]!"
- A round of group introductions, where children introduce themselves and share something personal, such as their favorite food or what they like to do in their leisure time

Once some ideas are listed, engage the group to shape one or more welcoming rituals and commit to using them when someone new comes to the group. If there is time, have one or more children role-play being new so others can practice the ritual.

After this session, write down the ritual. Make sure all co-leaders have these notes, so you will be able to remind participants to enact the ritual when a new person visits or joins the group.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors
- Optional: Items needed for new Closing ritual (Session 9, Activity 4)

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- If the group designed a Closing ritual in Session 9, prepare to hold it. If not, use the Closing described here. Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Invite the group to pass a blessing around the circle. Say you will each, in turn, address the person next to you by name and say "Thank you for being here today." Model by addressing the person on your left: "Howard, thank you for being here today."

When everyone has blessed a person next to them, extinguish the chalice together.

FAITH IN ACTION: WELCOME FLAGS

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Cloth in a variety of light colors
- Permanent or fabric markers in various colors
- Twine or heavy string, and glue, Velcro tabs, or another means of attaching flags to twine

Preparation for Activity

- Invite members of the membership committee, worship committee or the congregation's board to help plan this activity.
- Cut cloth into 8-inch squares — one per participant, plus a few extra.
- Place cloth squares and markers on work tables.
- Post blank newsprint.

- Optional: Post newsprint and list suggestions for "welcoming" words, from the bulleted list below.

Description of Activity

Participants make "welcome" flags to display in a congregational entryway.

Create a multigenerational experience by using this activity on a Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon.

Gather the group and ask:

- In what ways does our congregation welcome people? What physical signs or indicators do we use to show that our congregation is welcoming? (For example, ushers or greeters, pamphlets for newcomers, or a minister who shakes hands with congregants before or after the service.)
- Why is being welcoming a sign of our Unitarian Universalist faith?
- Do we always know when a person is new? If not, how does this affect how we welcome?
- If we see people we do not already know, do we assume they are not Unitarian Universalists?
- How would our welcome look different if we assumed every new visitor was a Unitarian Universalist?

Invite participants to each decorate a square of cloth with "welcoming" words, to make a collective display to help welcome visitors to the congregation. You might suggest (and write on newsprint) these phrases:

- Come, Come, Whoever You Are
- Everyone Belongs
- Come Play with Me
- Bienvenido!
- Elders Rule!
- Welcome
- Babies Welcomed Here
- Ours is no caravan of despair
- We Are One

Encourage participants to use symbols of welcome, too. You might prompt, and sketch on newsprint:

- a chalice
- a smiley face
- a rainbow
- people holding hands

As participants finish, have volunteers share their flags with the group.

Hang the flags on string. Decide as a group where to display the string so the most people can see the flags as they enter the building or enter the sanctuary for worship.

Once the flags are displayed ask the group:

- In what ways does the entrance look more welcoming?
- What do we need to do to make sure visitors actually find the welcoming that these words and symbols promise, once they are inside? It is the responsibility of just the minister? Just the adults? What can kids do?
- What more can we do to communicate welcome?

Collect suggestions. Invite volunteers to take responsibility for any first steps to advance some of the ideas, listing the steps and the volunteers on newsprint. Ask: How will we keep track, and make sure we do these welcoming actions? Should the list be posted? If the group agrees, lead everyone to show commitment to these promises by signing the list.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What have you learned that you can apply in the future? How did the children interact? Did everyone in the group demonstrate an understanding of welcoming behavior? How did the group make visitors or new participants feel welcomed?

Did each co-leader give themselves adequate time for their own spiritual preparation? Assign co-leaders any advance preparation needed for the next session.

TAKING IT HOME

Those of us who have come through the great doors, who have made of this place the soul of Sunday on our spiritual journey, share a commitment... to radical hospitality. This is the heart of our faith: love, service, justice, peace.
— Rev. Kim K. Crawford Harvie, Unitarian Universalist minister

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we talked affirmed that being welcoming to others is a sign of our Unitarian Universalist faith. We identified ways our congregation welcomes visitors, members, new members, friends, and people of all ages and life stages. We shared stories of when we felt welcomed and when we felt shut out or not welcomed. We created a welcoming ritual for

our Signs of Our Faith community so everyone will feel welcomed. We sang "Come, Come, Whoever You Are," Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, a song of inclusion and welcome sung in many UU congregations.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

times one or another family member may have felt shut out of family activities. Affirm that in a family, people do not always do everything together. Sometimes when someone is excluded, there is a good reason, although you might not know what it is. Make sure children know that if other family members participate in an activity they want to try, they can ask to accompany.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... volunteering as "family greeters" at your congregation. Your role will be to greet everyone, while paying particular attention to a new or visiting family. Make a family feel at home by showing them the nursery and RE rooms and explaining routines involving children and youth.

Family Discovery. Share stories about friendship. Ask each family member: Who is your best friend? How did you meet? How were you welcoming to them, or they to you?

Family Game. Play a version of the Welcome Challenge game we played today. Gather in a circle, leaving one empty seat. Take turns imagining a new person who might like to join your circle. Examples: a neighbor who has never been to your home before, the new girlfriend or boyfriend of an aunt or uncle, someone from another country who is just learning the English language and American customs. How would you welcome that person? What signs—words or actions—would you use? Take care that your welcome does not make assumptions about what the new person wants or needs, but invites them to tell you how you can help.

Family Ritual. Does your family have a special treat you like to offer visitors? If Dad is known for his banana bread or your stepmother makes a great fruit salad, children can help that person make the special dish for visitors. You might even create your own special welcome food. The treat need not be food. What about inviting every guest to leave a handprint on a special wall in your home?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — MAKING NAME TAGS FOR MEMBERS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Name tags (blank) used by congregation

- Markers
- Stickers, glue sticks, glitter, and other decorations for name tags

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange for the group to have a table during coffee hour.
- Assemble name tags and decorating items on a table that will be accessible to everyone who wishes to participate.
- Help children prepare their own name tags so they can wear them during the activity.
- Find out about special assistance the children might need to offer, such as assisting someone with visual, auditory, or physical impairment.
- Optional: Pre-decorate name tags for visitors.

Description of Activity

Every session offers one or more Leadership in Action (LIA) activities. In this activity, the children practice leadership skills by helping members of the congregation make and decorate name tags.

This activity is meant to be multigenerational. Encourage young children, youth, and elders to participate.

Since some congregations only have permanent name tags for adult members, this is an opportunity for the children in the congregation to have name tags for themselves. If adults already have name tags, invite them to decorate them with stickers or pictures. Make sure the children leading this activity have created and are wearing their own name tags at the start.

Beforehand, tell the children how they can offer special assistance to anyone who has visual, auditory, or physical impairment.

Before or following the activity, help the children process with the following questions:

- Why is it important that people wear name tags while at our congregation?
- Do you think name tags are welcoming? Why?
- Do you think it is important that all ages wear name tags?

Affirm that name tags are welcoming because they help us address each other by name, which feels more personal. They also help create a sense of community if everyone wears similar nametags. They can be like a uniform of the congregation.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION — LEADING A ROUND IN CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: Computer with Internet access or a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Refer to Activity 3, Song — "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" for help preparing to teach the song to the group. The instructions below will then help you teach the song as a round. You can hear it sung as a round [here](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QTB1AgVpZM) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QTB1AgVpZM).
- If possible, invite the music director or another adult who is comfortable leading songs. You will need at least two singing sections, with an adult co-leader for each.
- Write the words to "Come, Come, Whoever You Are," Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, on newsprint, and post.
- Arrange a date for the children to lead the round in Sunday worship.

Description of Activity

Every session offers one or more Leadership in Action (LIA) activities. In this activity, the children lead a musical round in a worship service.

Tell the children you will teach the group to sing "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" as a round. Explain: In a round, different groups start the song at different times and continue singing it. Name a familiar song often sung in rounds, such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Now, divide the group in half or thirds. Lead one section of the group to begin singing "Come, Come, Whoever You Are." After the first line, have the second group start singing. Have each section sing the entire song several times.

Now tell the children they will have a chance to lead the congregation in singing this song in a round. Suggest this will be a challenge worth trying!

Have the group choose one or two participants to announce the name of the song and explain that singing a song of welcome is a sign of our UU faith.

On the day the children will lead the singing, ask families to bring children a half hour before worship so they can practice. Have small groups of children stand in different sections of the sanctuary to help lead.

Afterward, use these questions to process the activity:

- What was it like leading the congregation in this song?
- Why might it be a good idea for a UU congregation to learn this song?
- Would you want to lead a song in the congregation again?

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 10: STORY: A CALABASH OF POI

Based on "A Calabash of Poi," originally published in *In the Path of the Trade Winds* by Coral Wells Thorpe (New York/London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1924).

It was a sizable house, as Hawaiian houses go, perhaps fifty feet long, its side thatched with ti-leaves—a sign of rank. Its only window, about a foot square, looked out on a carefully planted taro patch, while rows of coconut palms and fruit-laden banana plants made a pretty background.

Pele, the goddess of fire, was walking down the mountainside. Today she had disguised herself especially as an old, feeble woman with a hard face, and bitterness in her eyes. She grasped her cane, and hobbled up to the big house.

"Aloha," she said to the small group of people sitting in the doorway.

"Aloha," was the reply, in a not-too-friendly voice.

Pele waited. Apparently there was to be no invitation to enter or to refresh herself.

"I have walked many miles," she said finally, using a weak voice. "I am very hungry. Perhaps you have a calabash of poi for me."

"We are very sorry, but we have no poi," said the Hawaiian chief, the master of the house. "Besides our evening meal is pau."

"Then, perhaps, a small piece of salted fish?"

"No, nor fish," was the short rejoinder.

"Then, at least, some ripe berries? I am parched with thirst?"

"Our berries are all green, as you can see for yourself, providing your eyes are not too dimmed by age."

Pele's eyes were far from dim! At other times, flashes of fire blazed in her eyes at a moment's provocation. But this time, bowing low, she made her way in silence to the gate. A few steps further down the hard road, she entered a smaller garden and paused at a small hut. The work of the day and the evening meal were over. The children played. A man and woman sat watching the last golden rays of the sun sinking behind the gentle slopes of Mauna Loa.

"Ah, I see your evening meal is past;" sighed Pele. "I am sorry for I am tired and hungry, and had hoped for a little refreshment after a day's walk down the steep mountain."

"Neither fish nor awa have we," said the poor fisherman, "but to such as we have, you are most welcome."

Even as he spoke, his wife had risen, motioned Pele to a place on the mat, and set before her a large calabash of poi.

Pele ate happily. Dipping her finger in the calabash, she raised it dripping with poi, and placed it in her mouth. She finished the entire contents in no time and, looking up, remarked:

"I am still hungry. Would it be too much to ask for another calabash?"

The woman arose and placed before her a second calabash of poi, not perhaps as large as the first, but filled to the brim.

Again Pele emptied the calabash eagerly. She sighed as she finished the last mouthful, calling attention to the empty calabash in her lap.

This time, a third calabash—smaller than the second, but quite full—was placed before her. Pele finished half of it, arose to her feet, and, uttered these words:

"When your neighbors plant taro, it shall wither on its stem. Their bananas shall die on the stalk, and their coconuts shall fall on their favorite pig. But when you plant taro at night, you may pull it in the morning. Your cane shall mature overnight and your bananas ripen in one day's sunshine. You shall have as many crops as there are days in the year!"

Then Pele trudged out of the gate and was seen to disappear toward Ha-le-mau-mau in a cloud of flame.

When the astonished fisherman walked outside his hut the next morning, yellow bananas hung on new plants, the full grown taro stood ready to be pulled, and the cane-cuttings reached to the eaves of his house. Looking across to his rich neighbors land, he saw that, indeed, the curse of Pele had already come. In place of prosperous acres stood only sun-parched remnants of yesterday's proud crop.

In modern times, they say: "Whether you believe in the old lady Pele or not, don't ever forget to be nice to the old folks. It just might be Pele. You can't always tell."

FIND OUT MORE

Welcoming in UU Congregations

In a 2006 sermon, "[Setting a Place for Elijah](http://www.uucpa.org/sermons_06/sermon060409.html)" (at www.uucpa.org/sermons_06/sermon060409.html) Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern, encourages us to value and practice welcoming.

The [UUA website provides the manual "Accessibility Information for Unitarian Universalist Churches](http://www.uua.org/accessibility/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/accessibility/index.shtml)" by Devorah Greenstein and Charlotte Hawkins. [A short essay by Ken Hurto](#) (at www.uua.org/interconnections/interconnections/56233.s

[html](#)) on the UUA website discusses seeing visitors as guests.

[Welcoming Children with Special Needs](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=756) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=756) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=756) by Sally Patton (Boston: UUA, 2004) is a good addition for every congregation's religious education library.

Music

[Making Music Live](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/resources/music/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/resources/music/index.shtml) is a Tapestry of Faith resource by musician Nick Page to help leaders working with children and music. Chapter 6 has information on teaching songs, including how to teach a round.

SESSION 11: WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

A person will worship something, have no doubt about that. We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our hearts, but it will out. That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming. — Ralph Waldo Emerson

This session introduces worship with our UU faith communities as a sign of our faith. Children learn some components of a Unitarian Universalist worship service and create a mini-worship together.

Activity 4, Worship Planning Stations will work best with additional adult or older youth volunteers to help small teams of children choose readings and actions to contribute to a mini-worship service. For this activity, you may wish to provide worship resources the children explored or created in previous sessions. Read the activity carefully and give yourself time to collect these materials.

GOALS

This session will:

- Demonstrate how congregational worship gathers us to attend to values and share practices Unitarian Universalists believe are important
- Define common components of a Unitarian Universalist worship service
- Engage participants in building and enacting a short worship service.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand how UU congregational worship invites participants to share values and practices that are important

- Create and lead components of a typical worship service and discover how the components relate to each other.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: UU Worship	10
Activity 2: Story — Worship at Camp Taylor	5
Activity 3: Worship Components	10
Activity 4: Worship Planning Stations	20
Activity 5: Mini-Worship	15
Faith in Action: Multigenerational Worship	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Group Chalice Lighting	35
Alternate Activity 2: Leadership in Action — Children's Chapel	60
Alternate Activity 3: Leadership in Action — Hymnbook Drive	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Think of a worship service you attended or helped plan that was particularly moving. Why was it so? What worthy matters were addressed in the service? Which elements of the worship particularly touched you? What worship rituals mean the most to you?

Perhaps worship is not one of your favorite activities in the congregation. Have you experienced meaningful worship in another setting? Reflect on that experience instead.

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table

Preparation for Activity

- If the group designed an Opening ritual in Session 9, set out materials you need to lead it. Alternatively, prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle. Write the Opening words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Lead the Opening ritual designed in Session 9. Or, use this Opening ritual:

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice, and recite together:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

We come together in worship to rejoice and renew. We come together to remind ourselves what is worthy of our time, attention, and devotion.

ACTIVITY 1: UU WORSHIP (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Crayons or washable markers
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Tape sheets of newsprint to work tables, a hard floor, or low on walls where all the children will be able to reach them for drawing.

Description of Activity

Children explore why UUs worship together.

Ask: "What sorts of things do you do with groups like your families, your classmates, your scout group, or your friends?" Allow them to call out response. Then, gather children around newsprint, distribute crayons or markers, and invite them to draw one or more of the group activities they have mentioned.

While they draw, ask the children to describe their drawings. Who is in the group? What is the activity? Ask about activities they do in a group with the UU congregation. Point out the activities they are talking about or drawing which happen at times in your congregation.

Then ask: "Who can think of a unique activity we do as a group in our congregation, which we might only do with this group? What is an activity that happens here, for which we gather together?" Take suggestions. Tell them you are thinking about "worship." Use reference points they recognize to describe a worship gathering in your congregation. Now ask: "Why do you think Unitarian Universalists worship together?" Affirm all answers.

Say, in these words or your own:

In UU congregations all over the world, thousands of people come together for worship. Many groups worship together on Sunday morning. Some worship Saturday night. Some worship at other times.

Some congregations worship in a building they call a church. Some do not use the word "church" and instead call the place they gather a "meeting house," a "fellowship hall," or just say things like "I'm going to worship." Sometimes UUs worship outside.

Sometimes a minister leads UU worship services. But a worship leader can also be a religious educator like [name of your religious educator], a music director [name of your music director], or a lay leader—someone who is a volunteer.

What all UU worship has in common is why we come together. Worship is a time for us to share with others what we find worthy. Creating time for our thoughts, discussions, and celebrations of what we find truly important that helps us lead lives that reflect our values, lives full of meaning and purpose. It is fine to worship by yourself, but UUs also like to worship as a community. Worship is a time for giving and receiving and we show this with worship rituals that are signs of our faith. We might say some words together

as a pledge to be a loving, supportive community. We might sing a song that inspires us to work for justice in the world. We might hear a sermon—words from the worship leader or minister—about one of our UU ancestors, or about how we can help some of the world's problems. Someone might tell a story from the Hebrew or Christian scriptures or a story of their own, such as during a time of Sharing Joys and Concerns. During worship, a basket is passed to collect money to contribute to the congregation because we find the work of the congregation worthy. Worship is full of rituals that are signs of our faith.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY – WORSHIP AT CAMP TAYLOR (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Worship at Camp Taylor](#) (included in this document) "
- Leader Resource 1, [Illustration — Worship at Camp Taylor](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story to become familiar with it.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Ask if the children remember Kamal and Abby. Say that you are going to share a story about a new friend of theirs, Ricardo, who helps plan a worship service.

Tell or read the story.

Mention that, in the story, worship took place in the woods. Ask if worship has to happen inside a special building. Ask if worship only happens in a group or may an individual worship alone. Affirm that you may worship at any time, with or without anyone, and at any place. Yet, for the rest of the session, the group will mostly talk about weekly worship at and with the congregation.

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening or

can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 3: WORSHIP COMPONENTS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, [Common Worship Components for Children](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Download Handout 1. Adapt as needed to suit practices in your congregation. Copy for all participants and co-leaders.

Description of Activity

Children discuss common parts of a worship service and the rituals associated with these parts.

Distribute the handout. Tell the group it is a list of parts of a worship service. Ask the children to name parts of a worship service they can recall, or imagine. As they respond, explain how their suggestions correspond with items on the list. For example, "singing when we come in/go out" could be gathering, or closing. "Hearing a story" could be receiving. "Passing a basket for money" is giving.

Once you have noted all or most of the items on the list, invite the children to think about the story about Ricardo's worship in the woods. Guide them to identify components of worship from the story, and discover how your congregation includes the same components. For example, Ricardo's worship service included a gathering: singing "Come, Come, Whoever You Are." How does your congregation gather for worship? By ringing chimes or playing a prelude? Note: If participants have little experience of worship in the congregational setting, it is sufficient to highlight one or two components of worship. Aim to give them a taste.

Point out that lighting the chalice to open worship is the most common ritual of Unitarian Universalist communities all over the world.

Tell the group they will now have the chance to craft their own short worship service.

ACTIVITY 4: WORSHIP PLANNING STATIONS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*
- Arts and crafts materials
- A poster or handout of the seven Principles
- Optional: Recorded music, and a music player
- Optional: [*A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=760) (Skinner House, 2008), [*Sunday and Every Day: My Little Book of Unitarian Universalism*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1149) (Skinner House, 2010), [*Come Sing a Song With Me: A Songbook for All Ages*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=894) (Skinner House, 2008), and/or [*Now Let Us Sing*](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=437) (Kingston Unitarian Press, 2004), a collection of UU hymns categorized by Principle

Preparation for Activity

- Five stations are suggested. If the group is small, create fewer stations.
- Invite several adults or older youth to assist children at the stations.
- Choose one of the UU Principles as a focus for the mini-worship—or decide to let each team of children choose a Principle as the focus of their component.
- Set up the stations.
 - **Gathering:** An index card reading "Instructions: Lead the community to sing a hymn about one the seven Principles. One suggestion is Hymn 188, "Come, Come Whoever You Are," but another hymn is fine. Rehearse. This component may last two minutes or less. Copies of *Now Let Us Sing*, *Come Sing a Song with Me*, and *Singing the Living Tradition*; place a bookmark at Hymn 188, "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" in *Singing the Living*

Tradition; children learned this hymn in Session 10.

- **Opening/Closing:** An index card that reads "Instructions: Find or write one short reading for opening the worship and another short reading for closing the worship. Readings should reflect one of the seven Principles. Assign someone to light the chalice, someone to lead the opening reading, someone to extinguish the chalice, and someone to lead the closing reading. Rehearse. Each component may last one minutes or less." Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*. Newsprint sheets with the Opening and Closing words used in this session. Writing paper and pencils. Blank newsprint, markers, and tape. Optional: If the group created an Opening and/or a Closing in Session 9, give this group the materials to lead these components.
- **Centering:** An index card that reads "Find or write a prayer or meditation that reflects one of the seven Principles. Assign one or more team members to read the prayer or meditation aloud and then ask for a minute of silence. Rehearse. This component may last three minutes or less. "From Session 4: Handout 1, Prayers and Meditations; any meditations used in Alternate Activity 2, Creating a Meditation or the Faith in Action activity, Collecting Prayers and Meditations. Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* and (optional) other sources of prayers or meditations for children. Writing paper and pencils.
- **Receiving:** An index card that reads "Present one of the seven UU Principles in any way you choose. You could share visual art, dance, music, or acting. You could include statements about why the Principle is important or how they may be used. Rehearse. This component may take five minutes or less." From Session 3: Handout 1, UU Principles for Children (or another version of the Principles for children). Assorted art material. Newsprint, markers, and tape.

- **Acknowledging:** An index card that reads "Pick a reading that reflects one or more of the seven Principles. Copy the words on a sheet of newsprint. Prepare to post the newsprint and lead the group in reading together. Rehearse. This component may take two minutes or less." Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*, bookmarked from Reading 457 to Reading 473 (and other books with material appropriate for this age). Newsprint, markers, and tape.

Description of Activity

Children craft a worship service under 15 minutes long based on one of the UU Principles.

Invite the group to create a short worship service about the seven Principles. Say that a team of children is needed at each station to create a specific part or component of a worship service. Introduce the volunteers who will help the teams, and indicate the stations:

- Gathering
- Opening/Closing
- Centering
- Receiving
- Acknowledging

Form teams. The teams should be fairly equal in size, except for "Receiving" which can have a larger group.

Explain that each team will find instructions on an index card at their station, along with materials for planning their component of the worship service. Tell them the teams will have 15 minutes to plan and practice leading their component.

Assist teams as they work. Remind them to write down any words not in hymnbooks or handouts so they will remember them when it is their turn to lead a component of the worship service. Make sure all roles are assigned and that all every child has a role in planning or leading. Help teams listen to each member of their group, reach consensus, gather needed materials, and rehearse.

Including All Participants

Be prepared to help children explore written materials and implement their ideas for art or performance.

ACTIVITY 5: MINI-WORSHIP (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Material created and gathered in Activity 4, Worship Planning Stations
- Optional: Music, and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange seats in a semicircle, with a chalice table in the center. Place hymnbooks on every chair or every other chair.

Description of Activity

Participants conduct the short worship service they designed.

Conduct the worship service designed in Activity 4, Worship Planning Stations. One suggested order is: Gathering, Opening, Centering, Receiving, Acknowledging, and Closing.

Afterward, express appreciation to the participants for their work.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors
- Optional: Items needed for new Closing ritual (Session 9, Activity 4)

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- If the group designed a Closing ritual in Session 9, prepare to hold it. If not, use the Closing described here. Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table.
Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Extinguish the chalice together.

FAITH IN ACTION: MULTIGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Common Worship Components for Children](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the congregational worship calendar with congregational staff and lay leaders. Schedule a multigenerational worship service that the children can help plan.
- Schedule one or two preparation meetings where children can work with adult worship planners. Schedule a rehearsal the day before the service. Ask families to bring children early for another, short run through the day of the service.

Description of Activity

Participants take an active role in creating a congregational worship service.

Invite children to help plan and lead a worship service for all ages in the congregation. Use Handout 1, Common Worship Components for Children, and their experience in this session to identify the purpose of worship components. Lead the children to name UU rituals and talk about the purpose of the rituals. Invite the children to suggest rituals, songs, readings, and other ideas for each component and find a role for children in leading part of the worship service.

Be sure to include children in the actual worship service. Children who do not wish to be in the service may still enjoy working on the planning and being ushers or greeters. Make it clear that all of these roles are ways to be a worship leader.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What would you do differently next time? Did children understand what different parts of the worship are for and how they work together?

How is the group functioning? Do all members participate? Is attendance steady? If not, could you contact any families to let the children know that they are missed? What else does the Signs community need to be as strong as it can be?

TAKING IT HOME

A person will worship something, have no doubt about that. We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our hearts, but it will out. That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming. — Ralph Waldo Emerson

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we talked about worship. Worship is dedicated time for people to evaluate what is really of worth in their lives and remind themselves to live their life accordingly. We said that worship can happen anywhere and at any time, but when we worship in community we support each other. We learned about some common components of worship and rituals associated with them. We created a short worship service ourselves. Worshipping together is a sign of our faith.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about ... what are family members' favorite components of a UU worship service? Attend worship together at the congregation. Bring enough copies of the handout from this session for every family member to have one and a supply of stickers. Every time you identify a part of the worship that corresponds to one of the components in the handout, place a sticker next to the component on the handout. Compare handouts after the service.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... worshipping together at home. Choose a special occasion such as a birthday or holiday or anniversary. Work together to create a 15-minute worship service. Use the service to discuss, celebrate, and reflect on why this occasion and sharing it together are important..

Family Discovery. The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) has [worship resources online for families and children](http://www.clf.uua.org/re/) (at [clf.uua.org/re/](http://www.clf.uua.org/re/)) and streams worship services weekly.

Leadership Suggestion. As a family, volunteer to be a part of worship services at your congregation. Families often light the chalice, tell stories, and usher or carry the offertory. Perhaps a family member would like to join the congregation's Worship Committee.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – GROUP CHALICE LIGHTING (35 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chalice and matches or lighter

Preparation for Activity

- Work with the congregational worship leader to designate a worship service where participants may light the chalice.
- Communicate with families to schedule dates.
- Practice lighting the chalice before the worship service. Make sure the wick of the candle has been previously lit. If using a lighter, make sure it works.
- Assign at least one adult to assist.

Description of Activity

Children demonstrate leadership by writing a chalice lighting together, and leading the congregation by lighting the chalice during a worship service.

Work with the group to write a chalice lighting to be offered during an upcoming service. One way to start is "We light this chalice for..." Post newsprint and invite the children to complete the sentence. Then, use their ideas to shape a short chalice lighting. Write the chalice lighting on a fresh sheet of newsprint. Work with the group to memorize it. Find ways for everyone to participate in the chalice lighting. Perhaps each line is read or recited by a different child. Perhaps the group recites it in unison or the chalice is lit by assembly line.

Practice before the service. Have the newsprint on hand, in case it is needed. Afterward, thank the chalice lighters for participating in the worship service. Remind them that taking part in worship is one way to be a leader in the congregation and demonstrate their UU faith.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – CHILDREN'S CHAPEL (60 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Copies of *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Music player and assorted recorded music
- Optional: Materials gathered for Activity 5, Worship Planning Stations

Preparation for Activity

- Coordinate with the religious educator and others as appropriate to arrange for the group to lead a children's chapel.

Description of Activity

Participants coordinate and present a chapel service.

If your congregation offers children's chapel, invite the group to refine the worship service designed in the session and offer it as children's chapel.

Afterward, thank the group for participating in the chapel. Remind them that taking part in worship is one way to be a leader in the congregation and demonstrate their UU faith.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – HYMNBOOK DRIVE

Materials for Activity

- A copy of *Singing the Journey*

Preparation for Activity

- On the [UUA's website](http://www.uua.org/worship/music/hymnals/journey/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/worship/music/hymnals/journey/index.shtml) read about *Singing the Journey*, the supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*. Prepare to talk to the children about why the congregation would benefit from becoming familiar with *Singing the Journey*.
- Talk with your minister, music director, and worship leaders to assess interest in *Singing the Journey* and make plans for a fundraiser.
- Optional: Invite the music director to teach the children a song from the supplement. Arrange a time for the children to help the music director

introduce the song into the congregational repertoire, during worship or at a special event.

- Optional: If the congregation already uses *Singing the Journey* or if the congregation has a significant Spanish-speaking population, you might hold a fundraiser to purchase copies of *Las Voces del Camino*, the Spanish language version of the hymnbook supplement. Read about the Spanish language hymnbook [online](http://www.uua.org/worship/music/hymnals/voces/index.shtml) (at www.uua.org/worship/music/hymnals/voces/index.shtml).

Description of Activity

Children raise funds to purchase the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook supplement, *Singing the Journey*.

Show the group a copy of *Singing the Journey*. Invite them to share about any of the hymns they already know. Point out the diversity sources and styles of music included in the supplement and tell why it would be a service to the congregation and a sign of leadership to help the congregation purchase more hymnbooks so everyone could learn new songs.

Brainstorm fundraising ideas. For example, the children might sing a hymn from *Singing the Journey* at a music service or choir service, with proceeds from that service's offertory to help purchase *Singing the Journey*. The children could sing the song the music director teaches them or lead the congregation in singing "Come, Come Whoever You," learned in Session 10, as a round.

Another option is hosting a coffeehouse: Invite congregational and community members to perform, charge a small admission, and sell refreshments.

After the fundraiser, engage the children in ordering *Singing the Journey* from the UUA Bookstore and unpacking/distributing hymnbooks when they arrive. Arrange for five minutes of an upcoming worship service for children to explain why this supplement is important, and how they coordinated the fundraiser. Help the group articulate why it is important to have the supplement in addition to the regular hymnbook. Perhaps the children can be part of leading the congregation to learn a new hymn from *Singing the Journey*.

Tell the children what a special service they have given the congregation. Remind them that taking part in worship is a way to be a leader in the congregation and demonstrate their UU faith.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 11: STORY: WORSHIP AT CAMP TAYLOR

Ricardo and his grandparents arrived at Camp Taylor for the congregation's weekend retreat. This was Ricardo's third year at the retreat and he had been looking forward to this weekend for months. He helped bring the bags to their cabin. Then, he looked all over for his friends Abby and Kamal, but they had not yet arrived.

Instead he found his grandfather in the large, group kitchen. "Time will pass faster if you keep busy," his grandfather said, and he asked Ricardo to help him place bread in baskets for Friday night's dinner.

Grandfather was right: Time did move faster when you kept busy. In fact, Ricardo was busy all weekend. When he wasn't playing with his friends, he helped prepare meals and clean up after activities. At Saturday's lunch, the minister, Rev. Hendrix, sat by Ricardo. "Ricardo, you are really being helpful this weekend. I like to see such leadership in the children of the congregation."

"Leadership?" asked Ricardo.

"Sure. Leadership doesn't only mean being the person in charge. Pitching in where help is needed is leadership, too. I need a young person to help with tomorrow's worship service. Would you like to help?"

"Sure," said Ricardo, though he wasn't sure how he could help. What did he know about creating worship?

That night, the worship planning team met. Rev. Hendrix explained that they would keep the planned components short to leave plenty of room for people to share. The theme for the service was "All Together Now." She used newsprint to list the parts of the worship service.

"When we gather at the pond, people will come from all over. Let's gather people with a song, a song some people know and others can learn quickly," she said.

"How about, 'Come, Come Whoever You Are?'" asked Ricardo. "We learned that in RE and we sing it a lot on Sunday mornings."

Everyone liked that idea. Someone wrote the title of the song on the newsprint. Another member of the team suggested they open with a chalice lighting. Ricardo was surprised to see that someone had brought a chalice to the retreat. They knew it would be needed because all the worship services at the congregation started with a chalice lighting.

More ideas for the worship service were added to the newsprint, including two more hymns and a meditation led by one of the congregation's elders.

"Will you give a sermon?" Ricardo asked Rev. Hendrix.

"Not this time," said Rev. Hendrix. "Alex has prepared a short sermon," Alex was a college student, who was new to the congregation. Ricardo was surprised that someone besides a minister could give a sermon—especially someone almost as young as himself.

"At the end of my sermon, I will invite anyone who wishes to do so to say a few words about what coming together for this retreat means to them. Instead of our usual Joys and Concerns, this is what we will ask participants to give during the service," said Alex. Ricardo liked that. He thought everyone would be able to participate in this way.

The next morning, Ricardo went to the pond in time to start singing "Come, Come Whoever You Are" exactly at ten o'clock with the other worship planners. As more people arrived, they quickly joined in. Some brought chairs or blankets, and others just sat on the grass. Rev. Hendrix placed the chalice on a large stone. Different people led the group through the parts of the worship service. The songs were easy—no hymnbooks were needed.

Then Alex stood up to give a sermon. Ricardo was surprised to realize that Alex was talking about him! "Because we all took time to be together here," Alex said, "I have received some amazing gifts this weekend. One of these gifts was the special time I got to spend with my young friend Ricardo this morning, planning this worship gathering together."

After Alex finished speaking, it was time for people to share what the retreat meant for them. One person said, "Taking time away from the busyness of our everyday lives allowed me to just be right here, in the moment, without thinking about what I have to go and do next. I feel refreshed and renewed."

A parent said, "I got to spend more time with my children this weekend than I have for months."

An elder said, "I almost didn't come. I thought the retreat was really only for families with kids. But some of you encouraged me to come, and I'm so glad I did. I got to know people better. We shared many stories. Young and old people should talk together more often."

Ricardo had thought worshipping in the woods would be strange, and complicated. But it was easy. It turned out they didn't need hymnbooks, or an altar—just people, willing to share what was important to them with each other in a spirit of love and togetherness. After the closing words, Ricardo extinguished the chalice. It was time to go home.

"See you at Camp Taylor next year," Ricardo called out to Rev. Hendrix.

Rev. Hendrix laughed and called back, "See you at the congregation next Sunday."

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 11:

HANDOUT 1: COMMON WORSHIP COMPONENTS FOR CHILDREN

Adapted from "Components of Worship" by Rev. Barbara Pescan, in the UUA's Spirituality Development Conference manual (Boston: UUA, 2005). After serving churches in Oak Park, IL, West Redding, CT, and Evanston, IL, Barbara Pescan has retired and is living in Wisconsin.

Gathering — Asks us to come together as a religious community. Common rituals: Playing music (called a "prelude"), or ringing a bell or chime.

Opening — Signals the beginning of our sacred time together in worship. Most common ritual: Lighting a chalice and sharing inspiring words.

Acknowledging — We greet or acknowledge each other. This helps us recognize that we are a community. The leader may welcome everyone, encourage participants to greet one another, or lead a ritual where people greet participants in a special way, or singing a hymn together.

Giving — Everyone is invited to participate in the community. Rituals of giving include contributing joys and concerns and collecting an offertory of money. Community announcements of events in which we are invited to participate are also a way of giving.

Centering — Wakes up our inner thoughts and feelings. Common rituals: Prayer, meditation, or reflection.

Receiving - We share our values and thoughts with stories, sermons, dance, poetry, or artwork to teach, inspire, comfort, and encourage each other.

Acknowledging — We affirm that it has been good to have worship time together as a faith community. Common rituals: A hymn or responsive reading about why it has been good to be together.

Closing — Signals the end of our sacred time together in worship. The most common ritual involves saying closing words while extinguishing the chalice.

Dispersal — "ungathering", "leaving" sometimes accompanied by musical ritual, called a postlude.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 11: LEADER RESOURCE 1: ILLUSTRATION – WORSHIP AT CAMP TAYLOR

Illustration by Ginger Wyatt.

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/camp_taylor.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/camp_taylor.pdf) for printing.



FIND OUT MORE

Unitarian Universalist worship varies from community to community. Visit the UUA's website to read about [common practices](#) and [worship theory](#). Read "[Some Helpful Thoughts](#)" (at www.uua.org/documents/lfd/reader_worship.pdf) by religious educator Barbara Marshman.

The UUA website also has information on planning and leading [multigenerational worship](#). (at www.uua.org/worship/multigenerational/index.shtml) The UUA [WorshipWeb](#) (at www.uua.org/worship/index.php) is a vast resource,

searchable by keyword, with many readings and ideas for worship.

[Small Power: A Drive Time Essay on Worship with Children](#) (at www.uua.org/growth/small/182777.shtml) by Connie Goodbread advocates for children's presence in worship and offers practical suggestions.

The UUA Bookstore's resources for children's worship include [Come Sing a Song with Me: A Songbook for All Ages](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=894) by the UU Musicians Network, as well as and posters and other items with the children's Principles.

SESSION 12: STEWARDSHIP IS A SIGN

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught. — Baba Dioum, conservationist

Children understand themselves as "stewards"—that is, people with ability and responsibility to contribute to the care of people and places they love, such as family, friends, their school, the congregation, and the earth we share. Activities encourage participants to see themselves as generous people, with time, talent, and possibly financial resources (treasure) they can share to help take care of the congregation. The ritual for this session is the offertory, and the story is a wisdom tale from Islam about generosity.

In advance, ask children and their families to bring a new or gently used book or toy to donate to the congregation.

Activity 4, The Ritual of Offertory, can be expanded into a multigenerational worship experience. Read Alternate Activity 1, Leadership in Action — Collecting the Offertory and Alternate Activity 2, Leadership in Action — Sharing the Plate. Consider how you might weave one, or both, into Activity 4.

GOALS

This session will:

- Show that stewardship can be a sign of our faith
- Identify multiple ways to be a steward of family, friends, and the congregation
- Affirm that being generous makes us feel good
- Demonstrate that the congregation has financial needs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Practice stewardship of the congregation
- Experience the good feelings being generous can bring, through a joyous song
- Understand the ritual of offertory.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	3
Activity 1: Story — Know Yourself	15
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SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Think about a time you gave generously of your time, talent, or finances. How did you feel? What does your generosity dance feel like?

Do you sometimes feel you have given too much? Burnout can happen to us all, especially when we give generously of our time. You are no less a steward when you also take care of yourself. One way is to remind yourself of the love and hope that led you to take on your commitment. Another way is to set limits. Yet another is to share the work and its rewards with family and friends.

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- If the group designed an Opening ritual in Session 9, set out materials you need to lead it. Or, prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: If children will wear stoles during the session, make sure you have extra stoles for visitors. Activity 6, Third Emblem, is a good time for a child who has begun to attend regularly to add their initials to a stole.

Description of Activity

Lead the Opening ritual designed in Session 9. Or, use this Opening ritual:

If the children wear stoles for Opening and Closing rituals, distribute stoles. Invite the children to put on their stoles. Offer any visitors a stole and explain that they may wear it during the Opening time and the Closing time if they wish. Remind the children their stoles are a sign that everyone in the group is a worship leader.

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice together. Lead the group to say these Opening words:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together and individually, we practice good stewardship by taking care of our family, friends, congregation, community, and the world.

Point out the donation box. Invite children to place in it the toys or books they brought to donate to the

congregation. Say that anyone who forgot a donation can bring their gift of "treasure" next time they come.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — KNOW YOURSELF (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Know Yourself](#)" (included in this document) "
- A few coins
- Large box for donations
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling or reading it to the children.
- Optional: Make a sign for the donations box. It could say "Gifts of 'treasure' from the Signs group to [name of your congregation]."
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Participants hear a story about generosity, from the Middle East.

Invite the children to sit comfortably. Read or tell the story. Use coins as props to help you tell the story.

Process with these questions:

- This story comes to us from the Middle East. It mentions Allah. Who is Allah? [Allah is a name for God in the Muslim religion.]
- People who practice the religion of Islam are called Muslims. Muslims are found all over the world, though the religion was born in the Middle East. As part of their religion, Muslims are expected to give to others who need help. In Islam, giving to the poor and those in need is considered just as important as praying. The yearly giving is called *zakaat*. If you are a

Muslim, to pay your zakaat is a sign of love for and obedience to Allah. It is a sign of your faith.

- Why does the man say he is more generous than the zakaat requires him to be or the woman expects him to be? What does he mean that he knows himself?
- For Unitarian Universalists, being generous is a sign of our faith when we give to help make things more fair, like the man did in the story. Being generous can also be a sign of our faith when we give to support something we love. Muslim culture and many other cultures teach that the more generously you give something away, the more it will return to you. When we give to our congregation, do you think that can be true? That the more generous we are, the more we get back?
- Think of a time you were generous. How did it make you feel?

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening to a story or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 2: "THE MAGIC PENNY SONG" (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, "[The Magic Penny Song](#)" Lyrics (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Recording of "The Magic Penny Song" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a recording of "The Magic Penny Song." You can download a version from many music sites. Begin with this site devoted to [Malvina Reynolds](#) (at people.wku.edu/charles.smith/MALVINA/mr101.htm). Test music player and cue music.
- Copy the handout for children to share, and/or write the lyrics on newsprint, and post.

- Optional: Invite a musical volunteer to help teach the song to the children.

Description of Activity

Say, in these words or your own:

There is a song about giving something away and ending up with more of it. Let's learn "The Magic Penny Song."

Teach the song, using the lyrics from Handout 1 and playing a recording. Say that the songwriter, Malvina Reynolds, was a Unitarian Universalist.

Including All Participants

In Alternate Activity 4, children learn to sing the song, or its chorus, using sign language.

ACTIVITY 3: TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Stewardship Actions — Time, Talent, or Treasure?](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Recording of "The Magic Penny Song" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Write "Time," "Talent," and "Treasure" on three separate sheets of newsprint. Optional: Draw a simple clock, a stick figure, and money to illustrate time, talent, and treasure.
- Clear (or, plan to bring the group to) an open space where you can play music and children can move freely without bumping into any objects or one another. You may wish to do the entire activity in this open space, or, just the "generosity dance."
- Post the three newsprint sheets at least a few feet apart from each other.
- Cue a recording of "The Magic Penny Song" and test the music player.

Description of Activity

Participants learn that "time, talent, and treasure" are three kinds of gifts good stewards can offer their family, friends, or congregation. Children make up their own dances to express how it feels to be generous.

Say, in these words or your own:

When you love someone, you take care of and protect them. When you love something, you take care of and protect it. Taking good care of something you value is called stewardship. We can be good stewards of our families, our friends, our schools, the earth we live on, and our congregation.

Ask:

- What are some ways you care for, or are good stewards of, your family, including your pets? [If needed, prompt: helping with chores; watching younger siblings; celebrating family members' accomplishments; cleaning your house or apartment; feeding, walking and brushing pets.]
- What are some ways you care for, or are good stewards of, your friends? [If needed, prompt: helping with homework; being with a friend when they are sad or sick; sharing toys and snacks; being kind; and playing with friends.]

Point out any of the children's examples that involve (1) devoting time to taking care of family and friends, (2) using their abilities to do something special or helpful for them, or (3) sharing resources, like food or toys.

Say, in these words or your own:

You could say you give the gifts of time, talent, and treasure to your family members and your friends.

Make sure children understand talent and treasure. Say that treasure can be a precious toy or book, like the donations children brought today, but it can also be money. For example, what if their friend wanted to buy ice cream after school, but did not have the money for it? If they were to give their friend the money, that would be a gift of "treasure."

Say:

Now let's talk about ways to give time, talent, and treasure to our congregation. When we want to be good stewards of our congregation, we might give in some of these ways.

Say you will name some actions people take at the congregation, and the children can decide if the action involves giving time, giving talent, or giving treasure. Everyone should decide for themselves, and move to the appropriate sign. Indicate the three sheets of newsprint. Say they will probably have different opinions sometimes, because some of the actions you will name could involve two, or all three, kinds of giving.

Read an item from the leader resource. Allow children to move to newsprint signs. If children disagree, discuss

their choices. Use as many items as time and the group's interest allow.

Ask for a show of hands or other indicator if they have ever done any of the actions you named. Thank them for being good stewards of the congregation and for giving generously of their time, talent, and treasure.

Affirm that giving generously to the congregation can make you feel very good. Ask the children to think about a time they gave time, talent, or treasure and felt very good about it.

Play "The Magic Penny Song," and invite the children to make up a generosity dance. Tell them they may move any way they wish that is safe, does not touch anyone else without being asked to, and shows how they feel when they give generously of themselves.

Including All Participants

If there are differently-abled children in the group, you may wish to have children point to the time, talent, or treasure signs, rather than move from sign to sign. When you suggest the generosity dance, ask a child how they like to dance, and dance with them.

ACTIVITY 4: THE RITUAL OF OFFERTORY (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Items used by the congregation for offertory collection, such as baskets or pledge envelopes
- Optional: Leader Resource 2, [Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- If you are unfamiliar with the offertory ritual at the congregation, learn the words, music, and actions that are used so you can describe the ritual to the group.
- Review Alternate Activity 1, Leadership in Action — Collecting the Offertory and Alternate Activity 2, Leadership in Action — Sharing the Plate. If you plan to do one or both of these alternate activities, make arrangements with worship leaders before this session, and use this activity to introduce the children in the plan you have made.

Description of Activity

The ritual of offertory is explained.

Ask if anyone has ever seen people sharing money during a worship service, at your congregation or someplace else. If children do not, explain how offertory is collected in your congregation. Use any visual aids

you have collected. Does the congregation always say the same words, either before or after? Is music played or a hymn sung? What happens after the collection?

Point out that offertory is a ritual for giving "treasure" to the congregation. Ask:

Offertory is not the only way to give, but it must be an important way, since we have a ritual for it. Why is it important to collect money for the congregation? How is giving money—or time, or talent—a sign of our faith?

If you will facilitate Alternate Activity 1, Leadership in Action — Collecting the Offertory and/or Alternate Activity 2, Leadership in Action -- Sharing the Plate, tell the group about the plan you have made and (optional) distribute the letter to parents you have prepared.

If the group will not do either alternate activity, invite the children to notice the offertory ritual next time they attend a worship service.

ACTIVITY 5: WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO? (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, [Congregational Needs](#) (included in this document)
- Five buckets, masking tape, and a marker
- Offertory basket
- Twelve one dollar bills of play money

Preparation for Activity

- Cut apart the items on Leader Resource 3, Congregational Needs. You may wish to print the leader resource in a larger font so the items will be easier for children to read.
- Use masking tape to label five buckets: (1) Rent [or Mortgage] and Building Maintenance, (2) Utilities, (3) Salaries and Benefits, (4) Materials, and (5) Community. Think about how you can explain each category to the children.
- Put the play money in the offertory basket.

Description of Activity

Tell participants you have slips of paper that each say something the congregation spends money on. Indicate the buckets and explain that each bucket represents a different category of expenses—a different kind of thing that the congregation has to pay for. Engage the children to help you explain each of the categories. Work with the group to read aloud (or, have volunteers read) the slips and place each slip in the correct bucket.

Next, give the group the basket with the twelve one dollar bills in play money. Say you want them to pretend this money was collected in the offertory today. Ask them to decide, as a group, how to spend the twelve dollars. Each dollar can purchase one item in a bucket. Say they have two minutes to discuss what they will do.

Stop the group after two minutes. What have they decided to spend the money on? Why? Does everyone agree?

Say:

Every year, leaders at the congregation create a budget. A budget is a plan for how much money to spend on the different things the congregation's needs. [Indicate the buckets.] It is hard work because there are many needs and people have different opinions about which needs are most urgent. Sometimes everyone does not get everything they want. Yet, we have enough and we have a lot to be thankful for. Congregational leaders listen to all members of the community to make their decision. Giving money to the congregation is a way to be a good steward. It is a sharing of treasure.

Speaking up for how we think the congregation should spend its money, and using your voice in the decision-making, as you just did, are other ways to be good stewards. Those are ways to give a gift of time and talent.

ACTIVITY 6: THIRD EMBLEM (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Stoles
- Craft materials
- Optional: Leader Resource 4, [Third Emblem](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Review or find out from co-leaders the activities and stories this group has experienced in Sessions 9, 10, and 11 so you can prompt children's memories.
- Print copies of Leader Resource 4 and cut out a Third Emblem image for each child, including extra for newcomers. Alternatively, copy for all participants an emblem of your own design that symbolizes "Being a leader in our congregation is a sign of my faith." You might incorporate the name or acronym of your congregation or a picture of the building where you meet. Optional: If you have extra time, provide a line drawing of

your congregational building and invite children to color and cut out their individual emblems.

Description of Activity

Children add an emblem to their stole.

This emblem represents "Being a leader in our congregation is a sign of my faith." It is based on the experiences children have had in the third unit of this program (Sessions 9-12).

Remind children that the stole is a symbol that they are growing as leaders in the congregation and in their UU faith. Say, in your own words:

The last few times we have met, we have learned about signs of our faith that we show as leaders here in our congregation.

Prompt the children to recall activities and stories from Session 9 (Community), Session 10 (Welcoming), and Session 11 (Worship). Affirm their recollections. Then, say:

Today, you may add an emblem to your leadership stole. This emblem shows that you show your faith by being a leader in our congregation. The emblem stands for your actions of welcoming others, of taking part in worship together, and being a good steward of our community and the place we share.

Lead children to make emblems (optional) and attach the emblems to their stoles.

If any of the children have recently become regular attendees, help them add their initials to a stole.

Have children help put away the craft materials. Invite them to put on their stoles to wear during the Closing ritual.

CLOSING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors
- Optional: Items needed for new Closing ritual (Session 9, Activity 4)

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.

- If the group designed a Closing ritual in Session 9, prepare to hold it. If not, use the Closing described here. Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Invite each child to thank the person to their right for being a good steward of the congregation. Extinguish the chalice together.

FAITH IN ACTION: CANVASS

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Leader Resource 2, [Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Once the congregation starts planning the canvass, ask the appropriate leaders how the children can help. Be ready with suggestions: Perhaps the advertisement/announcement for the canvass could involve children's handprints or other artwork. Children could help with set-up and clean-up for a multigenerational meal. They can make announcements in worship services. They could perform "The Magic Penny Song" and a generosity dance as canvass entertainment or in a pre-canvass worship.
- Consider inviting a congregational leader to visit. Ask them to tell the children what the canvass is and how it is an opportunity for stewardship that engages the whole congregation. Invite them to bring posters, flyers, or photos from canvass-related events. Tell them to plan to present for five minutes or less.
- If you will need children to gather at a time other than the usual RE time, adapt Leader Resource 2, Letter to Parents to explain the plan to parents and caregivers.

Description of Activity

Participants help with the canvass.

Explain the canvass, or introduce the guest you have invited to do so.

Present the options for helping with the canvass to the group. Help them decide how they will help and make an action plan. Communicate roles and responsibilities, dates, times, and places to families. After this meeting, remind families by email and in person of the commitment the children have made. Be sure to note that the children and families' contributions to promoting the canvass are a form of stewardship.

After the canvass, ask the children what they learned about the congregation. Did they meet new people? How do they feel about their contribution? In what other ways might they contribute to the canvass in the future? Thank participants for being good stewards of the congregation and our faith.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leaders, reflect on the session. What went well? What would you do differently next time? Were you able to find ways that every child could practice stewardship? Did children seem to understand why members' stewardship matters to the congregation? Did they give freely? If participants made commitments to acts of stewardships, how will you gently remind them to follow through?

TAKING IT HOME

*In the end we will conserve only what we love.
We will love only what we understand. We will
understand only what we are taught. — Baba
Dioum, conservationist*

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we said that, as Unitarian Universalists, we believe in being good stewards. This means we look for ways to help take care of people and places we value and love, including our families, friends, and the congregation. We learned about the ritual of offertory and shared our feelings about being generous, after hearing a story. We added an emblem to our leadership stoles that represents ways we have begun to be faithful leaders in the congregation.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... how do you know when you have been generous enough? What does that feel like?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... paying more attention to how you use money. You can get a [Classic Money Box from Moonjar](https://www.amazon.com/Moonjar-Classic-Moneybox-Spend-Share/dp/0972428216) (at [www.amazon.com/Moonjar-Classic-Moneybox-Spend-](https://www.amazon.com/Moonjar-Classic-Moneybox-Spend-Share/dp/0972428216)

[Share/dp/0972428216](https://www.amazon.com/Moonjar-Classic-Moneybox-Spend-Share/dp/0972428216)) or set up your own containers to help you divide any money you receive: some for yourself, some to save, and some to share with the world community. [Online, read "Teaching Children about Money Management"](https://www.essortment.com/teaching-children-money-management-18009.html) (at www.essortment.com/teaching-children-money-management-18009.html) to learn how to use the three containers and find more suggestions for helping children learn fiscal responsibility. The website [Learning to Give](https://www.learningtogive.org/parents/raising/?idioma=) (at www.learningtogive.org/parents/raising/?idioma=) has tips for parents to encourage philanthropy in young people of all ages.

Family Discovery. Ask family members what time, talent, and resources they give to the congregation as good stewards.

Family Ritual. The next time you attend worship services as a family, allow all ages to make a financial contribution to the congregation. A quarter, fifty cents, two dollars, or more—any amount is appreciated. Give as much as you feel you can and should.

Family Adventure. Demonstrate the generosity dance you invented in the Signs group. Tell your family about the experience you thought of when you created the dance. Invite family members and friends to choreograph their own generosity dances.

Leadership Suggestion. Pick a place or community that matters to you that would welcome your stewardship. For example, if you pick your school, you might start a campaign to encourage paper recycling, or offer to help a teacher decorate a bulletin board or to sharpen pencils for the whole class. If you pick your home, look for a clean-up chore you can do regularly, such as vacuuming a carpet, putting away clean laundry or dishes, or brushing or bathing your dog. Share your new stewardship activities with members of the Signs of our Faith group at the next meeting.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – COLLECTING THE OFFERTORY

Materials for Activity

- Offertory collection baskets
- Activity 4, [The Ritual of Offertory](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 2, [Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange with worship leaders for children to collect the offertory during worship and (optional) to address the congregation about their donation plan.
- Engage a few adult volunteers to assist the children.
- Prepare a letter to parents about your plan to have children participate in worship. Use Leader Resource 2. Plan to hand out the letter and/or email to parents after this session.

Description of Activity

Children conduct the ritual of the offertory.

Remind children of the ways the congregation spends money, using examples from Activity 4, The Ritual of Offertory. Explain the logistics of collecting money and let them walk through the process in the worship space before congregants arrive. Introduce adults who will assist. Make sure the children know what to do with the money after it is collected. Sit together during the service.

Gather the children after the worship service. Ask how they felt about the experience. Thank children for being good stewards and faithful leaders.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – SHARING THE PLATE

Preparation for Activity

- Ask worship leaders how a project is chosen to share your congregation's offertory. If possible, arrange for the children to nominate a project.
- Schedule with worship leaders a time when children can support a special offertory by making posters or a giving a presentation in worship about the project for which funds are sought. Gather information about the project and why it is important, and plan how you will share the information with the children.

Description of Activity

Children support donating the plate to an organization that does good.

Many congregations donate a portion of their plates to non-profit organizations providing a service to the community or working for justice. Children can support this in different ways.

One way is to engage children in choosing recipients of the offertory. Can the children nominate an organization to receive the plate, perhaps one that helps children or is partially staffed by young people? If the children's nomination is chosen, arrange for participants to make a short presentation in the worship service that features this collection. Help participants craft short statements about why they chose the organization and what good works the donations might help to fund. Thank the congregation for being generous.

Children can also promote the plate-sharing. For example, engage them to create a large collage of all the organizations the congregation has helped in this way. Obtain photos online or from brochures and magazines. Write the names of the organizations and the amount of money donated to them, and display the collage in a public congregational space. Point out the children that the collage acknowledges the congregation's generosity and its stewardship of the local (or global) community, and encourages people to feel good about their giving to others.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CONSERVATION IS STEWARDSHIP

Description of Activity

Children help conserve the congregation's resources.

Ask the group if their family has ways to save money. Do they use cloth to wipe up spills instead of using paper towels? Are they careful to not waste food? Do they walk to places when they can, instead of using a car? Affirm that saving money and other resources is a way to be a good steward.

Lead a tour of the congregation and help children think of ways conserving resources could save money. Make sure the children know that the congregation pays for water for lavatories, cooking, and cleaning; electricity for lights, computers, and other appliances; and gas, oil, or an alternate fuel source for heating and cooling so people will be comfortable indoors. Shutting off lights when you leave a room and closing outside doors left open unnecessarily are ways to conserve electricity and fuel. Are there drippy faucets or running toilets that need repairing? Maybe the congregation pays to throw away trash, or could earn money by returning bottles for deposit money. Look for opportunities to re-use or recycle.

If ways to conserve resources are found, help the group follow through on taking action. You might post a list of the conservation ideas in your meeting space. Send the ideas to the Building Committee, too.

Thank children for being good stewards.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: SIGNING THE MAGIC PENNY SONG (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of Handout 1, "[The Magic Penny Song](#)" [Lyrics](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Recording of "The Magic Penny Song" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a recording of "The Magic Penny Song." You can download a version from many music sites. Test music player and cue music.
- Write the lyrics on newsprint, and post.
- Invite someone to teach the group how to sign the chorus of "The Magic Penny Song." Learn and practice ahead of time so you can focus on assisting children to learn.
- Optional: Arrange for the children to perform "The Magic Penny Song" with sign language, at a congregational worship or another event.

Description of Activity

Children learn a song about generosity, in sign language.

Teach the children to sign the chorus of "The Magic Penny Song." Lead the group to practice many times, first slowly and using only words; later, to the music. Then, sign and sing together.

If children will perform the song, have them sign the chorus.

Ask:

Learning sign language or learning any other language helps you to communicate with more people. How is this being a good steward of the congregation? How is learning to communicate with people who are hearing impaired a sign of our faith?

If children enjoy learning some signs and the guest teacher can visit again, include sign language in more activities.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 12: STORY: KNOW YOURSELF

From Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs, A Treasury of Islamic Wisdom for Children and Parents by Sarah Conover and Freda Crane (Boston: Skinner House, 2010). All rights reserved. Available through the [UUA Bookstore](#).

Kan ya ma kan, [Once upon a time]: there was and there was not a man known far and wide for his generosity. One day, sitting with his friends sipping coffee in the village square, a poor woman approached him with a small request for money to feed her child.

"Of course!" he replied, and without hesitation plucked coin after coin out of his pocket, piling them into the woman's hand until they spilled on the ground.

Overwhelmed with this show of kindness, the woman began to weep. She bowed her head in gratitude. "May Allah bless you, Sir. You have saved my child's life." She carefully placed the coins in a small cloth sack. Glancing up a last time, she thanked him with a frail half-smile.

When she was out of earshot, the man's friends probed him with questions: "Why did you give her so much money?" asked one.

"That was foolish. Don't you think she will tell all her friends?" asked another.

"A line of beggars will be at your door tomorrow morning!" warned a third.

"Just yesterday, you gave your *zakaat*, your yearly donation to charity," said a fourth. "You weren't obligated to give her any. Why did you do it?"

The generous man kept silent until their indignation ran its course. At last they quieted down.

"While such a poor woman may be pleased with just a little money from me," said the generous man, "I could not be." He looked from friend to friend. "Unless I give her what I am able to, I won't be happy. She may not know me, but I know myself."

And the group of men, thoughtful and contrite, said no more about it.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 12:

HANDOUT 1: "THE MAGIC PENNY SONG" LYRICS

Malvina Reynolds, copyright 1955 and 1958 by Northern Music Corporation, renewed 1986; permission pending.

Love is something if you give it away,

Give it away, give it away.

Love is something if you give it away,

You end up having more.

It's just like a magic penny,

Hold it tight and you won't have any.

Lend it, spend it, and you'll have so many

They'll roll all over the floor.

For love is something if you give it away,

Give it away, give it away.

Love is something if you give it away,

You end up having more.

Money doesn't have magic in it,

Things we buy might break in a minute,

Love's a circle, so let's begin it

And bring it to every door

For love is something if you give it away,

Give it away, give it away.

Love is something if you give it away,

You end up having more.

So let's go dancing till the break of day,

And if there's a piper, we can pay.

For love is something if you give it away,

You end up having more.

For love is something if you give it away,

Give it away, give it away.

Love is something if you give it away,

You end up having more.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 12: LEADER RESOURCE 1: STEWARDSHIP ACTIONS – TIME, TALENT, OR TREASURE?

Picking up trash outside the congregation

Buying muffins at the congregational bake sale fundraiser

Bringing muffins for a snack to share in RE

Attending Signs sessions

Visiting a member of the congregation who is in the hospital

Helping to tell a Story for All Ages in worship

Singing in the choir (or children's choir)

Babysitting children in the nursery

Donating toys to nursery

Attending worship

Putting money in the offertory basket during worship

Collecting money by passing the offertory basket during worship

Playing a musical instrument in worship service

Decorating bulletin boards or rooms

Helping in the garden

Being a greeter on Sunday morning

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 12:

LEADER RESOURCE 2: LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The children in the Signs of Our Faith program are learning about stewardship. Today we discussed ways to share our "time, talent, and treasure" with the people and places we love. As part of this study, our group has been invited to help collect the offertory during the [insert date and time] worship service at our congregation. [If applicable, insert name of the organization or project that will receive a portion of this offertory and describe how the recipient was chosen.]

Please bring your child 15 minutes early for the service, so the Signs group can sit together in worship.

[Insert other information about rehearsal or items needed from home.]

Thank you,

[Insert co-leaders' names and contact information.]

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 12:

LEADER RESOURCE 3: CONGREGATIONAL NEEDS

Pay rent or mortgage on building

Pay electric bill

Fix broken window

Pay minister's salary

Buy crayons

Give to community groups helping people who are homeless

Pay pianist for worship services

Buy sheet music for choir

Pay water bill

Give to money community soup kitchen to purchase paper plates

Buy paper plates

Pay cleaning service

Buy new flowers for in front of the building

Pay phone bill

Help a family with a sick child buy medicine

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 12: LEADER RESOURCE 4: THIRD EMBLEM

This is the official chalice of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/uua_logo.pdf) (at www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/uua_logo.pdf) for printing.



FIND OUT MORE

The UUA publication [Stewardship: The Joy of Giving](#) (at www.uua.org/documents/scheyerfia/stewardshipjoygiving.pdf) has resources for all ages. Find more [stewardship resources](#) (at www.uua.org/giving/apf/119273.shtml) from the UUA's Annual Program Fund on the UUA's website.

Read more about the Muslim spiritual practice of [Zakaat](#) (at www.inter-islam.org/Actions/Part12.html).

Learn more about singer/songwriter Malvina Reynolds from a [biography](#) (at www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/reynolds.html)

on the Harvard Square Library website. On YouTube, [hear her perform](#) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB5Z_30xSe8).

Sign language performed to music is often not literal, but more poetic and visually appealing. To explore sign language, look for [dictionaries online](#) (at www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi/). There is also a smart phone [app](#) (at www.asl-dictionary.com/asl-dictionary.html) for American Sign Language.

SESSION 13: FINDING BEAUTY IN UNIQUENESS

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

While we have the gift of life, it seems to me the only tragedy is to allow part of us to die - whether it is our spirit, our creativity or our glorious uniqueness. — Gilda Radner

Children learn that to recognize the beauty of each person's uniqueness is a sign of Unitarian Universalist faith. A story from Santeria/Yoruba tradition leads into a discussion about stereotyping where children are encouraged to share their experiences. Activity 3 engages children in cultural sharing, a respectful alternative to cultural appropriation. Though this topic might seem above the heads of young children, introducing it now opens a door for future, deeper understanding.

For Alternate Activity 3, Different Beliefs, invite guests a few weeks ahead of time.

GOALS

This session will:

- Show that appreciating the uniqueness of ourselves and one another can be a sign of Unitarian Universalist faith
- Demonstrate ways to respectfully share stories from different cultures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Recognize ways they are unique
- See how diversity strengthens our UU community
- Practice respectful cultural sharing.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Story — Oshun Loses Her Beauty	15
Activity 2: Uniqueness Game	20
Activity 3: Cultural Sharing	10
Activity 4: Problem Solving	10
Faith in Action: Recognizing New Members	60
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action – Telling a Story in Worship	
Alternate Activity 2: Unique Name Tags	10
Alternate Activity 3: Different Beliefs	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Unitarian Universalism values diversity. We believe each of us should be welcome to bring our whole selves to our community. Yet there are times that, even with the best intentions, we fail to appreciate all the facets of each individual. Do you feel you have been able to bring your whole self to the congregation and this faith, or have there been times your uniqueness has been unrecognized, unappreciated, or even rejected? How do you think others in your congregation would answer that question? If your congregation could use a reminder to appreciate our uniqueness, how can you help?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles, if the children wear them for Opening and Closing rituals. Invite the children to put on their stoles. Offer any visitors a stole and explain that they may wear it during the Opening time and the Closing time if they wish. Remind the children their stoles are a sign that everyone in the group is a worship leader.

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice together. Lead the group to say these Opening words:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together we make our UU community and the world stronger and more beautiful with our uniqueness.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — OSHUN LOSES HER BEAUTY (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Oshun Loses Her Beauty](#) (included in this document) "
- Optional: Leader Resource 1, [Santerian Gods and Goddesses](#) (included in this document)

- Optional: Handout 1, [Coloring Page of Oshun](#) (included in this document) and a variety of color crayons
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling or reading it to the children.
- Optional: Print Leader Resource 1, Santerian Gods and Goddesses. Plan how you will use the images when you tell the story.
- Optional: Copy the handout for all participants.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Child respond to a story about recognizing what makes us unique.

If you wish, distribute the coloring page (Handout 1) and crayons. Invite children to color during (or after) the story.

Tell or read the story, starting with the introduction that gives background about the Santeria religion:

The Orisha are gods that came originally from Nigeria, in West Africa, as part of the Yoruba religion. The gods travelled with African people who were stolen as slaves from Africa and brought to North and Central America. Today, a religion named Santeria is based on these gods and is practiced In Cuba, Brazil, and parts of Central America. We also have practitioners here in the United States. Though stories about the Orisha may not mean the same to us as they do to Santerians, we can find great wisdom in them and we are thankful for being allowed to share them.

Process the story with these questions:

- The other Orisha thought Oshun's special gift was her beauty. They did not recognize that her persistence was the gift that would save the

day. [Make sure children understand "persistence" as a quality; use an example from the story.] Has that ever happened to you? Has there been a time when someone underestimated your gifts, talents, or abilities? [Let everyone who wants to share do so; give this conversation more time, if needed.]

- Have you ever been judged more by your looks than your actions? This is what we call prejudice and it is not fair.
- There are some things we can tell by looking at someone. For example, I can tell the color of your shoes. But there are many more things you cannot tell by looking at someone. What are examples of things you cannot tell by looking at someone?

Affirm that each of us is a complicated human being, made up of many different abilities, thoughts, and identities. Like Oshun, we are all beautiful souls with unique gifts to share in our community.

If participants are coloring handouts, point out the various unique ways they have chosen to color the birds.

ACTIVITY 2: UNIQUENESS GAME (20 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the description of the game so you will be able to lead it smoothly.
- Read Alternate Activity 2, Unique Name Tags. If you have time, consider adding it at the close of this activity.

Description of Activity

Group the participants in triads and have children stand together with their teams. If there are fewer than nine participants, form pairs; one participant can be a team with a co-leader.

Give each team member a number: 1, 2, or 3. Tell the teams they will play a game called You and Me. Each team needs to come up with three (or two, if in pairs) ways they are all alike. The members should take turns asking one another questions until each member has discovered something all three (or both) have in common. They will need to remember the commonality, because they will each have to share it with people from other teams. Once they find the commonality, they may sit down to signal they are ready for the next part of the game. The first team to sit down wins.

Explain how you wish the participants to ask questions to find commonalities: For example, Person 1 might ask if everyone on the team is a child. Person 2 might ask if everyone goes to the UU congregation. Person 3 might ask if everyone likes playing video games. If one person does not like playing video games, Person 3 might ask if everyone is homeschooled. If all three team members are homeschooled, this team has completed the game and can sit down.

After all teams are done, invite each team to share their commonalities. Have the winning team go first.

Now, invite the teams to play another game: Me, Not You. In this game, each team member tries to identify a way they are different from other team members. Again, after every team member identifies a difference, the entire team should sit down to signal completion. Have each team share their differences.

Process the game with these questions:

- Which was easier to find, commonalities or differences?
- Did anyone in the larger group share a difference with you?
- Were some of the differences surprising?
- Sometimes people are treated badly because they are different. Can anyone give an example? Does noticing that someone is different the same as treating someone badly? Should we be afraid to talk about our differences? Why or why not?
- What would our world be like if we were all alike in every way?

Help children understand that noticing differences does not need to lead to fear, hate, or any form of oppression. You might say:

Noticing a difference is not the same thing as rejecting or criticizing someone because they are different. We often notice or discover differences between ourselves and other people, and not a bad thing to respectfully talk about them. On the other hand, if we do not talk about our differences, it is easy to get into misunderstandings. We may start to think that everyone has the same experiences, beliefs, thoughts, and values that we do, and that is not true. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe that our differences make us unique and uniqueness is not only beautiful, but needed. Appreciating our uniqueness can be a sign of our UU faith.

Including All Participants

If any children's mobility limitations make standing and sitting problematic, have the children signal their team is finished in another way, such as by raising their hands.

ACTIVITY 3: CULTURAL SHARING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A book for a role play

Preparation for Activity

- Write "cultural sharing" and "cultural appropriation" on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Tell the group that the ritual to discuss today is storytelling. Ask when they have heard stories in the congregation. Your congregation might tell stories in worship and in religious education sessions. Point out that the Signs of Our Faith group hears a story every time they meet.

Say, in these words or your own:

Unitarian Universalists often tell stories. Sometimes we tell true stories about events in the life of the storyteller or events in the life of someone else. Sometimes we tell stories we call wisdom tales or folk tales. Sometimes they are stories from holy texts, like the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament).

Ask:

- Do you remember where today's story came from? Where?
- Why are we telling stories from Africa when we do not live in Africa?

Say that, as UUs, we believe there is truth in stories from all over the world and all throughout time. We like to share these stories in ways that honor the original storytellers. One way we do this is by acknowledging where the story comes from. Ask, "Did I tell you where today's story came from, when I told the story to you earlier?"

Another way we show respect for the original storytellers is by trying to not make a lot of changes in the story.

It is also respectful to recognize that the story's meaning for us might be different than it is for the people who originally told the story. For example, we may not pray to the goddess Oshun, but people who belong to the religion of Santeria do.

When we share stories from other people or cultures, we do it respectfully. This is called cultural sharing. If we do it disrespectfully, it is cultural appropriation, which is like stealing.

Use the book as an example. Ask children to role play one child asking to borrow the book and them treating it disrespectfully. They might tell friends it is their book. They might pretend to rip out pages or color in it.

Then ask two different children to role play respectful borrowing of the book.

Say that stories are not the only things we share respectfully from other cultures. We share rituals from other cultures sometimes, too. Again, we always do this respectfully, acknowledging that the ritual comes from another tradition, naming that tradition, and knowing that it does not mean exactly the same to us as it does to people from the culture of origin. In this way, we gain wisdom from other traditions, such as Buddhism, without "playing at" being Buddhists.

Ask participants if they have any questions, and answer any you can.

ACTIVITY 4: PROBLEM SOLVING (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare several "problems" that children can role play. Make sure each problem has a wide variety of possible approaches and solutions.

Description of Activity

Say, in these words or your own:

Diversity is important to us as UUs because we recognize that often there is not just one right way to do something. When it comes to solving problems, people who approach the problem in different ways have a better chance of coming up with a solution together than a group in which everyone thinks the same way. When we share our unique gifts to solve problems, that makes our UU community nice and strong.

Invite children to role play examples of different solutions to a problem. One possible problem: You have planted sunflower seeds, but they are not growing. What are possible solutions? Engage everyone who is willing to role play different problems, including ones contributed by the children.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors
- Optional: Items needed for new Closing ritual (Session 9, Activity 4)

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- If the group designed a Closing ritual in Session 9, prepare to hold it. If not, use the Closing described here. Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Remind participants that at the end of every session, they receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Invite each child to turn to the person on the right and say, "I'm glad you are you!" Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together.

FAITH IN ACTION: RECOGNIZING NEW MEMBERS (60 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Camera
- Writing paper and instruments
- Snacks
- Art materials to make a display

Preparation for Activity

- Coordinate this activity with the religious educator and the congregation's membership committee.

Description of Activity

Participants meet new members of the congregation and learn what makes them unique.

Invite new members to a meet-and-greet with the children and their families immediately after a congregational New Member Ceremony. Take a photo of each member. Ask each new member their name, who else is in their family, and one unique thing about them. Obtain the new members' permission to include their photo and information in display.

While working, discuss the ways the new members are unique. Comment on how they add beauty and diversity to the congregation. Post the display for the congregation to enjoy.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What would you do differently next time? Did the children understand respectful cultural sharing? Even if they did not grasp the entire concept, raising the topic with them sets a foundation for future learning.

There are only three sessions left. If you will hold a celebration in the final session, start planning now. Review the next session and assign any preparation that is needed.

TAKING IT HOME

While we have the gift of life, it seems to me the only tragedy is to allow part of us to die - whether it is our spirit, our creativity or our glorious uniqueness. — Gilda Radner

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we said that, as Unitarian Universalists, we believe that we are all unique individuals and that is beautiful. We think our community is stronger when everyone is welcomed the way they are. We found out unique traits about each other. We discussed how our love of diversity leads us to tell stories and explore rituals from other cultures, but we always do that in respectful ways. This is called cultural sharing.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... being stereotyped. Ask your parents and/or siblings and friends: When have you felt judged by your appearance instead of your true abilities?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

Family Game. Give everyone a slip of paper for each family member. Write their name on the paper. Include a slip of paper with your own name. Now give everyone the same number of slips of a different colored paper. Write on each slip one unique trait of a family member. Mix up the second slips. Match them to the first. See who gets the most correct.

Family Ritual. Start a family story night. Once a month, share a story from a different culture or religion. Find popular stories from Hinduism. Hear tales of the Australian Dreamtime. Start with the book [Accept and Value Each Person](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=463) by Cheri J. Meiners (Minneapolis: Free Spirit, 2006).

Leadership Suggestion. Start recognizing others for the unique gifts they possess. At school, instead of choosing your best friend to be your partner for a science project, pick a student who you know loves science more than you. If you are very outgoing, have a play date with quiet friends. If you are quiet, spend time with friends who are more social. We can all learn new things from each other's unique ways!

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – TELLING A STORY IN WORSHIP

Materials for Activity

- A story to share with the congregation
- Costumes, props, music and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Coordinate the worship date, rehearsal date(s), and the choice of story with worship leaders.
- Research possible stories. A story in this program might work. Browse many other stories from all the Unitarian Universalist Sources in the [Tapestry of Faith story database](#) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/30341.shtml). Make sure you can find out the cultural origin of the story.

Description of Activity

Participants demonstrate respectful cultural sharing of stories during worship.

Invite the children to tell a story from a cultural different from that of most congregants. If possible, allow the children to choose a story from several you have selected.

Help children write an introduction that includes these elements of cultural sharing:

- The origin of the story
- An acknowledgement that the story has wisdom for us, even though it may not come from our culture
- An acknowledgement that the story may not mean the same thing to us as it would to the people to whom it belongs
- Thanks to the originators of the story for sharing it

For example, if you were to share "Oshun Loses Her Beauty," you might say:

This story comes to us from West Africa. The gods in the story are called Orisha. They are part of the Santeria religion. Though this religion is different from our UU religion and it may mean something different to the people of West Africa or other practitioners of Santeria, it has wisdom to share with us. We thank them for sharing the story with us.

Rehearse the introduction and the storytelling. Include as many props, costumes, and sound effects as you can to make the story interesting. If there are ways to make it interactive and include congregants, do so.

After the worship service, ask participants what they enjoyed about the experience of sharing the story. Ask:

- What would you do differently next time?
- Do you feel we shared the story in a respectful manner?

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: UNIQUE NAME TAGS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Blank name tags
- Art materials, such as crayons, color pencils or markers, glitter, and glue sticks

Preparation for Activity

- This activity may be used to extend Activity 2, Uniqueness Game.

Description of Activity

Participants individualize name tags.

Invite children to artistically represent the uniqueness they shared in Activity 2, Unique Game. You might say, "Add the art to your name tag and wear your uniqueness with pride!"

Suggest that, in the future, when the children introduce themselves at the congregation, they might want to add

their uniqueness. For example, "I'm Tabitha, and I have two pet frogs."

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: DIFFERENT BELIEFS (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- At least three weeks ahead of time, recruit three or four UU guests to talk to the group about their different theologies. Seek diversity not only in theologies, but age (try to include at least one youth), ethnicity, and gender.
- Help guest prepare a short (about three minutes) presentation on their theology. You might ask each guest to cover basic questions, such as whether they are theist or non-theist, spiritual practices, and how their theology relates to Unitarian Universalism. It will be especially important to work with a guest who may not have much experience with young children; make sure their presentation is interesting, appropriate, and relevant. Encourage the use of audio/visual material and make sure you will have necessary equipment on hand.
- Remind each guest about the session a week in advance.

Description of Activity

Children recognize the theological diversity in the congregation.

Tell the group that they will hear from guest speakers who are all UU, but who have different theologies. Explain that Unitarian Universalism can be embraced by people who have unique beliefs about God, heaven, and other religious questions. This is another way recognizing each person's uniqueness is a sign of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

Introduce guests and facilitate their presentations. After each presentation, lead a question-and-answer time. Thank the guests for visiting.

Afterward, ask the group some of the ways their beliefs are unique to each other.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 13: STORY: OSHUN LOSES HER BEAUTY

Based on a Santerian story. Special thanks to Lesley Murdoch for her insights to Afro-Caribbean religions.

The Orisha are gods that came originally from Nigeria, in West Africa, as part of the Yoruba religion. The gods travelled with African people who were stolen as slaves from Africa and brought to North and Central America. Today, a religion named Santeria is based on these gods and is practiced in Cuba, Brazil, and parts of Central America. We also have practitioners here in the United States. Though stories about the Orisha may not mean the same to us as they do to Santerians, we can find great wisdom in them and we are thankful for being allowed to share them.

Olodumare, the Creator God, sits far up in the heavens. Other gods, Orishas, like to leave the sky and walk amongst the people on earth. All the Orishas have things they are in charge of:

Yemaya rules over the seas and lakes. She is called the Mother of All and protects pregnant women.

Shango rules over thunder, lightning, fire, and the dance. He loves the drums and having fun.

Eleggua is the god of doors and roads. He carries messages between humans and Orisha.

Oshun is the youngest goddess. She is found in the sweet waters of the world, such as streams and rivers. She is also the goddess of fertility.

Once, some of the Orisha decided they were tired of obeying Olodumare. He sat so far away. What did he know about running the universe? They had control over all things on earth. They thought he was no longer needed.

Olodumare knew the other Orisha were rebelling. He could have struck them down, but he decided to withhold the rains instead. Without the rain, the earth

dried up. The rivers, lakes, and streams ran dry. No crops grew; animals were dying. Humans, too. The people cried out to the Orisha, "Save us! What have we done to anger you?"

The Orisha heard their cries. They knew that it was they, not the humans that had angered Olodumare. They pleaded with him to bring the rain. But Olodumare was too far away and did not hear.

They asked for forgiveness and promised to obey him again. But Olodumare was too far away and did not hear.

Several of the Orisha tried to ascend into the heavens, but they could not reach Olodumare.

Oshun asked if she could try. The other Orisha laughed at her. "How can someone so small and young do what her elders could not? Just go back to sitting there, looking pretty." Oshun persisted. Finally, out of sheer desperation, the other Orisha agreed that she could try. They did not expect her to succeed.

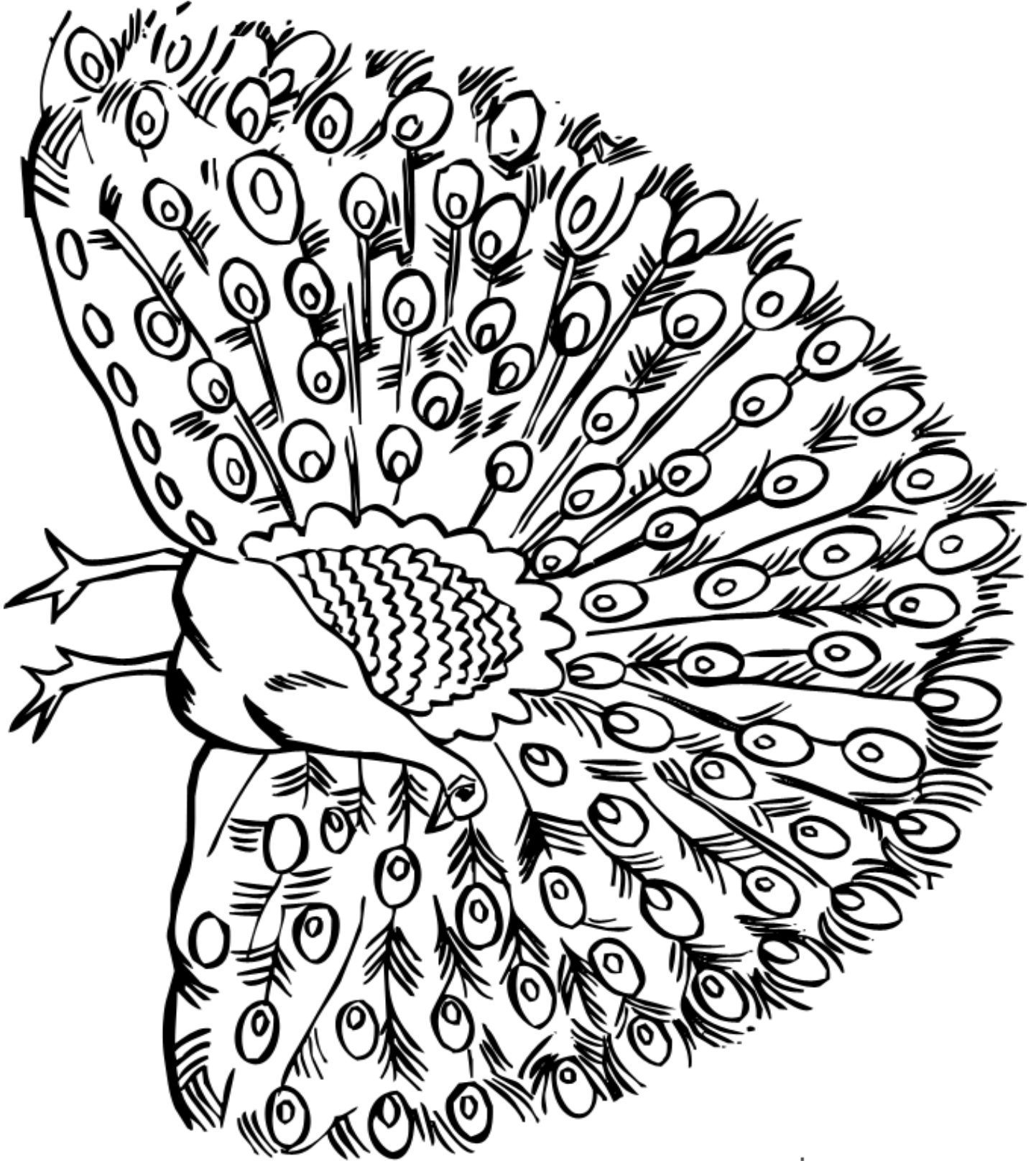
Oshun turned herself in a beautiful peacock. She flew off towards the heaven. It was so far away, that her feathers begin to fall off. As she reached the sun, her colorful feathers were scorched and all the delicate feathers burned off her head. Yet she was determined to reach Olodumare and she flew on.

When Oshun thought she could not fly another mile, she reached the home of the Creator god, Olodumare. She collapsed in his arms and he saw that the beautiful peacock had been transformed into a vulture. Olodumare took Oshun and nursed her back to health.

"Your bravery and determination has softened my heart. I will bring the rains," said Olodumare. And he did. "From now on, you, dear vulture, will be the Messenger of the house of Olodumare and I will communicate only through you."

Oshun, as a vulture, returned to earth to honor and praise. Her gifts of determination and inner strength had saved the world.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 13:
HANDOUT 1: COLORING PAGE OF OSHUN



SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 13: LEADER RESOURCE 1: SANTERIAN GODS AND GODDESSES

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/santerian.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/santerian.pdf) for printing.



Yemaya - Photo of Island of Salvation Botanica, Piety Street, Bywater Neighborhood, New Orleans, by Infrogmation



Eleggua Painting by Tomas Gonzalez Perez, Cuban Painter



Shango Painting by Tomas Gonzalez Perez, Cuban Painter

FIND OUT MORE

Santeria

Read versions of the story "Oshun Loses Her Beauty" on the [Voices from Venus](http://www.voicesfromvenus.com/OrishaOshun.html) (at www.voicesfromvenus.com/OrishaOshun.html) website, the [Angel Fire](http://www.angelfire.com/journal/ofapoet/oshun.html) (at www.angelfire.com/journal/ofapoet/oshun.html) website, and the [Orishanet](http://www.orishanet.org/oshun.html) (at www.orishanet.org/oshun.html) website, which also has more about the Orisha in Santeria. A related book is *Teachings of the Santeria Gods: The Spirit of Odu* by Ocha'ni Lele (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2010).

Cultural Appropriation

As a religious community that draws truth from many Sources, we need to acknowledge that we do not always borrow respectfully. For guidance, see the article "[Cultural \(Mis\)Appropriation](http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/misappropriation/index.shtml)" (at www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/misappropriation/index.shtml) in the UUA's online Introduction to Multiculturalism.

Uniqueness

The Liberal Religious Educators Association pamphlet [Moving Toward an Inclusive Vision](http://www25.uua.org/lreda/content/BestPracticesIT.pdf) (at www25.uua.org/lreda/content/BestPracticesIT.pdf) provides tips to welcome and embrace diversity in religious education programs and the congregation at large.

SESSION 14: FAIR GROUP DECISIONS

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

I believe that decision making should not be the exclusive right of the privileged. That those who are affected by policy—not those who by default often stand above it—should be heard in the debate. — Winona LaDuke, Native American activist

This session is about the fifth Principle and use of the democratic process. Children examine different methods of making group decisions, practice making group decisions in a hypothetical situation, and learn about the congregation's governance systems.

GOALS

This session will:

- Show that using the democratic process and fair decision-making can be a sign of our faith, reflective of our Unitarian Universalist Principles
- Engage participants to practice making fair decisions together
- Explore practices UU congregations use to reach group decisions as fairly as possible.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand that to strive to make group decisions as fairly as possible reflects our UU Principles and is a sign of our faith
- Discuss three different ways to make group decisions: authority, majority, and consensus
- Practice making fair group decisions
- Learn the the congregation's system of governance from a guest presenter from the board of trustees.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Story — Game Day	10
Activity 2: Authority, Majority, and Consensus	10
Activity 3: Role Plays	20
Activity 4: Making a Group Decision	15
Faith in Action: Enacting the Group Decision	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Our Congregation's Governance	20

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Today's session is about our fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle, the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process in our congregations and in society at large. Read the session's quotation from Winona LaDuke. The quote and our fifth Principle are really about power: who has it and who shares it. Think about your relationship with power when you were young. When did you feel empowered? When did you feel marginalized? Was there a time when participating in a family decision made you feel empowered?

As a leader in this program, how have you helped to empower the children—not just to act with power, but to share power with others, and to help build communities where everyone is ready to take the helm? Good leaders know not only how to lead, but when to lead and when to follow.

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- If the group designed an Opening ritual in Session 9, set out materials you need to lead it. Or, prepare to lead the Opening described below: Set a chalice table with a cloth, a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Lead an Opening ritual the children designed (Session 9, Activity 4). Or, use this Opening ritual:

Distribute stoles, if the children wear them for Opening and Closing rituals. Invite the children to put on their stoles. Offer any visitors a stole and explain that they may wear it during the Opening time and the Closing time if they wish. Remind the children their stoles are a sign that everyone in the group is a worship leader.

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice together. Lead the group to say these Opening words:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists
and members of the Signs of Our Faith
community.

Together our group makes decisions about what
is important to us.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY – GAME DAY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Game Day](#)" (included in this document) "
- Leader Resource 1, [Illustration – Game Day in Abby's Classroom](#) (included in this document)

- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to tell or read the story to the group using the illustration of Game Day in Abby's classroom (Leader Resource 1).
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Tell or read the story. Process the story with these questions:

- What were some of the ways the group made decisions?
- Why didn't Dr. Liu simply make the decisions?
- Abby says, "We believe that everyone deserves a say about the things that concern them." This is our fifth UU Principle, stated simply. Have you ever been part of a decision-making process where you voted? How does it feel when you lose? When you win?
- How does your class in school or other groups to which you belong, made decisions? Do they always use the same method?

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening to a story or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 2: AUTHORITY, MAJORITY, AND CONSENSUS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- Leader Resource 2, [Ways to Make Group Decisions](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the Leader Resource. Use it as a guide to prepare and post three newsprint sheets to portray "authority," "majority," and "consensus," as shown. You may wish to include just the "We..." statement for each method of decision making, and keep the longer definitions for your own use.

Description of Activity

Children explore pros and cons of different ways to make group decisions.

Remind the children of the fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle: We believe everyone deserves a say about the things that concern them. Say that the adult version of the Principles talks about using the democratic process.

Invite volunteers to define the democratic process or explain how people make decisions in a democracy. Say that the democratic process means making sure everyone can have a say in the decisions that affect them. Sometimes it is summarized by saying "one citizen equals one vote."

Say, in your own words:

This sounds fair and, in a perfect world, it would be fair. It is, however, hard to achieve. Sometimes people who should have a say are excluded from the process. We often say these people are marginalized.

In the U.S., women could not vote before 1920 and in many countries, women still cannot vote. Other groups have had their access to the democratic process denied in the history of our country, too, such as African Americans, who can now vote, and people who live in Washington, D.C., whose elected representative cannot vote in Congress. So even systems based on voting are not always fair.

In our country, children cannot vote. But most adult citizens can vote for people to represent them in local and national government where decisions that affect everyone are made. So, too, in most UU congregations, members elect other members to represent them on a governing board. The board makes many, but not all, of the decisions for the congregation. Decisions may be made by staff or committees. Some decisions are made by the whole membership. At congregational meetings, all the members of the congregation can vote on

important issues. Using different methods of making decisions gives more opportunity for congregational leaders to hear the opinions of everyone in the congregation. Using the democratic process as a fair way to make group decisions is a sign of our UU faith.

Using the newsprint you have prepared, explain three different ways groups make decisions: authority, majority, and consensus. Ask which method sounds the most fair. Ask which method sounds the easiest and fastest and which the hardest and longest. Say that consensus can be hard to reach and time consuming, but, if the group is small enough and has enough time for everyone to hear one another's opinions, it can be the most fair way for a group to make a decision.

Say:

Sometimes one method might be best; sometimes, another. For example, cars at an intersection cannot use consensus as to whose turn it is to go. Traffic lights, stop signs, and the rules of the road are a form of authority that makes that decision. When you receive your driver's license, you agree to obey the rules of the road, which is a form of consensus.

ACTIVITY 3: ROLE PLAYS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint sheets "Authority," "Majority," and "Consensus," from Activity 2

Preparation for Activity

- Read the description of this activity. Then, come up with scenarios to offer the group for role play in addition to those presented here.
- Clear space for children to physically reconfigure their group to embody (1) a decision made by one person's authority, (2) a vote in which a majority will win, and (3) a consensus decision. Plan how any children with limited mobility can fully participate. You might designate a child with limited mobility as the "authority" so they do not need to move.

Description of Activity

Children role play making decisions as leaders.

Invite participants to role play the use of authority, majority, and consensus in a situation where a decision needs to be made. Present a scenario—your own idea, or one of these:

- It is the leader's birthday party. All the party guests want to play a game, but they only have enough time to play one game. What game will they play?
- A group wants to order pizza. They have enough money to purchase one large pizza with up to three toppings, or three small plain pizzas. Order the pizza.
- The group is a classroom and the leader is the teacher. The class will take part in a school Halloween play. They can be a group of mummies, vampires, or singing pumpkins. What will the group be?

Act out "authority" first. Designate one child as the authority and explain that their decision is the one the group must follow.

Then, act out "majority." Help the children clarify the choices, and hold a vote. Have children move physically to show their vote. Count heads to find the majority, and announce the decision.

Finally, act out consensus. Encourage the children to arrange themselves in a circle, and guide them to take turns sharing their opinions. Facilitate only as much as needed, with comments such as "It sounds as if you have decided..." or "Many people seem to think [X] is the best idea."

- After enacting each method of decision making, help the children reflect: Was everyone given the opportunity to voice an opinion?
- Will everyone be happy with the decision?
- Was the decision fair?

Once you have enacted all three approaches to one scenario, ask:

- Was the decision the same each time? Why, or why not?
- Is it sometimes okay for a leader to make a decision without consulting everyone involved? Why?

Enact and process another scenario, if time allows.

ACTIVITY 4: MAKING A GROUP DECISION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stickers

Preparation for Activity

- Plan the scenario for which you will ask the group to make a decision. The decision could involve choosing a low-cost snack to serve to all RE groups at a future meeting time. Or, if the group or a larger RE group has an opportunity to play games, such as at a holiday party or a Game Day, the children might decide which games everyone will play.
- Post blank newsprint.

Description of Activity

Participants practice reaching a group decision.

Tell the group you will guide them to use consensus to make a decision. Explain the decision they will make together now and when they (and, if applicable, others) will carry out the decision.

Optional: Use the sticker voting method mentioned in the Game Day story.

Here are some tips you may share with the group to help the process:

- Avoid arguing for your own individual judgments. Approach the task on the basis of logic.
- Avoid changing your mind if it is only to reach agreement and avoid conflict. Support only solutions with which you agree at least somewhat.
- Stick to the consensus process. Avoid "conflict-reducing" techniques such as majority vote, averaging, or trading votes in reaching your decision.
- View differences of opinion as a help rather than a hindrance in decision-making.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors
- Optional: Items needed for new Closing ritual (Session 9, Activity 4)

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.

- If the group designed a Closing ritual in Session 9, prepare to hold it. If not, use the Closing described here. Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Remind participants that at the end of every session, they receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Ask all participants to blow out the chalice the same way they made decisions: together.

FAITH IN ACTION: ENACTING THE GROUP DECISION

Description of Activity

Participants follow through on the Faith in Action idea created in Activity 4, Making a Group Decision.

Be sure to gather the group after the activity or event they had decided on together. Ask if they feel they made a good decision. If not, how would they do it differently next time? Revisit the consensus process they experienced and reinforce the actions individuals or the group took that embody the fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle—that is, remind them of actions they took that ensured the decision-making was fair or encouraged every person to participate in the process.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

With your co-leaders, reflect on the session. What went well? What would you do differently next time? Ask yourselves: How have you made decisions together? Is there anything from this session you will apply to your personal life?

Review the next sessions and assign any advance preparation. If the last session will include a celebration, start planning now.

TAKING IT HOME

I believe that decision making should not be the exclusive right of the privileged. That those who are affected by policy—not those who by default

often stand above it—should be heard in the debate. — Winona LaDuke, Native American activist

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we talked about ways to make fair decisions. Our fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle says we believe that everyone should have a vote on matters that affect them, but sometimes simply voting is not fair enough. In our congregation, many people are involved in decision making. Some decisions are made by the board of trustees. Others are made by the whole congregation. Trying to make group decision making as fair as it can be is a sign of our UU faith.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about ... family decisions. Which decisions are made using authority, majority, and consensus methods? Why is it necessary for parents and caregivers to sometimes make authority decisions?

Family Game. Try playing a board game with teams instead of as individuals. Every decision must be made as a team. How will you reach agreement?

Family Ritual. When a public election or referendum is held, go to the polls as a family. Talk about the people and issues on the ballot. Do not forget to get an "I voted" sticker.

Family Discovery. Go to a meeting of a neighborhood or civic association. How is decision making done there? Is it an informal discussion to reach consensus, or, more like ballot voting... or something else? If decisions are made according to the vote a majority, is there at least some opportunity for everyone to voice their opinion?

Leadership Suggestion. The next time you find yourself in a group that has to make a decision, suggest the group try reaching consensus.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – OUR CONGREGATION'S GOVERNANCE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Visual aids, such as a list of the congregation's board members and their roles, copies of board agendas, or photos of board members

Preparation for Activity

- Invite two congregational board members as guests. Seek diversity in age, ethnicity, gender, and length of service. It would be nice if one is an officer and the other an at-large member. Ask them to prepare a short (no more than five minutes) presentation on the congregation's

board and what it does, with a focus on decision making and one or two examples the children will understand. Offer the guests these questions as a guide:

- How did you come to be a member of the board? Did you need to be elected, or did you simply say "yes?"
- How is taking part in the governance of the congregation a sign of your UU faith?
- What does the board do?
- What are the roles on the board?
- What happens at board meetings?
- When is board work hard?
- What kinds of decisions does the board make? Can you give an example?
- How does the board make decisions?
- How do our UU values inform the board's decision-making process?
- Who and what else helps the board to govern? What other ways does the congregation make group decisions?

Description of Activity

Children talk to board members about congregational governance.

Say that any group of people will find itself having to make decisions if they want to do anything. Ask the group what they know about how the congregation makes decisions. Affirm that different groups within the congregation might have decisions to make, and they might make them in different ways. If your congregation has staff, tell the group what kind of decisions the staff makes and how—for example, who chooses the hymns that will be sung in worship? Who decides what will be posted on congregational bulletin boards? Who decides what the snacks will be at coffee hour?

Introduce the guests and explain that they are members of the board of trustees or directors (use your congregation's language), which makes decisions for the entire congregation. Invite the guests to give their presentation, using any visuals you or they brought. Encourage the children to ask questions.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 14: STORY: GAME DAY

Abby always liked school, but she was especially excited about today. Her class had earned a reward: a game day! Their teacher, Dr. Liu, promised they could spend most of the day playing games. Abby's best friend, Kamal, hoped they would play his favorite board game. Abby hoped they would play basketball.

Before everyone had taken a seat, Kamal was showing everyone the board game he had brought from home. "Can we play my favorite game?" he asked Dr. Liu.

"Who has a game in mind that they would like to play today?" asked Dr. Liu. Almost everyone raised their hands.

"How will we decide which games to play?" Dr. Liu asked.

"Since you are the teacher, you could decide," said Corey.

"Well, I could," said Dr. Liu, "But I would rather the group decide, because the decision affects everyone. I think that would be more fair. What do you think?"

"Why don't we play everyone's game?" asked Ty.

"Let's do the math," said Dr. Liu. Everyone groaned.

"We've just started learning division. Let's see who can find out how much time we would have to play each game." The children added up all the time they would need for lunch in the cafeteria, their visit to the school library, and their music class. Not even three hours were left to play games. The class had twenty students. That meant if they played each student's game, they could only play each game for about ten minutes. No one thought this was a good idea: Some games take almost that long to set up!

"We could vote on which games to play," suggested Abby. "In my congregation, we say that everyone deserves a say about the things that concern them."

Everyone thought this would be fair. Dr. Liu invited everyone to suggest games and wrote all their suggestions on the board. Some games needed special equipment which they did not have; Dr. Liu asked the children who suggested them if he could cross these off the list and they agreed. Dr. Liu suggested a game, too. It was a game he used to play as a child in China.

"If we take a simple vote, most of you will vote for the game you suggested," said Dr. Liu, "and that won't get us very far. So I will give everyone three star stickers. Put your star stickers by three games you would enjoy playing. After everyone has voted, we'll see which games have the most stickers." Everyone talked excitedly while placing their stickers.

Dr. Liu tallied the votes. He listed all the games in order of most votes. Dr. Liu said he wanted to make sure everybody got to play at least one game for which they had voted. He pointed to the top three games and said "If you did not vote for any of these games, raise your hand." Two people raised their hands. Dr. Liu pointed to the top four games and asked the same question. No one raised their hands. "We will play these four games today."

So the Game Day started. Dr. Liu's game had the most votes because everyone wanted to learn a new game. Kamal was happy that his board game was third on the list. He enjoyed playing it, even though he did not win.

When Abby went home, her sister teased her. "I thought school was for learning, not playing games."

"We did learn something today," Abby countered. "We learned a new game from China and we learned about making fair decisions."

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 14: LEADER RESOURCE 1: ILLUSTRATION – GAME DAY IN ABBY'S CLASSROOM

Illustration by Ginger Wyatt.

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/game_day.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/game_day.pdf) for printing.



SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 14:

LEADER RESOURCE 2: WAYS TO MAKE GROUP DECISIONS

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/decisions.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/decisions.pdf) for printing.

Authority

"I will make the decision."

One or more leaders decide what is best for the group as a whole at this time. Leaders may consult with other members before making a decision, but the decision belongs to the leader(s) alone.

Majority

"We will make the decision because most of us agree."

The majority of members (51% or more) agree that the decision is the best one for the whole group at this time. Often achieved through voting.

Consensus

"We will make the decision only when everyone can agree."

All members of the group agree on one decision all believe is the best one for the whole group at this time.

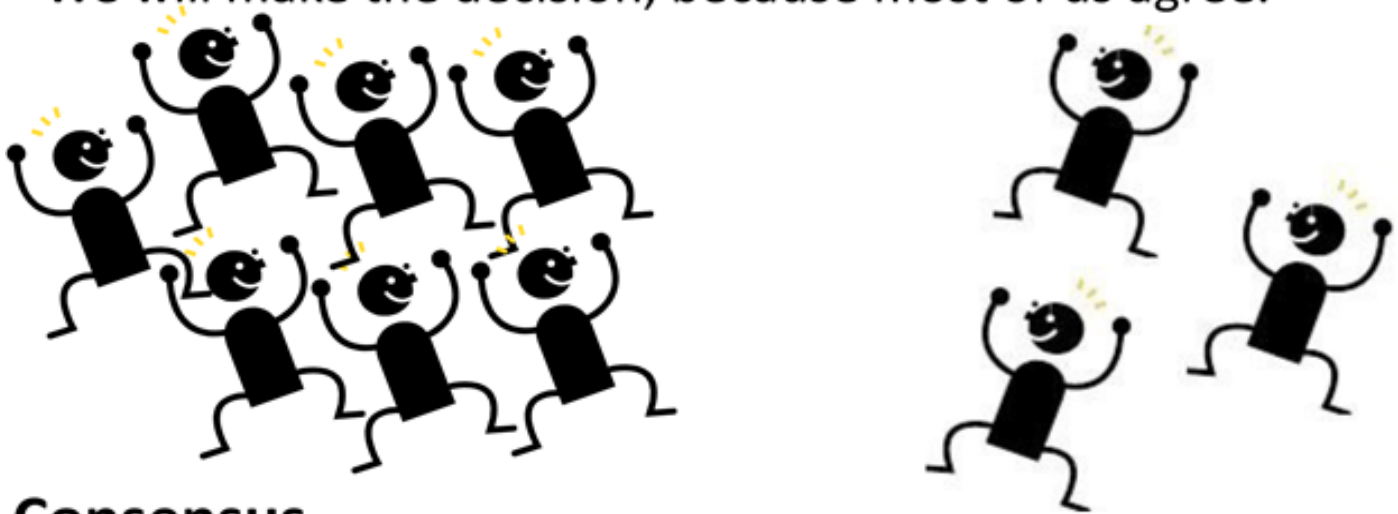
Authority

"I will make the decision."



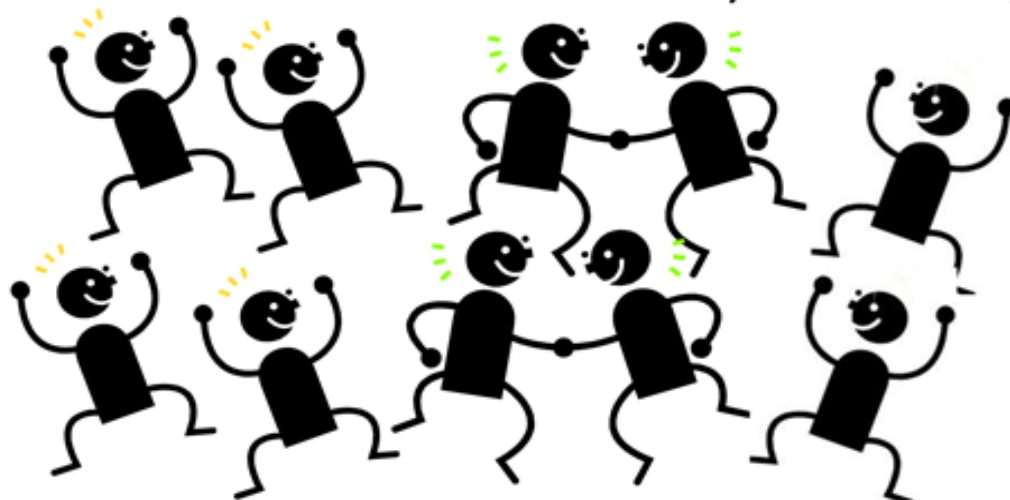
Majority

"We will make the decision, because most of us agree."



Consensus

"We will make the decision only when everyone can agree."



FIND OUT MORE

The [Tools for Change](https://toolsforchange.org/resources/org-handouts/consensus-process.pdf) (at toolsforchange.org/resources/org-handouts/consensus-process.pdf) website has helpful material on consensus.

A Quaker blogger, Robin Mohr, writes about teaching [Quaker methods of decision making](https://robinmsf.blogspot.com/2007/05/voting-vs-quaker-decision-making-in.html) (at robinmsf.blogspot.com/2007/05/voting-vs-quaker-decision-making-in.html) to an elementary school class.

SESSION 15: WITNESS FOR JUSTICE: PUBLIC SIGNS OF OUR UU VALUES

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Our lives begin to end the day that we become silent about the things that matter. — Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King

This session introduces public witness as a way to show one's faith by working for a just world.

The Faith in Action and Alternate Activities provide options for engaging children in direct public witness experiences. It is strongly recommended that you plan one or more events outside the sessions—if possible, the same day or week—where the children can support a congregational justice campaign through witnessing. Work with your Justice or Social Action Committee, and tailor the Faith in Action and/or one of the three Alternate Activities to provide this experience.

GOALS

This session will:

- Show that public witness for justice is a sign of our faith
- Introduce John L. Cashin, a UU ancestor who showed his faith through public witness
- Demonstrate multiple ways to make public witness
- Explore the congregation's public witness ministry.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand public witness as a form of justice work through viewing and learning about examples of public witness
- Understand public witness a sign of Unitarian Universalist faith
- Hear words from the Prophet Muhammad that name good actions
- Learn about John L. Cashin, a UU ancestor who witnessed for racial justice
- Discover the congregation's public witness ministry and explore a role in it

- Share stories of times they have witnessed or stood up for justice.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Muhammad's Prayer	10
Activity 2: Story — John L. Cashin, Witness for Justice	10
Activity 3: Gallery Tour	10
Activity 4: Ritual of Public Witness	25
Faith in Action: Public Witness Event	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action — Guest at Your Table	
Alternate Activity 2: Leadership in Action — Justice Sunday	
Alternate Activity 3: Meeting the Justice Committee	
Alternate Activity 4: Public Witness Online	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

What were you taught as a child about witnessing for justice? If you were included in public protests or other justice work, do you remember the first time you took part? What was the cause? Who was with you? How clearly did you understand the issues and purpose of your public witness?

Including children in public witness can help to deepen their justice-loving souls. Prepare to engage them in issues and guide them to form their own opinions. Get ready to lead them to come to their own understanding of how a public witness action is a sign of faith.

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- If the group designed an Opening ritual in Session 9, set out materials you need to lead it. If not, prepare to lead the Opening described here: Set a table with a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: If children will wear stoles during the session, make sure you have extra stoles for new participants and visitors. A child who has begun to attend regularly can add their initials to a stole in the concluding session, Session 16.

Description of Activity

Lead the Opening ritual designed in Session 9. Or, use this Opening ritual:

If the children wear stoles for Opening and Closing, distribute stoles. Invite the children to put on their stoles. Offer any visitors a stole and explain that they may wear it during the Opening time and the Closing time if they wish. Remind the children their stoles are a sign that everyone in the group is a worship leader.

Welcome all participants. Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime. Ask a volunteer to light the chalice. Lead the group to say these Opening words:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists
and members of the Signs of Our Faith
community.

Together we live our values not just in private,
but publicly.

ACTIVITY 1: MUHAMMAD'S PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

- Handout 1, [UU Principles, Children's Version](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- If you do not have a poster of the UU Principles in the meeting space, copy Handout 1 for all participants.
- Print this prayer on newsprint, and post:

What actions are most excellent?

To gladden the heart of a human being.

To feed the hungry.

To help the afflicted.

To lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful.

To remove the wrongs of the injured.

That person is the most beloved of God who
does most good to God's creatures. — The
Prophet Muhammed

Description of Activity

Children learn a prayer calling for people to do justice and connect its words with UU Principles that support our justice work.

Tell the group that you want to share a prayer with them. Say the prayer was written by the prophet Muhammad, of the founder of the religion of Islam. Tell them that Islam is the world's second largest religion and that people who practice Islam are called Muslims. Ask what the children know about Islam or Muslims. Affirm:

- Muslims are monotheistic, which means they believe in one God.
- The Muslim name for God is Allah.
- Muslims believe that God spoke to the Prophet Muhammad so he could spread God's word to everyone else.

Tell the children that Unitarian Universalists often look to other religions of the world for wisdom such as these words of Muhammad, to inspire us to be the best person we can be.

Share the prayer with the children. If the group includes strong readers, you might ask a volunteer to read each line aloud and then have the group repeat it. Define words you are not sure the children understand.

Point out that Muhammad suggests actions a person can take to show what they believe in. Help the children

to name some of the actions. You can prompt: helping at a food pantry, speaking up when something is unfair, giving clothes or toys you do not need to a child who needs them more, participating in a justice rally; marching in an annual Martin Luther King Day parade. Now ask: Do Unitarian Universalist show our beliefs with any of the same actions? Point out that while our UU religion is different from Islam, our religion shares some of the same ways to show our beliefs.

Indicate your poster of the UU Principles or distribute the handout. Read the Principles aloud or invite volunteers to read. Ask:

- Which of our UU Principles are we following, when we do the actions in Muhammad's prayer? [Affirm answers.]
- What about speaking up for justice? Do our Principles ask us to do that?

Tell the group that people who believe in justice can show their belief in many ways. Say:

Today we are going to talk about the kind of action called public witness.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — JOHN L. CASHIN, WITNESS FOR JUSTICE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story "[John L. Cashin, Witness for Justice](#)" (included in this document) "
- Leader Resource 1, [John L. Cashin Photo](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story to become familiar with it. Plan how you will use the photograph of John Cashin while telling the story.
- Optional: Read *The Agitator's Daughter* by Sheryll Cashin, the daughter of John L. Cashin, or watch a [CNN cablecast](#) (at www.sheryllcashin.com/videos) of a her 2008 talk at the Politics & Prose Bookstore in Washington, DC; her father, who died in 2011, is present in the audience.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See

Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Participants respond to a true story of a UU ancestor who witnessed for justice.

Introduce the story with this background information, in these words or your own:

We are going to hear about John L. Cashin, an African American Unitarian Universalist. His story will help us understand how public witness is a sign of our faith.

John Cashin was born in Huntsville, Alabama in 1928. His mother was the principal of a school. His father was a dentist, and when John Cashin grew up, he became a dentist, too. Way before John Cashin was born, his grandfather had been a representative in the Alabama State Legislature. So, you see, his family cared very much about health, and education, and citizens taking part in government. You will see how John Cashin cared about those things, too, and how he showed it.

Tell or read the story.

Process the story with these questions:

- John Cashin wanted to see African Americans get more involved in politics and government in Alabama. How did he encourage other African Americans to participate in politics? [By running for elections, he let the public see a black man participating as a candidate. He showed it was possible for African Americans to not only vote, but to publicly share their views about justice and other issues, and to ask for a larger role in governing their own town or state.]
- Why do you think getting black people to participate in government was so important to him? [Blacks were underrepresented in public office; unfair laws and racist threats kept people from voting, and that is not fair; elected officials make rules and decisions for everyone, so it is not fair when a group of people is excluded from participating in making the rules for everyone; he knew it was wrong that, while his grandfather had been a legislator in Alabama, now there were no black legislators governing the state.]
- When John Cashin ran for mayor of Huntsville, and then when he ran for governor of Alabama, he spoke at meetings, talked to the newspapers, and went on the radio and television to convince

people to vote for him. He spoke out about laws and customs that were unfair to black people in Alabama. Do you think this is public witness?

- John Cashin was a Unitarian Universalist, like us. So we know a little bit about his beliefs. Our seven Principles were his Principles, too. Which Principles do you think he cared about especially? [1st Principle, everyone is important/inherent worth and dignity; 2nd Principle, justice, equity, and compassion; 5th Principle, everyone should have a say in matters that concern them/democratic process; 6th Principle, working for a fair and just world]
- We can do public witness in many ways. We do not have to run in an election to participate in public witness. Suppose we were members of John Cashin's family, or his UU congregation, during one of his political campaigns. What kinds of public witness could we have done to support his election or the justice issues he cared about? [Hand out flyers in a public place; talk to our friends about the issues; attend one of John Cashin's speeches and cheer for him.]
- Suppose you have done public witness, such as participating in a rally or march, because an unjust law needs to be changed—but the law is not changed after the rally. Does that mean your public witness has failed? What should you do?
- In 1968, when John Cashin formed the National Democratic Party of Alabama, there were no African Americans in the Alabama legislature, the law-making body of state government. In 2012, 22 percent of the Alabama legislature is black. This is close to the percentage of the total state population that is black. Black people hold many positions in local government, and the state elected its first African American woman to the U.S. Congress. It seems as if politics and government in Alabama include everyone much better than they did in John Cashin's time. But, there are still injustices that affect the lives of some African Americans in Alabama. John Cashin died in 2011. If he were still alive today, do you think he would be silent? Or would he be witnessing about other problems in Alabama?

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can help control active bodies.

ACTIVITY 3: GALLERY TOUR (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Social justice posters, index cards, and non-sticky painter's tape
- Optional: A computer with Internet access, and a large monitor or digital projector
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape; and stickers

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how much time you have for this activity and what it needs to accomplish. If the group will use a consensus process to choose a social justice cause for which to witness, your time for the gallery viewing will be quite brief.
- If you have time to extend this activity and have Internet access, read Alternate Activity 4, Public Witness Online and consider incorporating it. The alternate activity guides you to demonstrate "public witness" by exploring an age-appropriate advocacy website for examples.
- Obtain social justice posters. If you have planned a public witness experience for the group, obtain posters related to the topic—for example, if children will march, rally, or speak out for humane treatment of animals, obtain posters advocating spaying/neutering of pets, pet adoption, or factory farm regulations. Other causes may include recycling, marriage equality, immigration policy reform, fair trade, or peace/anti-war (such as a poster with the famous slogan "War is not healthy for children and other living things."). Find posters appropriate for this age group via [Zazzle](http://www.zazzle.com/spay+neuter+posters) (at www.zazzle.com/spay+neuter+posters) (recycling; spay/neuter), [Reach and Teach](http://www.reachandteach.com/store/index.php?l=product_list&c=8) (at www.reachandteach.com/store/index.php?l=product_list&c=8) (Defense of All Families poster), the [Teach Kind](http://www.teachkind.org/merchandise.asp#TeachKindFreeTeachKindMaterialsforEducators) (at www.teachkind.org/merchandise.asp#TeachKindFreeTeachKindMaterialsforEducators) website ("Help Me!" circus poster, "Shut Up Violence" poster, "We Are Not Nuggets" poster), and [Progressive Catalog](http://www.progressivecatalog.com/catalog/socjusposter.html) (at www.progressivecatalog.com/catalog/socjusposter.html) (a colorful, simple fair trade poster).

- Display posters around the meeting space. Write each poster's name or topic and the illustrator, if you know it, on an index card, and post cards alongside posters, gallery style.
- Optional: Prepare an online gallery of social justice graphics. Download images to show the group as a slide show, and cue the slide show. Here are some sources:
 - [Ricardo Levins Morales](http://www.rlmarts.com/) (at www.rlmarts.com/) is one modern artist who has designed many social justice posters. His graphic illustration of global inequity in access to clean water appeared in the [Summer 2010 UU World Family pages](http://www.uua.org/documents/uuworld/families/10_summer.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/uuworld/families/10_summer.pdf).
 - [The Graphic Imperative](http://www.thegraphicimperative.org/) (at www.thegraphicimperative.org/) was an art show presented by the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and Philadelphia University. It includes social justice posters from 1965 to 2005.
 - The [Syracuse Cultural Workers catalog](http://syracuseculturalworkers.com/catalog) (at syracuseculturalworkers.com/catalog) has myriad items from tee-shirts and posters to CDs and DVDs to support public witness on a variety of causes.
- Optional: Test equipment and Internet connection, and cue any short videos you wish to show the group.
- Optional: If the group needs to choose a cause for which to witness, plan to extend this activity by 5 to 10 minutes to lead the consensus process described in Session 14 of this program. Review Session 14, Activity 1, Story — Game Day.

Description of Activity

Children view posters/videos that witness for justice and (optional) choose a cause for which to do public witness.

Say, in these words or your own:

When we speak out in public about righting a wrong or urging people to do good acts, that is called public witness. Sometimes we can speak with our voices in public. Sometimes we witness by going to a march or a rally and hold posters or signs in public.

Public witness is a way of working for a better world. For example, many people are working on the problem that many children do not have enough to eat. Some people donate food to food pantries. Others serve food at shelters to families who need a healthy meal. Still other people work to pass laws to make sure families have enough money for food.

And some people do public witness about hunger. They write books and articles. They create plays, TV shows, music, and art to tell everyone about the problem of child hunger and suggest ways to solve it. They speak to Congress and hold public meetings to talk about solutions.

Show the group the [No Kid Hungry](http://nokidhungry.org/) (at nokidhungry.org/) website. Play the video (:49). Under "Ways to Get Involved," point out the link to Spread the Word and the ways it invites us to witness for ending childhood hunger in the United States by sharing information online. Watch actor Jeff Bridges' [public service announcement](http://nokidhungry.org/featured-pledge-takers/Jeff%20Bridges) (at nokidhungry.org/featured-pledge-takers/Jeff%20Bridges). Ask:

- Why would an organization want a celebrity spokesperson? Is that a kind of public witness?
- Can you name any other famous person who speaks out for a justice cause?

Tell the children that going to a rally or making a poster can also be a form of public witness. Invite children to visit the gallery of public witness. Give them several minutes to visit all the posters and/or see the slide show.

Re-gather the group.

Invite the children to play a game. Tell them you will call out a justice cause and children should quickly move to a poster that witnesses for that cause. If the group is large, ease congestion by calling out "If your name begins with letters A through M, stand by the recycling poster. If your first name begins with N through Z, stand by the peace poster."

If any of the posters have been displayed before in the congregation, ask children if they can identify which ones.

Say:

Unitarian Universalists have a long and proud history of public witness. We believe we should speak up and speak out when we see a wrong that needs righting, people afflicted, hungry, or injured by immoral laws or practices. Public witness for a justice cause is a sign of our UU faith. Public witness is one way to show we want

to help to create a world where everyone is treated equally and fairly.

Variation

If the group needs to choose a cause for which to witness, take at least five minutes to lead a consensus-finding activity. Post newsprint and ask children to generate ideas. List all suggestions on newsprint, including yours. Lead the group to eliminate ideas that are impractical or impossible. Then, give each child three stickers and invite them to vote by placing stickers on the ideas they like the best. Engage the group to identify the three most popular ideas by calculating the number of votes each idea received. Then, you may announce the idea that had the most votes as the winner. Or, ask if any children did not vote for any of the top three, and allow them to say which of the top three they prefer. Their votes may change the results.

Including All Participants

If any children in the group have mobility limitations, do not use a game that requires children to move quickly from place to place.

ACTIVITY 4: RITUAL OF PUBLIC WITNESS (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Items from recent congregational public witness events
- Art supplies and (optional) video camera and playback equipment

Preparation for Activity

- Gather and display items such as flyers, banners, photos/videos, and newspaper coverage from congregational public witness activities. Good sources will be your religious educator, minister, administrative staff or volunteers, or Justice or Social Action Committee members.
- Plan how you will explain the context and purpose of the witness event(s) represented, in an age-appropriate way.
- If the children will make materials for an actual congregational public witness event, plan how you will explain the issue or cause. Prepare to tell the group how their public witness will promote justice and thereby express their UU faith. Review the Faith in Action activity and Alternate Activities 1, 2, and 3. Work with your Justice or Social Action Committee or other appropriate leaders to connect this activity with

witness experience the children will actually do. You may wish to invite lay leaders to this session to discuss a planned public witness and guide the children to create useful materials.

- Choose and gather media for children to use in the second part of this activity. You might have children make posters or flyers, or videotape themselves. If they will clean a banner, gather appropriate supplies. Note: If you plan to videotape children, talk to the religious educator and families about where the video will be shown and create and distribute a release form, if needed.

Description of Activity

Children explore items used by the congregation in public witness and create their own materials to support a public witness event.

Show the children the items you have gathered from congregational public witness. Explain the context and purpose of the witness events. Engage children to identify familiar people and places in photos and to share their experiences with the issue or cause being witnessed.

Now invite the children to help prepare for a new public witness event—one you have already selected for them to do, or one that will support a cause the children chose by consensus in the previous activity.

Suggestions:

- If your congregation is involved in a justice campaign, children can support this work by creating posters or flyers. If the issue is one they understand and have an opinion about, you might film them making short witnessing statements. For example, if the congregation works for marriage equality, videotape children making short statements about why they think everyone should be allowed to marry the person they love.
- Support the public witness of the congregation's Justice Committee by making decorations for a justice table. Children can use fabric crayons and markers to colorfully decorate a table cloth and make attractive signage for a table displaying justice material. At the end of the session, they could stand by the table, helping to disperse flyers and pamphlets for the justice activities that interest them the most.
- Does your congregation carry a banner at marches and rallies? Children can help take care of it with repairs or cleaning. They could

take photos of themselves with the banner to display in your meeting space or publish in a congregational newsletter. They could videotape themselves behind the banner saying justice statements ("Public witnessing for justice is a sign of our UU faith.") or saying the [seven Unitarian Universalist Principles](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session1/sessionplan/handouts/132149.shtml) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session1/sessionplan/handouts/132149.shtml).

While the children work, talk about multiple ways to witness: speaking in public, making and holding signs, creating and passing out flyers, sharing or making a video, music, speaking up when you see a wrong, siding with someone who needs help. If children did not have enough time in Activity 1 to talk about their experience with public witness, continue that conversation.

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors
- Optional: Items needed for new Closing ritual (Session 9, Activity 4)

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt [Taking It Home](#) and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email [Taking It Home](#) to parents/caregivers after this session.
- If the group designed a Closing ritual in Session 9, prepare to hold it. If not, use the Closing described here. Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute [Taking It Home](#). Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Invite each child turn to the child to the right of them and say "Thank you for being a public witness for justice."

Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together. Have them store their stoles in the place you have designated. Stoles should stay at the congregation and not go home with children.

FAITH IN ACTION: PUBLIC WITNESS EVENT

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Media releases
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape; and stickers

Preparation for Activity

- Invite members of the Justice Committee to describe the committee's work to the children. Tell them how much time they will have. Encourage them to bring visual aids, such as photos and videos taken at justice events and brochures published by community groups the committee supports. If they have a banner, they should bring it, too. Inform them that the group will be talking about public witness. Invite them to sing songs or chants that they include in their witness activities.
- Optional: If your congregation holds a justice or community service fair, plan to attend with the Signs group.
- Optional: If the group needs to choose a cause for which to witness, plan to use the consensus decision process described in Session 14 of this program. Review Session 14, Activity 1, Story — Game Day.

Description of Activity

Children witness for a justice issue of their choice.

Ask children what local justice issues concern them. These questions might help identify issues:

- Are there things that are unfair in their community?
- Do you know of any justice issues the congregation is involved in?
- Have you or your families participated in any public witness protest? If so, what were they protesting or advocating for? Are these issues still present in the community?

List the issues on newsprint. Help the group pick an issue they would like to advocate for or protest against. Possible issues include environmental (recycling, protecting land), hunger and homelessness (supporting shelters), bullying, and animal welfare (spaying and neutering pets, boycotting a circus that uses animals).

Keep the focus of the activity on public witness. Here is an example of the form the activity could take if children wish to advocate for spaying/neutering/adopting pets:

1. Identify a local organization to invite into partnership. It could be a clinic offering reduced rates for neutering pets or part of a campaign by a humane organization or a local shelter.
2. Identify a specific event the partner is hosting that all the children can attend.
3. Before the event, talk about reasons to spay/neuter pets and reasons why adopting pets from shelter is a good practice. Include an explanation of what spay and neuter mean.
4. Design and create posters and/or flyers to share at the public witness event that illustrate the problem and possible solutions.
5. Help children write and practice short statements in defense of spaying/neutering pets. Also, write and practice two or three short chants, such as "Spay, neuter, pet adoption/ help prevent overpopulation."
6. If the group will be on land not owned by your congregation or the partner organization, make sure it is legal for you to congregate and witness on the space.
7. If the event may be covered by news media, find out your congregation's policy around children and the media. Talk to your religious educator and the children's parents/caregivers about whether they are comfortable with their children being filmed and/or interviewed. Ask parents/caregivers to sign any releases that might be needed.
8. On the day of the event, gather with signs at a highly visible spot. Spend at least 30 minutes at the event, holding up signs, chanting, and delivering sound bites to whoever will listen.
9. Afterward, discuss the event. Would children do anything different next time? What did they like the best? Was the experience what they expected? What effect do they think their witnessing had on bystanders? How can they tell? How did it affect them?

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? What would you do differently next time? Look over the next session and assign any preparation duties as needed. Note that Session 16 includes a ceremony to celebrate the culmination of the program, to which you are encouraged to invite a few congregational elders and younger children. You might invite the participants' families, the religious educator, and/or your minister.

TAKING IT HOME

Our lives begin to end the day that we become silent about the things that matter. — Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we talked about public witness as a sign of our Unitarian Universalist faith. We said that we should speak up when we witness a wrong and speak out to support those who need help. We viewed posters that witness for justice. We heard about John Cashin, an African American leader in Huntsville, Alabama who was a member of the UU congregation there. Cashin witnessed for the rights of black Americans to participate in the political process. He is one of our UU ancestors.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... public witness events family members have experienced. Where did they go, what did they do, and why? Did they believe their presence made a difference? How?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... witnessing together. Attend a rally, march or public forum to support a cause your family believes in. Ask other families to join you and make a banner that says "UU Families For..." to further your witnessing presence.

Family Adventure. Explore the world of public witness art, online. If you use [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com) (at www.pinterest.com), create a board devoted to your favorite social justice and public witness graphics. Start by pinning images from these sources:

- [Ricardo Levins Morales](http://www.rlmarts.com/) (at www.rlmarts.com/) is one modern artist who has designed many social justice posters. His graphic illustration of global inequity in access to clean water appeared in the [Summer 2010 UU World Family pages](https://www.uua.org/documents/uuworld/families/10_summer.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/uuworld/families/10_summer.pdf).
- [The Graphic Imperative](http://www.thegraphicimperative.org/) (at www.thegraphicimperative.org/) was an art

show presented by the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and Philadelphia University. It includes social justice posters from 1965 to 2005.

- The [Syracuse Cultural Workers catalog](http://syracuseculturalworkers.com/catalog) (at syracuseculturalworkers.com/catalog) has myriad items from tee-shirts and posters to CDs and DVDs to support public witness on a variety of causes.

Family Discovery. The University of Wisconsin's School of Education produced a list of [50 books for children on peace and social justice](http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/detailListBooks.asp?idBookLists=77) (at www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/detailListBooks.asp?idBookLists=77). How many have you read? See how many more you can read together.

Family Ritual. Do you know about [Standing on the Side of Love](http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/) (at www.standingonthesideoflove.org/), the Unitarian Universalist Association's campaign for justice? Research a variety of justice causes, learn how to support them with your family or congregation, and purchase tee-shirts from the campaign. When you attend social justice events, wear your shirts as a sign that you are a UU family working for justice.

Leadership Suggestion. Public witness can be about all kinds of issues and topics. Children may be inspired to think of their own witnessing ideas by watching Clara Huff's series of [Kids Witness News](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ8gDAnB1Lw) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ8gDAnB1Lw) videos on YouTube. She witnesses about many different topics, from [favorite books](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ8gDAnB1Lw) (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ8gDAnB1Lw) to turning twelve.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION: GUEST AT YOUR TABLE

Materials for Activity

- [Guest at Your Table](http://www.uusc.org/guest) (at www.uusc.org/guest) boxes and materials

Preparation for Activity

- Talk with your religious educator, minister, and or lay leaders about the [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](http://www.uusc.org) (at www.uusc.org) Guest at Your Table program to determine interest in the Signs group introducing it in the congregation.
- Order Guest at Your Table boxes for the congregation and order or download information on [Guest at Your Table](http://www.uusc.org/guest) (at www.uusc.org/guest), including Stories of Hope and RE workshop materials. Explore the

material and decide what you will include in this activity.

- If the congregation has a Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) representative, invite them to tell the group about the UUSC.

Description of Activity

Children lead the congregation in participation in Guest at Your Table.

Invite the group to lead the congregation in participation of Guest at Your Table, an annual program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Explain what the UUSC does and why the congregation participates in Guest at Your Table (GAYT). Share only as much of the GAYT information as needed to help the children understand how it works, why it is important, and how it is a form of public witness.

Present your plan for how the children will work with the congregation. For example, they could introduce the program during a worship service, then distribute GAYT boxes. They can collect the boxes, count the donations, and send thank you cards to contributors.

To ensure a public witness component, you might plan a presentation to the congregation that incorporates a GAYT "story of hope" from the UUSC. You might have the children build a display for the narthex. Do not be afraid to do something different from usual. Follow the interests and ideas of participants and solicit additional help, if needed.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION: JUSTICE SUNDAY

Preparation for Activity

- Invite one of the coordinators of Justice Sunday in your congregation to speak to the children and help them plan ways to participate.

Description of Activity

Children assume leadership for Justice Sunday.

If the congregation participates in Justice Sunday, have a coordinator explain to the children what it is, why it is important, and how the events your congregation has planned are examples of public witness. Work with coordinators and children to gather ideas on ways the children can help lead Justice Sunday activities. For example, children can tell a Story for Ages in worship or help host a lunch for a guest speaker. Do not be afraid to plan a contribution by the children that will be different, joyful, or fun.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: MEETING THE JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Preparation for Activity

- Invite two or three members of the Justice or Social Action Committee to speak to the group. Tell them how long they have to present information about the work of the committee. Encourage them to bring visual aids, such as photos and videos taken at justice events, and brochures published by community groups the committee supports. If they have a banner, they should bring it, too. Inform them that the group will be talking about public witness. Invite them to sing songs or chants that they include in their witness activities.
- Optional: if your congregation holds a justice or community service fair, plan to attend with the Signs group.

Description of Activity

Participants meet with congregants involved in justice work.

Spend a few minutes brainstorming questions to ask the guests. Introduce the guests and ask them to give their short (ten minutes or less) presentations. Leave a few minutes for questions.

Afterwards, ask what commonalities exist in the issues of the Justice Committee. Where did they hear public witness as one of the ways the committee works for justice?

Alternately, if your congregation holds a social justice or community service fair, attend as a group. Gather information. Sit together and review the information, asking the same processing questions.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: PUBLIC WITNESS ONLINE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A computer with Internet access, and a large monitor or digital projector

Preparation for Activity

- Preview the [No Kid Hungry](http://nokidhungry.org/) (at nokidhungry.org/) website and the [PSA by actor Jeff Bridges](http://nokidhungry.org/featured-pledge-takers/Jeff%20Bridges) (at nokidhungry.org/featured-pledge-takers/Jeff%20Bridges).
- Preview alternate child-friendly websites, devoted to other causes, with which you can provide this activity. These include People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' kids website,

PetaKids (at www.petakids.com/celebs.asp), and the website for Kids vs. Global Warming (at www.imatteryouth.org/).

- Immediately before the session, cue the website(s) and test your Internet connection and projector.

Description of Activity

Use the No Kid Hungry (at www.nokidhungry.org/) website, or another cause-oriented, age-appropriate website, to help you explain different modes of public witness to the group.

Tell the children:

Public witness is a way of working for a better world. For example, many people are working on the problem that many children do not have enough to eat. Some people donate food to food pantries. Others serve food at shelters to families who need a healthy meal. Still other people work to pass laws to make sure families have enough money for food.

And some people do public witness about hunger. They write books and articles. They create plays, TV shows, music, and art to tell everyone about the problem of child hunger and suggest ways to solve it. They speak to Congress and hold public meetings to talk about solutions.

Show the group the No Kid Hungry (at nokidhungry.org/) website. Play the video (:49). Under "Ways to Get Involved," point out the link to Spread the Word and the ways it invites us to witness for ending childhood hunger in the United States by sharing information online. Watch actor Jeff Bridges' public service announcement. Ask:

- Why would an organization want a celebrity to speak publicly about their cause?
- Can you name any other famous person who speaks out for a justice cause? Is that a kind of public witness?
- What are some ways young people your age can do public witness about child hunger in the U.S.?

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 15: STORY: JOHN L. CASHIN, WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

One day in Alabama, in 1968, as farmers worked in their fields, a small airplane swooped into view. The farmers looked up wonderingly as papers fluttered out of the plane, into the sky and came swirling down to earth all around them. The papers were flyers about the upcoming elections—flyers with a picture of an eagle and the names of the candidates the pilot of the airplane liked the best.

That pilot was John L. Cashin. He hoped those farmers would vote for the candidates of the National Democratic Party, a political party he founded to help African Americans run in Alabama's elections. He wanted the farmers, and everyone else, to know that these candidates, if elected, would use their positions in government to make life better and more fair for the farmers, their families, and all their neighbors.

John Cashin was not only a pilot, he was a dentist, too, and a husband, and a father of three children. He himself had run for mayor in his town, Huntsville, Alabama. He did not win. Later in his life, he would run for governor of the state of Alabama. He didn't win that election, either, but then again, he had not expected to win.

In those days in Alabama, African Americans had little chance of winning public office. Even though about one third of Alabama's people were Black, the Alabama state government had no elected officials who were African American. Very few Blacks ran for election. Very few Blacks could even vote in elections. They were kept away by unfair laws—sometimes called "Jim Crow" laws—and by threats of violence by white people who did not want their black neighbors to vote.

So, with so little chance to win, why did John L. Cashin run for mayor, and then for governor? Well, John was an activist who understood the power of public witness. And

he had made a promise when he was 11 years old, to do whatever he could to get Blacks involved in the political process and to speak out against the injustices that kept them away. Every time John Cashin put his name on a ballot and his picture on election posters and flyers, he caught the dreams of other African Americans in Alabama. Campaign speeches gave him a chance to make some noise for justice, and speak out against laws that were not fair to African Americans.

When John Cashin formed the National Democratic Party, he chose as its symbol, an eagle—the well-known symbol of American freedom. With eagles printed all over their flyers and signs and posters, the National Democratic Party made sure even blacks who could not read could vote for justice-loving candidates, the ones with the eagles by their names. Soon, African Americans in Alabama were running for sheriff, city councils, and judgeships—and the National Democratic Party helped get many get elected.

Cashin did not have to witness alone. His family, his Unitarian Universalist congregation in Huntsville, Alabama, and many other UUs and friends joined him. They came to his rallies, made their own speeches to support him, and helped him raise money to run for elections. Like John, they believed that to witness against the wrongs committed against African Americans was an important way to show their faith.

Over time in Alabama, more African Americans voted. More African Americans ran for public office, and won. As more African Americans became part of the Democratic and Republican parties, John Cashin's National Democratic Party was less important for public witness, and it was dissolved.

John Cashin died in 2011. We can be a new generation witnessing for justice. Every time we speak up against a wrong or support people to speak up for themselves, we are part of John Cashin's legacy. He witnessed for the justice he wanted to see in his community and in our nation—an America where everyone's vote is counted.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 15:

HANDOUT 1: UU PRINCIPLES, CHILDREN'S VERSION

We believe each and every person is important.

We believe all people should be treated fairly.

In our congregations, all people are accepted and we learn together.

We believe each person is free to search for what is true and right in life.

Everyone deserves a vote about the things that concern them.

We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.

We believe in caring for our planet Earth and every living thing that shares it with us.

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 15: LEADER RESOURCE 1: JOHN L. CASHIN PHOTO

Photo taken by Wesley Swift; used with permission.

Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/john_cashin.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/signs/john_cashin.pdf) for printing.



FIND OUT MORE

Aisha's Moonlit Walk by Anika Stafford (Skinner House Books, 2005) has a story about a young girl who moves past her shyness to stand up and speak at a public gathering.

Read *The Agitator's Daughter* by Sheryll Cashin, or watch a [CNN cablecast](#) (at www.sheryllcashin.com/videos) of a her 2008 talk at the Politics & Prose Bookstore in Washington, DC. John Cashin, her father, is present in the audience.

[Reach & Teach](#) (at www.reachandteach.com/content/index.php) carries many products useful in teaching children about justice.

Parents as Social Justice Educators, by Roberta and Christopher Nelson, is a useful curriculum for parent groups. It can be purchased as part of [The Parent Trilogy](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=747) from the UUA Bookstore.

SESSION 16: SIGNS OF FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Humankind has not woven the web of life.

We are but one thread within it.

Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

All things are bound together.

All things connect. — Chief Seattle, 19th-century Native American leader

This session concludes the program by affirming children's connection to our Unitarian Universalist history and future. They are invited to see themselves as carriers of a UU legacy: of faith in the power of humans to make the world a better place, of hope, and of support for one another on our faith journeys. The story of Antoinette Brown and Olympia Brown reinforces a sense of UU history and encourages children to help one another find the courage to follow one's calling.

Activity 5, Closing Celebration provides an opportunity to involve families of participants. Decide if you will invite parents/caregivers to attend the entire session or only from the closing ceremony through the end. If they will only attend the Closing, you might invite participants' entire families and/or schedule the Closing celebration so it will not conflict with worship or other congregational activities.

GOALS

This session will:

- Show how strengthening our connection to each other, our shared past, and our shared future, can be a sign of our faith
- Affirm that to live one's faith every day takes courage and is a sign of faithful leadership
- Cast participants as keepers of a Unitarian Universalist legacy, inherited from the past and transferable to future generations
- Reinforce learning from the program and celebrate its culmination.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- See themselves as embodiments of our Unitarian Universalist faith, connected to a UU past and a UU future
- Understand why and how UUs help and support one another on our individual faith journeys
- Learn a story that connects two UU faith ancestors, Antoinette Brown and Olympia Brown
- Accept their stoles, as a sign of their journey toward becoming faithful leaders
- Celebrate!

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	2
Activity 1: Six Degrees of Connection Game	15
Activity 2: Story – Antoinette Brown and Olympia Brown	10
Activity 3: Fourth Emblem	15
Activity 4: Closing Celebration	15
Faith in Action: Stoles for the Future	
Closing	3
Alternate Activity 1: Leadership in Action – Sustenance for the Journey	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Has someone supported you on your faith journey, even when it was difficult? Who encouraged you to accept a role of leadership in Unitarian Universalism? If you have not shown these people your gratitude, now might be a good time to do so.

Your leadership of this program contributes to the future of Unitarian Universalism. Thank you! Remember that your support of these children's leadership does not need to stop with this program. How will you continue to support these children on their faith journey?

SESSION PLAN

OPENING (2 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell
- Optional: Cloth for centering table
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- If the group has designed an Opening ritual in Session 9, set out the materials you need to lead it. If not, prepare to lead the Opening described here: Set a chalice table, a chalice, candle, and lighter or an LED battery-operated candle. Write the opening words on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: If children will wear stoles during the session, make sure you have extra stoles for visitors.

Description of Activity

Perform the Opening ritual designed by the group.

If a new Opening ritual was not designed, gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table, ask a volunteer to light the chalice, and recite together:

We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.

Together, we acknowledge our role as keepers of a UU legacy. We will continue to support each other in our faith journeys. As faithful leaders, we have the courage to live our faith every day.

ACTIVITY 1: SIX DEGREES OF CONNECTIONS GAME (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Writing paper and instruments
- Optional: Clipboards, to provide a good writing surface

Description of Activity

Children play a game that demonstrates how much we have in common. The game is adapted with permission from a game copyrighted by [Business Trainings Work](http://www.businesstrainingworks.com/Train-the-Trainer/Icebreakers-Free.html),

[Inc](http://www.businesstrainingworks.com/Train-the-Trainer/Icebreakers-Free.html) (at www.businesstrainingworks.com/Train-the-Trainer/Icebreakers-Free.html).

Tell the group you want to play a game about the connections we share. Form pairs, or ask the children to find a partner.

Give each pair a sheet of writing paper and a pencil or pen.

Ask each pair to write a list of six things they have in common—for example, the school they go to, the year they were born, pets, favorite books, food likes, sports likes. One word for each thing is enough.

Ask the children to tell you when they have listed six things. As pairs finish, bring them a new sheet of writing paper and invite them to find someone else in the room who has one of their six things in common with them, too. Tell them that when they find that person, they can use the new sheet of paper to make a new list. The new list should have also have six things, but they must be things all three people have in common, without repeating any of the things on the first list.

Depending on the size of the group and the time you have allotted, you might challenge the children to continue until everyone is included in six different lists, or call "time."

Talk about the process. Was it easy or hard? Did participants discover similarities they did not know existed? Point out that they found connections with others in the group. Do they think they could find some connection to everyone in the room? Do they think they could find some connection to everyone on the planet? What does it mean to you to realize that we are all connected?

Including All Participants

Set up the room and plan the activity so all participants will be able to become part of new groups. If any participants have mobility limitations, you can adapt the game so one partner brings their first list to a new partner and adds six different commonalities with the new partner to the list, then moves to a third partner, and so on.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY – ANTOINETTE BROWN AND OLYMPIA BROWN (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the story, "[Antoinette Brown and Olympia Brown](#)" (included in this document) "

- Optional: Fidget basket (see Session 1, Leader Resource 2, [Fidget Objects](#) (included in this document))

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story so you will be comfortable telling it.
- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during storytelling. See Session 1, Leader Resource 2, Fidget Objects for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Say that to recognize our deep connections to and dependence on one another is a sign of our UU faith. Remind the group that our seventh Principle says we respect the interdependent web of life to which we each belong—all life, which means all people. Say in these words, or your own:

As UUs, we believe we must support each other in our faithful journeys through life. We are going to hear a story about two UUs doing just that.

Read or tell the story. Process the story with these questions:

- Who supported Antoinette in her goal to become a minister?
- How did Antoinette support Olympia? Why do you think this was important to Olympia? Why was it important to Antoinette?
- Antoinette and Olympia had the courage to keep going on their faith journeys, even when it was hard. What do you helped them stay strong? Do you think your faith can help you stay strong and committed, even when it is hard? Does the support of other people help, too?

Ask participants to name some signs of one's UU faith you have discussed in previous sessions [being a leader, supporting one another on our faith journeys, seeking answers to big questions, cherishing life, honoring our lives at death, sharing, caring, supporting community, being welcoming, worshipping together, taking care of our faith home, embracing uniqueness, making decisions as a group, doing public witness].

Ask them which signs of faith take courage. Prompt with examples: It can take courage...

- to speak up against injustice

- to talk with others about someone you loved who has died
- to be the one to include somebody who is new, or has a special need because they are using a wheelchair or cannot hear or cannot see.

Invite participants to share a time when they ran into an obstacle—when it was hard to live out a sign of their faith.

Say:

It takes courage to live your faith every day. When you have that kind of courage, that is a sign that you are a faithful leader. We honor Olympia Brown and Antoinette Brown as our UU ancestors because their courage to live their faith helped to make the world better. Today, our religion has more women ministers than men ministers. With most religions in the United States, it is the opposite.

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening or can focus better with sensory stimulation. For a full description and guidance, see Session 1, Leader Resource 2.

Consider using rug squares in the storytelling area. Place them in a semi-circle with the rule "One person per square." This can be very helpful for controlling active bodies.

ACTIVITY 3: FOURTH EMBLEM (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Stoles
- [Iron-on chalice patches](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=735) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=735)
- Session 4, Leader Resource 1, [First Emblem](#) (included in this document)
- Session 8, Leader Resource 3, [Second Emblem](#) (included in this document)
- Session 12, Leader Resource 4, [Third Emblem](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: An ironing board and iron
- Optional: Safety pins

Preparation for Activity

- Several weeks before the session, order iron-on chalice patches from the [UUA Bookstore](#) (at

www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=735).

- Decide whether you will iron the patches onto the stoles before, during, or after this session. If you plan to iron during the session, invite one or more adult volunteers to help. If you plan to iron afterward, use safety pins to temporarily attach a patch to each child's stole. Remember to apply a patch to the stoles of absent children, if you think they are still part of the program.
- Identify a place to leave the stoles of absent children and/or children on whose stoles you will iron a patch after this session. Plan to inform the parents where they can pick up their child's completed stole.
- Prepare emblems children may have missed receiving due to an absence in Session 4, Session 8, and Session 12; use the Leader Resources listed in the Materials for Activity section, above. The first emblem (Session 4) represented living one's faith to oneself. The second emblem (Session 8) represented living one's faith in relations with others. The third emblem (Session 12) represented living their faith in the congregation and/or wider community. Optional: Revisit Session 4, Session 8, and Session 12 so you will be able to tell the children more about the meaning of these emblems and remind them of related activities they have done.

Description of Activity

Participants receive an iron-on chalice patch, the last of four emblems for their stole.

Tell children that this is the last session of the program. As a sign of their faith and to show their dedication to being faithful leaders, every child will receive an iron-on patch for their stole.

Invite children, one at a time, to come have a patch pinned or ironed onto their stole. Place each patch at the center of a stole, at the neck.

Check stoles for missing emblems from previous sessions and help children attach these to their stoles. If they did not get a chance to finish making an emblem, help them do so.

While one or two adults attach the patches, have a co-leader lead a discussion with the other children, using these questions:

- How do our stoles show our connection to Unitarian Universalism? [The chalice is a symbol that connects our religion to the past

and present; the stole is a symbol of religious leadership; UUs value each person, and our stoles are a sign of this because they are all similar, but each one is unique.]

- Sometimes we say the chalice's flame is a symbol of hope for the future. UUs believe in hoping for a better future and working for it, too. What hopes do you have for a better world?

Collect the stoles to distribute to children in Activity 5, Closing Celebration.

ACTIVITY 4: CLOSING CELEBRATION (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large mirror, and a cloth to cover it
- Handout 1, [A Faithful UU Leader Is...](#) (included in this document)
- Stoles
- White ribbons and safety pins
- Recording of the song "We Are the Ones (We've Been Waiting For)" by Sweet Honey in the Rock, and a music player
- Refreshments

Preparation for Activity

- Adapt the ceremony as needed. You may wish to download the Description of Activity to your own computer to insert the names of the leaders and any guests who will read particular parts. You can also insert the names of the children and notes about actions such as distribution of the children's stoles. Make a copy of the ceremony for each person who will have a role in leading it.
- Invite participant's families to take part in the ceremony or invite a few congregational elders and younger children to the ceremony. Schedule the ceremony for after worship to ensure a good turnout. If one of the congregational elders is also a leader (such as the religious educator, minister, or board president), consider asking them to read part of the words of the ceremony (Leader Resource) and give them their part ahead of time.
- Obtain a recording of the Sweet Honey in the Rock performing "We Are the Ones" (2:51). You can purchase the song from an online music store such as iTunes. Set up and test the music player. Cue the song.

- Arrange the room for the number of participants and guests you expect. Make sure everyone seated will be able to see the centering table and chalice, and the mirror, and that individual participants can easily come forward to receive their stole. Place stoles near the centering table. Take care that anyone with mobility challenges or using crutches or a wheelchair will be able to navigate the space.
- Position the mirror, then cover it with a cloth.
- Set out refreshments.
- Optional: Plan to teach participants and guests to sing "We Are the Ones." You might invite a song leader to help. The song has simple lyrics that can be sung in one, two, or more overlapping melodies. Hear Sweet Honey in the Rock sing it [here](http://www.sweethoney.com/discography.php) (at www.sweethoney.com/discography.php); scroll down to the 1998 album "... Twenty-Five..."

Description of Activity

Participants and guests celebrate the end of the program. Participants are recognized as UU leaders.

Gather the group.

Welcome everyone. Thank visitors for joining in a closing ceremony that celebrates the participants' work in the Signs of Our Faith program.

Conduct the ceremony:

LEADER 1:

We have shared many stories together—stories about different Unitarian Universalists and the signs of their faith. Our participants discovered there are many ways to show our UU faith—as many ways as there are UUs.

LEADER 2:

Today's story was about Antoinette Brown, one of our first Unitarian women ministers, and Olympia Brown, the first Universalist woman minister. They are part of our UU legacy. They are our two of our UU ancestors. But we have many more: people of all genders, all ethnicities and races, all cultures, all affectional orientations, and all economic classes. Because our UU ancestors kept the faith alive, we have inherited it to keep alive, too. The children have learned to recognize the signs that we are living our faith, and keeping it alive. Signs like the activities we do and the ways we act in our congregation, the ways we relate to one another and the world as we live our daily lives, and how we treat ourselves.

LEADER 1:

The children wear stoles in our group as a sign that they are UU worship leaders. The stoles show our dedication to being faithful leaders not just in our UU faith community, but at home, at school, with friends, with newcomers we must welcome, and in the world community.

LEADER 2:

Signs group, do you remember the story about the birds that were looking for a leader, the Simorgh? At the end, the birds discovered that they were the leaders. [Session 9 story, "The Journey of the Birds"] It's possible something like that has happened in our very group.

[LEADER 2 uncovers the mirror.]

LEADER 1:

As we call your name, please come forward, accept your stole, and look into the mirror. Envision yourself as part of a long line of UUs: a line that extends into the past and into the future. It is the signs of our faith that hold us together.

As each child looks into the mirror, I will lead us all to say together: "Thank you for being a faithful UU leader."

[LEADER 1: Call each child by name, place their stole around their neck, and turn the child to face the mirror. As each child faces the mirror, lead the group to say "Thank you for being a faithful UU leader." LEADER 2 may assist by handing stoles to LEADER 1 and, as the last child receives a stole, distributing Handout 1, A Faithful Leader Is...]

LEADER 1:

Please join in reading together from the handout: A Faithful UU Leader Is...

[Alternately, direct volunteers to each read a line from the handout.]

LEADER 2:

We have one last item to add to everyone's stoles. White ribbons. In the story today, we heard how Antoinette Brown wore a white ribbon to remind her to be strong and courageous in her faith journey. May the white ribbons we give you today remind you to be strong, courageous faithful leaders in Unitarian Universalism.

[Play the recording of Sweet Honey in the Rock's "We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For." Invite the gathering to sing along. You might invite or lead participants to dance once they have received their white ribbon. Pin a white ribbon on the stole of each participant.]

CLOSING (3 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle, and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Stoles, including extras for visitors

Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt Taking It Home and copy for all participants. And/or, plan to email Taking It Home to parents/caregivers after this session.
- If the group designed a Closing ritual in Session 9, prepare to hold it. If not, use the Closing described here. Write the words for chalice extinguishing on newsprint, and post.
- Decide whether you will invite the children to take home their stoles at the conclusion of the Signs of Our Faith program or to leave the stoles at the congregation for use during future leadership opportunities.
- If you have arranged an upcoming leadership activity for this group, be ready to give the children and their parents/caregivers details after you formally close the session.

Description of Activity

Distribute stoles and invite participants to put them on.

Distribute Taking It Home. Tell participants that at the end of every session, they will receive this guide to fun activities they can do with family or friends. Read it aloud to give participants an idea of activities suggested.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Lead the group to say:

We end as we began: together.

May we remember to be UU not just when we are together here, but every day and in every way.

Ask all participants to blow out the chalice together.

Have them store their stoles in a place you have designated, or invite them to take home their stoles.

FAITH IN ACTION: STOLES FOR THE FUTURE

Materials for Activity

- Material and supplies to make and decorate stoles

Preparation for Activity

- Cut cloth for the stoles.
- Decide how children can help make stoles from the pre-cut cloth for other children to use in future RE programs. This may involve sewing. It might involve children taping or gluing cloth together so it can be sewn later. Work within the parameters of your time and skills, the group's abilities, and the availability and cost of materials. It is fine for participants to perform only minor parts of the construction.
- Prepare materials. This may include pre-cutting cloth, threading needles, or setting up a hot glue station.
- Set materials and supplies on work tables for children to use.
- Work with the religious educator to identify a place where finished stoles can be stored for a future group to use.

Description of Activity

Children help prepare stoles for future RE participants and process their experiences in the Signs of Our Faith program.

Tell the group that one way they can connect to future generations of UU leaders is to help make stoles for the children who will be in the next Signs of Our Faith group.

Indicate materials and explain/demonstrate the tasks you wish the children to do. While children work, lead a conversation with questions like these:

- What did you like best in this program? When new children have a Signs of Our Faith group, what do you think they should do more of?
- What did you like least about the program? What should the next Signs of Our Faith group do less of?
- What are some ways you can connect to and support future UU leaders who are younger than you?
- What are some ways you can connect to and support the elder leaders in the congregation?
- Where do you see your future leadership in the congregation and faith taking you? What do you want to do in our congregation, to show you are a faithful UU leader? What would you like to do in your daily life, at home, or at school that would show you are a faithful UU leader?

Take notes to document participant feedback. You might share feedback with co-leaders and your religious educator. Also, the Unitarian Universalist Association welcomes feedback. Please contact religiouseducation@uua.org (at <mailto:religiouseducation@uua.org>) to share feedback, or submit using the form(s) in this program's Introduction.

Thank participants for their support of future UU leaders.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

What went well in this session? Did you plan and lead a successful celebration activity? Do the program participants feel like young leaders? How can you tell?

Consider publicizing the leadership work of participants, perhaps by acknowledging their accomplishments in a worship service, a newsletter article, or a display at the congregation. What plans are in place for these children to continue to grow as faithful leaders? How has leading this program changed you as a faithful leader? How has it affected your relationship with the congregation and the faith?

TAKING IT HOME

Humankind has not woven the web of life.

We are but one thread within it.

Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

All things are bound together.

All things connect. — Chief Seattle, 19th-century Native American leader

IN TODAY'S SESSION... we acknowledged our deep connections to each other, to all other people, and to our Unitarian Universalist faith. We discussed ways our connections call us as faithful leaders to honor the UUs who came before us and to support those who will join and follow us. We concluded the Signs of Our Faith program by celebrating the UU legacy we carry.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... your stole. What does the stole symbolize to you? On a more practical note: Where will you keep your stole? When will you use it as a sign of faithful leadership, after this program ends? Talk to the religious educator at the congregation about upcoming leadership opportunities—times when the children in the Signs of Our Faith group might wear a stole.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Find out about leaders who came before you in other groups or communities to which you belong. If you are part of a dance troupe, who started the troupe? Why was it

important to them? Is your school named after someone? Who was this person? What did they do that deserved the honor of having a school named after them?

Family Discovery. Talk to the elders in your family. What dreams did they have when they were your age? Ask adults for stories about how they made one of their dreams come true. Who supported them? Who told them "I believe in you" and encouraged them not to give up?

Family Ritual. We can use a mirror to look at ourselves honestly. We can also use a mirror to help us dream of how we would like to be seen. For example, look in the mirror and see yourself as a brave person. You might make a morning glance into the mirror your new ritual. You will see that you that you look fine and are ready to start the day, and that you are a good person and ready to live and show your faith today.

Family Game. Once a month, hold a UU history moment before dinner. Take turns giving a short presentation on one of our UU ancestors, whom you can learn about from sources such as the [Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography](#) (at www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/), Tapestry of Faith stories (search the [Tapestry of Faith curriculum database](#) (at www.uua.org/re/tapestry/index.shtml) on the UUA website), and books from the UUA Bookstore, like [Black Pioneers in a White Denomination](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=553) or [This Day in Unitarian Universalist History](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=644).

Leadership Suggestion. What can someone your age do in your congregation to show you are a faithful young leader? Does the congregation need greeters, ushers, or people to shelve and straighten items in a library or supply room? Invite friends from the Signs of Our Faith group to join you. Find ways to welcome new young leaders into your circle, too.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION – SUSTENANCE FOR THE JOURNEY

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Ingredients for snack mix, and large bowls
- Plastic or paper bags for individual snack mix
- Ribbon or paper, and writing instruments
- Stoles

- Optional: Art materials to decorate small paper bags

Preparation for Activity

- Plan a time when children can personally give individual bags of snack mix to other congregational members. Calculate how many bags the group will need to make. If you plan to hand out bags during or after a worship service, make sure you will have enough for first time visitors, as well. You might have the children distribute a bag to each child, or each family, in the RE program at the close of a morning's session.
- Purchase ingredients for snack mix. Take care to follow your congregation's policy on nuts or other foods, and to check with parents/caregivers about children's food allergies or restrictions.
- Cut lengths of ribbon to tie around individual snack bags, or strips of paper to insert into the bags. Make these long and wide enough for children to write a phrase or sentence. Set the ribbon or paper on work tables, with crayons or markers. (Only non-toxic markers should be used on paper that will be inserted into a bag of snacks.)
- Pour snack mix ingredients into large bowls, and set aside.
- Post blank newsprint.
- Optional: If you will put the snack mix in small paper bags, provide additional decorating materials and plan for extra time so children can decorate the bags with inspiring messages and artwork.
- Optional: If you wish to give each participant an individual snack mix bag at the close of this session, make them during this activity. Write a message for each child to encourage their individual, lifelong faith journeys.

Description of Activity

Children stuff snack-size bags with snack mix and words of inspiration.

Gather children at work tables. Ask them what they would take with them to sustain themselves on a long journey. Affirm their answers. Then, ask what they think people could use to sustain themselves on a spiritual journey. What sorts of things might be like food or water for their spirits? Remind them about the story of Antoinette Brown and Olympia Brown. What did each of

them give the other to sustain them on the long road toward living out their faith? Affirm answers such as "support," "encouragement," "being an example/role model," "showing it is possible to succeed at a hard goal."

Invite children to help sustain congregants on their faith journey. Say, in these words or your own:

All of us are on a faith journey. We will all find our own ways to live our faith. It is a long journey. What can we do to sustain the people in our congregation on each of their long faith journeys? Let's mix a snack mix to sustain the body, and we'll add some words of inspiration to sustain the spirit.

Ask the children to help you think of some words they could write on ribbon (or paper) to tie around (or put inside) a packet of snack mix. You might prompt with single words, such as "love," or short phrases, such as "Your spirit is beautiful;" "You are a faith leader." Write the words on newsprint.

Have children write words or phrases on ribbon to tie around bags or on paper to insert into bags.

Set out bowls of snack mix ingredients. Make sure you have enough for everyone.

If each child is making more than one or two snack mix bags, collect all the finished bags in baskets.

Lead the children to put on their stoles and walk together to the location where you will distribute bags.

Afterward, talk as a group about the experience. How did people react to being offered a bag of snacks? Was any child asked to explain the gift? How did it feel to give them out?

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 16: STORY: ANTOINETTE BROWN AND OLYMPIA BROWN

Today we will hear about two girls from long ago, who both had the last name of Brown. As you hear the story, see if you can notice other things they had in common, besides a name.

Let's go back in time together, about 200 years, to meet Antoinette Brown. When Antoinette was a young girl, her faith was important to her. The way she wanted to show her faith was to share it with other people and encourage them to live *their* faith, in their own way. She decided to become a minister. But she was told, "No, that is impossible." Because in those days in this country, there were no women ministers.

People laughed at Antoinette. They discouraged her. They told her she was being foolish and should give up this idea. But her mother supported her. Antoinette's mother pinned a white ribbon on her dress and said, "You can do it. I believe in you." When Antoinette Brown felt discouraged, she would touch the ribbon and remember that she had support.

There were many obstacles. Antoinette's family could not afford to send her to college. Antoinette touched the white ribbon. She found a job, and worked for three years until she could pay for college herself. She attended Oberlin College, the first U.S. college to admit women and blacks. Oberlin was proud to support people who others thought not worthy of college. But when Antoinette asked to enter a program to become a minister, Oberlin College said, "No. That's impossible." I bet Antoinette Brown touched her white ribbon then. She did not back down. Eventually, she entered the program, but once her studies were done, Oberlin College refused to grant her a degree. Do you think she touched her ribbon?

Antoinette found other people who supported her. Friends invited her to speak in public and in churches. She gave speeches for women's rights and other social justice causes and she inspired and supported many people even without being in a church. Seventeen years

after her mother had pinned the white ribbon on her, in 1853, Antoinette was ordained. It is believed that she was the first woman ordained as a minister in our nation. She was a minister of a Congregationalist church, but she left it and became a Unitarian minister. She is one of our faith ancestors.

Reverend Antoinette Brown liked to give speeches to women in college. She remembered the obstacles she had faced to become a minister. She wanted to support young women with their goals, even when others might have said to them, "No. That's impossible." Becoming a minister had been one sign of Antoinette Brown's faith. Now, encouraging other young women who came after her was another.

One time, a young student invited Reverend Antoinette Brown to speak at Antioch College. The student's name was Olympia Brown. They shared the same last name, but they were not related to each other. Olympia Brown had never heard a woman minister before. Olympia told Antoinette that she wanted to be a minister, too. Like Antoinette, she wanted to live her faith by working to make the world a better place for all people. But, Olympia Brown had not been sure a woman could become a minister. People had said to her, "No. That's impossible."

Antoinette Brown gave Olympia Brown a white ribbon. Maybe she told her, "You can do it. I believe in you."

Olympia was ordained as a Universalist minister in 1863.

These two women were some of the first women ministers in our country. They are our faith ancestors. Like us, they had great hopes for the future. Like us, they accepted the mantle of faithful leadership. When we show these and other signs of our faith, we honor their memory and strengthen our connection to our UU legacy.

It takes courage to live your faith, day in and day out. It takes extra courage when people keep telling you the way you want to live your faith is wrong or impossible. How much courage did Antoinette Brown and Olympia Brown have?

SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: SESSION 16:

HANDOUT 1: A FAITHFUL UU LEADER IS...

Someone who...

- ... cares for others.
- ... understands the importance of being in beloved community.
- ... tries to make fair group decisions.
- ... recognizes the value of each person's uniqueness.
- ... is not afraid to ask questions.
- ... realizes they are on a faith journey and supports others on their faith journey.
- ... reveres life.
- ... shares willingly with others.
- ... tries to live a good life, where their good deeds will outlive them.
- ... welcomes new members to the community.
- ... is a good steward of their congregation or UU community.
- ... witnesses for justice.
- ... treasures their connections to our UU past and UU future.
- ... accepts the mantle of leadership when their faith community needs them.

FIND OUT MORE

Science is interested in the theory of six degrees of separation. Cnet.com's article, [Proof of Six Degrees of Separation](http://news.cnet.com/8301-13953_3-9894881-80.html) (at news.cnet.com/8301-13953_3-9894881-80.html), analyzes data from Microsoft Messenger to look at connections in the virtual world. A BBC documentary, [Six Degrees of Separation](http://www.documentary-log.com/six-degrees-of-separation/) (at www.documentary-log.com/six-degrees-of-separation/), is about Network Theory, a new branch of science that stemmed from research on six degrees.

UU camps and conference centers offer programs for young people that strengthen their connections to one another and to Unitarian Universalism while building leadership skills. Find programs by age group and

location by visiting [The Council of Unitarian Universalist Camps and Conferences](http://www.cu2c2.org/) (at www.cu2c2.org/).

Read online about many Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists who demonstrated faithful leadership, in the [Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography](http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/) (at www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/) or the [Harvard Square Library](http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org) (at www.harvardsquarelibrary.org). The Harvard Square Library has posted an [article on Antoinette Brown Blackwell](http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/UIA%20Online/95blackwellab.html) (at www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/UIA%20Online/95blackwellab.html) and an [illustrated autobiography of Olympia Brown](http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/olympiabrown/home.html) (at www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/olympiabrown/home.html).