

TOOLBOX OF FAITH
A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children
Grades 4-5



BY KATE TWEEDIE COVEY

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For my father, who taught me how to hammer a nail and how to value our faith.

I grew up enjoying the smells, sounds, and sights of the hardware stores and the workshop where my father built furniture. I would like our children to feel the same sense of comfort, pride, and challenge as they build their faith.

— Kate Tweedie Erslev

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THE PROGRAM

The expectations of life depend upon diligence; the mechanic who would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools. — Confucius

Toolbox of Faith invites fourth- and fifth- grade participants to reflect on the qualities of our Unitarian Universalist faith, such as integrity, courage, and love, as tools they can use in living their lives and building their own faith. Each of the 16 sessions uses a tool as a metaphor for an important quality of our faith such as reflection (symbolized by a mirror), flexibility (duct tape), and justice (a flashlight).

GOALS

Reflecting on the qualities (tools) of our faith, children and leaders gain insight into what makes our faith important in their lives, and how they can grow in our faith.

LEADERS

Leaders are an important component of the Toolbox of Faith program. Leaders are not recruited to "indoctrinate" children, but rather to share the journey as seekers with the children. Leaders are not in the role of experts handing down information but are co-explorers and "beloved adults." Children value adults who are interested in their opinions and lives. They will reward those who work with them with trust, sharing, and affection.

PARTICIPANTS

This program is written for fourth- and fifth-grade children. With some adaptation, it can be used with younger or older participants.

In her book, *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd lists characteristics of the older school-age child. A summary follows. Comments relating these characteristics specifically to the Toolbox of Faith curriculum appear in parentheses.

At the age of nine, ten, or eleven, a child:

- Uses gross and fine motor skills, which are almost fully developed
- Has fully developed vision (by age seven to age nine) and a highly developed central nervous system (by age ten to age twelve)

- Needs adequate exercise, food, and rest (during religious education programming as well as in school, at home, in sports, and at play)
- Enters puberty toward the end of school-age years (particularly girls)
- Is influenced by media images and may be at early risk for eating disorders (So, Toolbox of Faith can be an important antidote to pervasive, intrusive media images.)
- Engages in logical thinking based on concrete operational thinking
- Practices cognitive skills of acquiring, storing, and retrieving information (Toolbox of Faith sessions offer factual information, stories, and specific details appropriate for their cognitive development.)
- Develops specific learning styles such as an auditory, visual, sensory, and/or kinesthetic style of learning (Each session provides activities to address a variety of learning styles.)
- Exhibits domain-specific intelligences such as verbal/linguistic, musical/rhythmic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, or naturalist
- Uses student identity and personal, informed knowledge as sources of self-esteem (Toolbox of Faith gives children opportunities to name what they already know, in Council Circle discussions.)
- Engages peers and learns through mutual friendship (Toolbox of Faith builds community.)
- Comprehends the perspective of others (The Council Circle format encourages children's discussion and reflection.)
- Engages in gender-segregated play
- Works on developing racial, ethnic, and gender identities and seeks peers' affirmation of these identities
- Learns and negotiates early understandings of social scripts about sexuality
- Shows interest in moral issues of fairness, justice, and care (addressed extensively in this program)
- Is energized by developing rules to assure fairness, in work or play (The games in Toolbox

of Faith can give children opportunities to make the rules.)

- Uses the Golden Rule (treating others as one would like to be treated)
- Wrestles with moral dilemmas in relationships (highlighted in many of the sessions)
- Demonstrates awareness of a culture of violence and is receptive to strategies for personal and global nonviolence and peace
- Exhibits increasing awareness of societal moral issues and interest in helping to solve community problems (Children's awareness and interest can be engaged by the Faith in Action suggestions in this program.)
- Shows interest in concrete aspects of faith and religion (This program helps participants understand and give voice to what Unitarian Universalism means.)
- "Does" religion or spirituality by participating in traditions (Each session opens and closes with traditions of our faith.)
- Ponders increasingly complex moral and spiritual questions (such as those posed in the Council Circles)
- Explores religious or spiritual ideas as a way of deepening faith (a major purpose of the program)
- Enters Fowler's mythical-literal stage of faith development (Toolbox of Faith provides engaging stories which are the basis of a mythical-literal framework of understanding.)

Hurd's book also suggests some ways religious educators, leaders, and parents can offer support to the developing, older school-age child. Comments specific to Toolbox of Faith again appear in parentheses.

Healthy strategies for support include:

- Provide for the overall care of physical needs, including nutrition, exercise, and sleep (The games in each session provide an outlet for the energy that is typical of this age.)
- Counteract school and societal pressures by affirming the child's developing body
- Support self-esteem
- Continue to provide time for play and hands-on activities (Sessions allow for games and expressive options, such as water play and skits.)

- Allow the child to be active and limit extended times of sitting and listening. (Let these sessions be different from school learning, with active games and Council Circle.)
- Encourage the natural impulse to learn and present challenges that promote thinking skills. (Some of the Council Circle questions are conundrums which challenge adults, too!)
- Support different learning styles such as auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and/or sensory (A variety of learning styles are addressed in the variety of options in each session.)
- Help learners develop their own organizational strategies
- Encourage problem solving and discussion. (This program helps participants develop inner resources.)
- Allow time to ponder large, complex questions
- Help with follow-through on projects and ideas
- Support interest in peers and intervene appropriately against exclusion
- Allow opportunities to practice social problem solving and assume others' perspectives
- Allow time with like-identity peers and support or facilitate mixed-peer times; recognize the unique needs of multiracial or transracially adopted children
- Affirm student identities as important
- Provide honest conversation about sexuality and cultural scripts about sexuality
- Support the natural impulse for rule making and negotiation of fairness with peers
- Recognize that children need to work out relational complexities as a part of moral development
- Provide alternatives to the culture of violence (Studying the qualities of our faith can do just that.)
- Provide many ways to contribute to the community (The program provides many opportunities for children to demonstrate their responsibility and leadership skills.)
- Provide opportunities to "do religion" and be part of a faith community
- Welcome large spiritual questions and encourage questioning of religion

- Model lifelong spiritual development
- Provide encouragement and love
- Support the whole child as an individual and as a family member (Use the Taking It Home resources and Faith in Action activities to build home-congregation connections.)

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

In her book, *Welcoming Children with Special Needs: a Guidebook for Faith Communities*, Sally Patton explains how we practice and deepen our own faith when we work to integrate all participants in a religious education program:

Ministering to children with differences helps us be more creative in our ministry to all children and reaffirm our beliefs. Lessons of compassion, caring, and acceptance benefit us all, young and old alike... . We deepen our faith when we embrace and fight for the vision of an inclusive community.

Patton continues:

(We) ... have to learn from these people about compassion and forgiveness, persistence and courage, and most importantly, the wholeness of their spirit and the gifts they offer if we allow them to flourish. Listening to children's stories encourages us to see each child's uniqueness rather than their limitations . . . Parenting, loving, befriending, and ministering to children with special needs changes people. How we handle the change will either mire us in the prevalent belief system about disability and limitations, or it will set us free and alter our ideas about who we are and why we are here.

Patton's book does not merely inspire, it provides a strategy for congregations to engage in to institutionalize and internalize the spirit and justice of an inclusive faith community that deepens the faith of all participants. Consider reading this book and sharing it with a broad spectrum of congregational leadership.

FAMILIES

The loving family unit, of whatever configuration, is the primary source of spiritual nurture in a child's life. For parents and/or caregivers to engage with the program in the family setting, it is vital for them to know the theme of each session and something of its content. Each session includes a Taking It Home section for the religious educator or leader to customize and share with families as a handout or e-mail. Taking It Home sections summarize each session's goals and describe stories, activities, and other aspects of the session to provide

background for family conversations and activities at home.

Here's the usual conversation, oft repeated in religious education programs everywhere:

Parent: What did you do today?

Child: Nothing.

Parent: Did you have fun?

Child: Yeah.

Parent: (pause) Oh, ummm ... fine.

With Taking It Home, a parent will have enough details to ask an engaging question such as, "What did you think about the Cellist of Sarajevo story today?" Or, "How do you play Cloaks and Daggers?" Or, "Do you remember the story of Aunt Kim who protested at the Pentagon?" In this way, parents and children may learn from each other.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

All 16 sessions in Toolbox of Faith follow the same structure. Between an opening ritual and the Council Circle (which incorporates reflection, a sharing of joys and concerns, and a closing ritual), a number of activities guide participants to investigate a particular facet of Unitarian Universalist faith. Each session includes hands-on exploration of a Tool of the Day and engagement with a central story.

Each session offers at least one idea for a Faith in Action activity. These activities are optional, and the time you will need for them is not calculated into a 60-minute session. Nevertheless, Faith in Action is an important element of the Tapestry of Faith curriculum series. You can incorporate Faith in Action into regular sessions, if you have time. You can create Faith in Action activities for the group to complete in one, additional meeting. Longer-term Faith in Action activities may require advance planning, additional meeting times, and the involvement of congregants or community members outside your group. Before you commit to a long-term Faith in Action project, make sure you obtain the support of congregational leadership and the children's families.

Core activities in Toolbox of Faith often include options. For example, an activity in which participants process a story's message by playing a game may suggest several different games. Choose the game(s) you will use according to the time you will have, the group's interests, and the learning styles you observe in the group. Let these factors also guide your use of any alternate activities suggested for a session. Optional and alternate activities may also prove useful outside of the

Toolbox of Faith program. Consider using some of them at family retreats, intergenerational dinners, or other gatherings where some interesting child-friendly programming is needed.

Quotes

One or two quotes introduce the subject of each session. You may decide to read a quote aloud to your group as an entry point to the session. However, the quotes are intended primarily for leaders and are not always at a child's level of understanding or experience.

Co-leaders may like to discuss a quote as part of preparation for a session. Exploring a quote together can help you each feel grounded in the ideas and activities you will present and can help a team of leaders get "on the same page." Quotes are included in the Taking It Home section for families to consider.

Introduction

The Introduction gives an overview of the session concepts, explains how you can use the activities to teach the concepts, and provides tips on what to aim for and what to watch out for in planning and leading the session. In addition, the Introduction presents the Tool of the Day and the quality of Unitarian Universalist faith it represents; for example, "The mirror symbolizes reflection."

Goals

The Goals section provides general participant outcomes for the session. Reviewing the goals will help you connect a session's content and methodologies with the four strands of the Tapestry of Faith religious education programs: ethical, spiritual, Unitarian Universalist identity, and faith development. As you plan a session, 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 goals for the session and the activities that will serve them best.

Learning Objectives

Each session includes Learning Objectives. These will help you see how specific activities connect to specific, intended outcomes and support the overall goals of the session; for example, "Participants will learn a song in which the hammer is used as a metaphor for justice."

Session-at-a-Glance

The Session-at-a-Glance table lists the session activities in a suggested order, and provides an estimated time for completing each activity to conduct a 60-minute session. The table includes all of the core activities from the Opening through the Council Circle/Closing.

The table also shows Faith in Action: Ideas. Note that the time required for your Faith in Action activities depends entirely on the projects you choose to do and is not included in the calculation of a core, 60-minute session.

The Session-at-a-Glance table also presents any alternate activities, with their estimated times. Alternate activities can be substituted for core activities or added to your core session if you have time.

Spiritual Preparation for the Session

Taking five or ten minutes to center yourself within the session's purpose and content will support and free you to be present with the children and focus on providing the best possible learning experience.

Each session provides a short spiritual preparation exercise to help you focus on the quality of Unitarian Universalist faith being introduced, engage the issue in your own life, and get ready to bring the topic to the group in an authentic manner. The exercise will guide you to call forth your own life experiences, beliefs, and spirituality and relate these to the session you are about to lead. In this way, leaders may experience teaching as an experience in spiritual growth and faith development.

Session Plan

The session plan presents every element of the session in detail, in the sequence established in the Session-at-a-Glance table. The session plan also presents a Taking It Home section with extension activities for families, a Leader Reflection and Planning section, a Resources section, and all the stories, handouts, and other leader resources you need to lead all of the session activities. Finally, under "Find Out More" you will find additional sources to help you, the leader, further explore session topics. It can be useful to scan the resources in "Find Out More" before you lead a session.

If you are reading Toolbox of Faith online, you can move as you wish among a session's elements — Opening, Closing, Faith in Action, Activity 4, Resources section, the session's core story, etc.

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

Welcoming and Entering.

Guidance is provided for greeting, orienting, and immediately engaging children as they arrive for each

session. For a first or second session, Welcoming and Entering may involve making and putting on nametags. You may wish to display the Tool of the Day and the Toolbox of Our Faith poster during the Welcoming and Entering time.

Shape the Welcoming and Entering activities to suit the needs of the group and the limitations of your physical space.

Opening.

Each session begins with a chalice-lighting, a sharing of opening words, and an introduction of the Tool(s) of the Day. To ensure safety, obtain an LED/battery-operated flaming chalice or use a symbolic chalice.

The Opening is a time for centering, both for individuals and the group. Take the liberty you need to shape an opening ritual that suits the group, works within space limitations, and reflects the culture and practices of your congregation.

Activities.

Up to five activities form the core content of each session. While you are free to order the activities as you wish, presenting activities in the sequence suggested will help you provide a coherent learning experience. The variety of activities presented within each session addresses different learning styles you may find among participants. The suggested sequence alternates listening and talking, sitting still and moving about, individual exploration and team or whole group exploration, to provide variation that will help keep nine-, ten- and eleven-year-olds engaged and on track. Pedagogically, the sequence of activities is designed to activate prior knowledge, pique interest, engage children in experiential learning including hands-on interaction with the topic, and help them process and apply their observations and new knowledge. As you mix and match activities to form a session that will work well for you and suit the needs of the group, keep in mind the benefits of a well-paced session that includes different kinds of activities.

Welcome and Entering activities are suggested to meaningfully use the time, before a session, when individual participants "straggle in."

The Opening includes an opening ritual and introduces the Tool of the Day.

The next activity usually presents the session's core story.

Games and physical activities are offered next. In most sessions, multiple options are presented for games. Choose according to the learning styles, developmental readiness, energy level, and other aspects of the

particular children in the group. Also consider whether you will have time for just one game, or more. For some games, we suggest adaptations for children with mobility, cognition, or other limitations under the heading, Including All Participants.

After participants have let off some steam, a personal expression activity involves them in music, art, crafts, or role-play.

Finally, participants gather in a Council Circle. A sharing circle is becoming central in many Unitarian Universalist religious education programs. This activity incorporates rituals of reflection, sharing joys and concerns, and a Closing. Sharing, reflecting, and listening are important religious skills to cultivate with our children. Research and observation increasingly indicate that children do not automatically share intimate thoughts with their friends. Some authors describe a "code" which makes sharing feelings, especially for boys, something that is not done easily. Disruption, teasing, and fidgeting can be manifestations of the discomfort some children feel when sharing is imposed before they are ready.

Therefore, this program engages children in active play at the beginning of the session, then provides expressive options, and finally invites reflection and sharing in Council Circle. Conclude the Council Circle, and the session, each time with a closing ritual. To be most effective, a Closing should be a standard one that the group uses each time they meet. Find options for closing words and songs in the Council Circle activities in every session. Or, create a Closing with elements that are part of your congregational culture.

Materials for Activity.

Provided for each activity, this checklist tells you the supplies you will need.

Preparation for Activity.

Review the bulleted preparation "to do" list for each activity at least one week ahead of a session. The list provides all the advance work you need to do for the activity, from securing parent permissions for an off-site walk to downloading leader resources, practicing telling a story aloud, and organizing art materials.

Description of Activity.

This section provides detailed directions for implementing the activity. For many activities, the description includes a rationale which links the activity thematically to the rest of the session and to the entire program.

Read the activity descriptions carefully during your planning process so that you understand each activity

and its purpose. Later, when you are leading the group, use the description as a step-by-step how-to manual.

Including All Participants.

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

Faith in Action.

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

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

Several ideas for Faith in Action projects are presented in each session. Let these stimulate you to devise short- or long-term Faith in Action activities that will help you make session themes come alive for the children in your group. Take advantage of the expertise and interests of members of your congregation, the opportunities for service and education available in your community, and the Internet.

Most Faith in Action activities will require special arrangements to be made in advance. As you begin planning a Faith in Action project, you may find it useful to develop a materials checklist, a list of preparations to make ahead of time, and a detailed activity description, as we have done for the core and alternate activities in this curriculum.

Leader Reflection and Planning.

This section provides guidance to help co-leaders process the session after it is concluded and use their reflections to shape future sessions.

Taking It Home.

Taking It Home resources for each session are designed to help families extend their children's religious education experiences. For each session, download the Taking It Home section and adapt it to reflect the actual activities you have included in the session.

Taking It Home resources may include games, conversation topics, ideas for incorporating Unitarian

Universalist rituals into the home environment, and/or book or online sources families can use to further explore session themes or stories. After you have customized the Taking It Home section, print and photocopy it for children to bring home, or send it to all parents/caregivers as a group e-mail.

Alternate Activities.

Some sessions offer alternate activities. You can substitute these for core session activities, or add them to the core activities. Some alternate activities are simpler versions of a core activity; some require more time than a core activity; some are particularly suited to adaptation for developmental or ability differences among the children in the group. Alternate activities have their own materials checklists, preparation lists, and descriptions.

Resources.

In a session's Resources section you will find information you need to prepare for the session, and the resources you will need to lead any element of the session, including:

- Stories — the full text of the central story and any other stories that you will need for any session activity
- Handouts — any material that needs to be printed and photocopied for participants to use in a session activity
- Leader Resources — additional documents you may need to lead the session activities; for example, a recipe, song lyrics, a puzzle for you to print out and cut into pieces, or an illustration to show the group as a hard copy or on a computer

Under the heading "Find Out More," you will find selected resources to help you further explore session topics. These might include book or DVD titles, links to websites, or detailed biographical information about Unitarians, Universalists, or Unitarian Universalists, or other individuals mentioned in the session. You may find it useful to scan the Find Out More section before leading the session.

LEADER GUIDELINES

While you will find a full range of options for Closings in each session's Council Circle activity, it is recommended that you decide on a standard opening and closing ritual to use in each session, in collaboration with your co-leaders at the start of the program.

Keep Openings and Closings simple so participants can remember them, from session to session. It can be as

simple as a chant or brief words. Use the ritual to provide continuity for participants with discontinuous attendance. Another way to provide continuity is to display the Toolbox of Our Faith poster, adding a picture of the new tool each session. Find instructions for making the poster in Session 1: Faith, both in the Welcoming and Entering section and in Activity 4: Toolbox of Our Faith poster and Group Covenant. Over the course of the program, the poster provides a visual reminder of the session themes and tools.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Session-at-a-Glance section suggests the duration of core activities for a one-hour session. Be aware of the flow of the session and maximize time for "teachable moments" as group interest allows. For example, if participants are intrigued by the story, "The Cellist of Sarajevo," because someone is taking cello lessons or comes from Eastern Europe, allow the discussion to flow. The ultimate goal is to encourage participants' reflection on and development of the qualities of our faith, not to be locked into conducting any specific activity.

A session isn't a race, and shouldn't feel like one. On the other hand, participants need to feel excited about attending and being part of the group. By meeting their need for challenge, physical activity, and enjoyable moments, we build a sense of community that will draw them into wanting to partake in the program. If the children don't come, there will be no opportunity for teachable moments. So, if a group is reluctant to engage in reflection and discussion, leaders may wish to expand the games or the artistic or musical expression activities to build community, at first, and gradually increase time for shared reflection and insight over the course of the Toolbox of Faith program.

A session can easily be expanded beyond an hour by increasing the games or expressive activities that you offer. If you have less than an hour, you may need to skip an activity entirely. For example, in the integrity session and with an active group, you may choose to leave out all of the expressive options (building compasses in this case) in order to invite participants to move about in the games to understand bodily what it means to go in a certain direction. This may help focus them on what it means to hold your own course no matter what direction people want you to go. On the other hand, a leader with a quieter group or a group that includes children who cannot meaningfully participate in movement activities may wish to omit the games and focus on the compass-building.

When scheduling the program, remember to include times for congregational traditions around holidays.

Being part of the life of the congregation is as important as holding religious education sessions in the age group setting. Don't miss intergenerational services, such as Flower Communion. In addition, you may wish to schedule less formal mornings to celebrate themes such as winter holidays, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, and Valentine's Day.

The Toolbox of Faith program lends itself well to a retreat format. The tool theme could be used as part of a day-long family program which ends with building something for the congregation, such as a picnic table or playground. It would also complement a Habitat for Humanity congregation-wide program.

BEFORE YOU START

These real tools will be needed for the sessions:

Session 1: Faith — Toolbox and Ruler

Session 2: Questioning — Magnifying Glass

Session 3: Integrity — Compass

Session 4: Flexibility — Duct Tape

Session 5: Reflection — Mirror

Session 6: Expression — Paintbrush

Session 7: Democratic Process — Chalk

Session 8: Power — Hammer

Session 9: Spirit of Life — Canteen

Session 10: Courage — Saddlebags (or bike panniers, or backpacks)

Session 11: Listening — Stethoscope

Session 12: Humor — Sandpaper

Session 13: Love — Gloves

Session 14: Justice — Flashlight

Session 15: Atonement — Level

Session 16: Resiliency — Hard Hat

You can keep most of these tools in a real toolbox and bring one tool out at each session. Another option is to simply present one tool at a time. For many sessions, you will need more than one of the same tool — ideally, enough for all participants to use.

The Session 1, leader resource, Introductory Letter to Participants and Families includes a list of the tools needed for the program. You may wish to customize and mail or e-mail this letter to families several weeks before the program begins, to build your inventory of tools well in advance.

Before Session 1, create the basic Toolbox of Our Faith poster. This poster will eventually include a representation of each tool and quality of faith you cover in the program, so leave room for adding on. Black foam core would be dramatic, but plain cardboard from the side of an appliance box is just as good, and lends itself to a hardware store atmosphere. You might cut it out in the shape of a toolbox, or paste an illustration or photo of a toolbox in the center. Hardware store catalogs may provide pictures that can be used as a border.

Find a place to display the Toolbox of Our Faith poster for the duration of this program, or each time the group meets.

Developing children's Unitarian Universalist identity is an explicit goal of the Tapestry of Faith curricula, and represents one strand of every curriculum's purpose along with children's ethical, spiritual, and faith development. As you lead Toolbox of Faith, you will have opportunities to nurture children's Unitarian Universalist identities by helping them understand, affirm, and choose to act on the seven Principles of our faith. In Toolbox of Faith, themes, stories, and activities are linked with particular Principles as well as Sources of our faith. If you are not very familiar with them, review the Principles and Sources before the program begins. This will help you authentically incorporate them — and, by extension, Unitarian Universalist identity development — into the sessions you lead.

Certain sessions require longer-term advance planning:

Session 3 offers several optional activities that require high-powered magnets as components of a compass. If you will need the magnets, order them well in advance.

For Session 8, you may wish to invite a song leader and/or a musical accompanist to teach and lead "If I Had a Hammer."

For Session 11, you may wish to order a listening tool. An auto mechanic's listening tool would be ideal and is available on the web. A medical stethoscope is another option. A toy spy listening device, a seashell, I-pod earphones, or a cupped hand could do in a pinch.

Make sure the meeting space includes worktables for arts expression activities; access to a large, open space for active games; and an area where children can sit comfortably in a circle on the floor (as they are able) for the Council Circle activity that ends each session. You may like to use the Council Circle area for Openings and storytelling, as well.

PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

There are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant to affirm and promote:

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

Unitarian Universalism draws from many sources:

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

RESOURCES

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

[The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children](#) by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar *Second Edition* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003)

[Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities](#) by Sally Patton (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004)

Games

The Outrageous Outdoor Games Book by Bob Greyson (Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, Inc., 2001) includes more than 100 group projects, games and activities for outside experiences. These include activities for multiple intelligences and a variety of learning styles. All games are easy to play, require little or no preparation, and are readily adaptable to a variety of situations and skill levels. Step-by-step instructions are provided for each game. Great for the whole group, small and large collaborative groups, and community-building activities.

Junkyard Sports by Bernie DeKoven (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 2005) offers 75 innovative, creative demonstration games using nontraditional approaches but outlined in the modes of six traditional team sports including soccer, baseball, and volleyball. Games are geared to be adapted and modified by the participants across a wide range of ages and abilities. Fosters leadership, compassion, and cooperation as participants create and adapt games.

Arts and Spirituality

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

FACILITATOR FEEDBACK FORM

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Resource Development Office
Ministries and Faith Development
Unitarian Universalist Association
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1409
religioueducation@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:

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

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation or group:

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

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

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

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

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

SESSION 1: FAITH (TOOLBOX AND RULER)

INTRODUCTION

It is not the style of clothes one wears, neither the kind of automobile one drives, nor the amount of money one has in the bank, that counts. These mean nothing. It is simply service that measures success. — George Washington Carver (1864-1943), horticulturist, chemist, and educator who started his life as a slave in the United States

The toolbox symbolizes our Unitarian Universalist faith. In this session, there are opportunities to reflect on what we might put in a toolbox of our faith and what tools our faith can provide. In addition to the toolbox, this session introduces a ruler to illustrate the rules and promises that are decided together. Discussion may include the nature of our faith as something we decide together. Allow time for participants to discuss the differences between deciding together versus being told what to do. Emphasize the meaning of "to covenant" as "to promise together." Participants will create their own group covenant.

This session introduces the Toolbox of Our Faith poster that provides continuity as a visual representation of the metaphorical tools used throughout the program. See the Introduction to the Toolbox of Faith program ("Before You Start") for suggestions on how to make and decorate this poster.

In advance of this session, you may wish to customize and distribute the leader resource, Introductory Letter to Participants and Families. The letter describes the Toolbox of Faith program and makes a request for donations of actual tools you will need for this and future sessions.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism is a faith we build together
- Give participants experience in the Unitarian Universalist Principle of the right of conscience

and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large

- Affirm the Unitarian Universalist Principle that we are part of an interdependent web
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Link the metaphor of tools with the concept of tools of our faith
- Learn about the tools for life that we can gain from our faith, such as courage, questioning and love
- Learn to make rules together
- Explore the meaning of a covenant as promises we make together
- Experience the fun of acting out a classic folk tale that embodies the spirit of cooperation, the basis for making promises together

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — The Difference between Heaven and Hell	5
Activity 2: Eating in Heaven and Hell Game	15
Activity 3: Expression Music	10
Activity 4: Toolbox of Our Faith poster and Group Covenant	15
Activity 5: Council Circle	15
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on faith, you may wish to reflect on how you feel about the seven Principles that our congregations have covenanted to create together.

- What ways have you tried to live by them and succeeded?
- What ways have you failed to live by them?
- How are they difficult to follow? Do they come naturally?

Our Principles are not beliefs but promises to each other that we try to live up to. Aim to guide this session with the idea of covenanting in mind.

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us — adults and children — has differing opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to explore their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Large sheet of poster board
- Hardware store ads for cutting out pictures of tools, toolboxes, tool belts, etc. to decorate the poster
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors) and glue sticks

Preparation for Activity

- You may wish to cut the poster board into the shape of a toolbox. In large letters, label it, Toolbox of Faith. Begin decorating the edges with a few pictures from hardware store ads, or wait for the participants to begin the decorating. Be sure to leave a large area where, in future sessions, you will add visual representation of up to 16 tools and write the qualities of faith each tool represents.
- Set out the poster board, hardware store ads, scissors, and glue at a worktable that can accommodate all participants.

Description of Activity

This section is intended for the time before the beginning of a session when participants arrive individually over a period of time (that is, "straggle in").

If the group arrives together from worship or another scheduled event, conduct this poster activity within the session, as part of Activity 4: Toolbox of Our Faith poster and Group Covenant.

Welcome participants as they arrive. Introduce them to the title of the program, Toolbox of Faith, and ask them to help create the poster. Have them find and cut out tools and hardware paraphernalia from hardware store ads and paste them on the border of the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tools of the Day — a toolbox and a ruler

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in your Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Participants will learn about the tools for life that we can gain from our faith, such as courage, questioning, and love.

Participants will learn about making rules together, and learn the meaning of covenant as promises we make together.

Invite participants to sit in a circle in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Introduce the Tools of the Day — a toolbox and a ruler. You might ask, "What do you think makes these a Unitarian Universalist's tool and toolbox?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that truly there is no one answer, and then explain that the toolbox represents our faith, Unitarian Universalism, and it is the name of the program, Toolbox of Faith.

You may say:

During our time together we will discover all sorts of different tools of our faith, things that we learn about and adopt for our own growth. Examples include the tool of courage, the tool of questioning, and the tool of justice. Each session, we will be talking about a different tool.

In this first session, the tool is a ruler. The ruler represents how we make our rules. Someone decided to use this measure of twelve inches as a standard. It may have been the length of a particular king's foot. Then, everyone agreed to use the foot as a measure.

Unitarian Universalism is a faith that values the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. Just as a ruler was once agreed upon, we try to make our rules together and vote on them together. We also try to make

promises to each other. This is called a covenant. A covenant answers the questions, "Why are we Unitarian Universalists? What is it that binds us together as a congregation and a faith?"

Read or share the words that introduce the Unitarian Universalist Principles: "We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote" Then tell the group, in your own words:

This is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding. One of the sources of our faith is "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." This means that each of us has experience with the Spirit of Life. Because of that direct experience, rather than needing to rely solely on the experience of someone else, we each can contribute to making the rules and promises. Once again, the covenant that our congregations adopted gives us a say, or a vote, in the things that concern us. That's a tool of our faith, that ruler that each of us helps make.

Pass around the tools. As children pass them, invite them to share an experience they have had with a ruler and/or toolbox.

Collect the tools and extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[The Difference between Heaven and Hell](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Two wooden spoons (or other long spoons), duct tape or masking tape, and two rulers, dowels, or yardsticks

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story, "The Difference between Heaven and Hell," and prepare to share it with the group. For a more dramatic storytelling, gather the props you will use.
- Gather participants in a comfortable configuration for listening to a story.

Description of Activity

Through this folk tale, the participants will understand the value of cooperation, a key quality of making promises.

Introduce the story by saying that this folk tale is a version of one told in China and Japan.

Read the story aloud. Or, tell the story dramatically: To demonstrate how people ate in hell, tape a spoon to a ruler or dowel so that the entire length is longer than your own arm. When you get to the next paragraph about heaven, tape the other spoon to another ruler. Ask some participants to help illustrate the way the people ate in heaven, by pretending to feed each other.

After the story, invite participants to share their reflections and initial thoughts about the folk tale. The discussion will be continued in depth in the Council Circle.

ACTIVITY 2: EATING IN HEAVEN AND HELL GAME (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Wooden spoons (or other long spoons), duct tape or masking tape, and rulers, dowels, or yardsticks for all participants
- Foods to eat with spoons, such as grapes, oyster crackers, macaroni, or other easily picked up and delicious nibbles
- Serving bowls or plates

Preparation for Activity

- Set out the food on serving bowls or plates.

Description of Activity

Participants will experience the fun of acting out a classic folk tale and embodying the spirit of cooperation that is the difference between heaven and hell.

Invite each participant to tape a spoon to a ruler. Tell them that they are now in hell and that their elbows are fused and cannot bend. Have them try to feed themselves without bending their elbows.

After a minute, tell them that their elbows are still fused but now they are in heaven. Allow time for participants to work out a way to feed each other.

Including All Participants

Be sure to avoid foods to which any participant may be allergic.

With a movement-challenged participant, you may wish to use a tea infusing spoon with a covered lid that will

hold food. Or make a sign with the word "Heaven" on one side and "Hell" on the other. Allow the child who is movement-challenged to be the sign-holder. Encourage some comedy and ask them to switch it back and forth quickly and have other participants act out the appropriate feeding.

ACTIVITY 3: EXPRESSION MUSIC (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of Hymn 402, "From You I Receive," in the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will teach and lead the song, "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. You may wish to invite a musical volunteer to join the group for this part of the session and lead the song for you. Or, you may like to lead the song as a spoken chant.

Description of Activity

Further explore the concept of covenant, an aspect of Unitarian Universalist faith, through music.

Have the group stand in a circle and introduce the song, "From You I Receive." As you teach the words, teach the movements that accompany them:

From you I receive	Participants reach out toward others, then scoop air toward themselves at chest level — that is, receiving it.
To you I give	Opposite from above. Participants scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to others.
Together we share	All grasp hands.
By this we live	Participants each make fists of strength and stack both hands together at belly button level.

ACTIVITY 4: TOOLBOX OF OUR FAITH POSTER AND GROUP COVENANT (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Markers, glitter pens, or other media for writing and decorating the covenant

- Large sheet of poster board, for Toolbox of Our Faith poster
- A separate sheet of poster board, for group covenant
- Optional: Paper strips to add items to the covenant, and pencils or pens
- Hardware store ads for cutting out pictures of tools, toolboxes, tool belts, etc. to decorate the poster
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors) and glue sticks
- Tape and/or push pins for displaying Toolbox of Our Faith poster and group covenant
- Optional: Copies of the handout, Unitarian Universalist Principles for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Print out a copy of the handout, Unitarian Universalist Principles. If you wish, make copies for all participants.
- Identify a place in your meeting space to display the Toolbox of Our Faith poster and the group covenant (attached, or adjacent) throughout the program.
- Post newsprint where you can write on it and everyone can see it.
- If you have not created the Toolbox of Our Faith poster before the session, participants will need a little time to begin it now. You may wish to cut a large sheet of poster board into the shape of a toolbox. In large letters, label it "Toolbox of Our Faith." As time permits, have participants decorate the edges with a few pictures from hardware store ads. Be sure to leave a large area where, in future sessions, you will add visual representations of up to 16 tools and write the qualities of faith each tool represents.
- Decide how you will represent this session's tools (a toolbox and a ruler) on the poster. Be ready to add the images and write "Faith" on the poster at the end of this activity.
- Prepare another sheet of poster board for the group covenant.
- Set out the poster board, hardware store ads, scissors, and glue sticks at a work, table that can accommodate all participants.

Description of Activity

Participants will learn about making rules together, and learn the meaning of a covenant as promises we make together, as they develop a group covenant that will be attached to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. The combined poster serves at least three purposes. It provides a visual representation of the metaphorical tools of our faith explored in each session. It keeps the group covenant before the group each time they meet, and it provides continuity throughout the program.

Using the Principles as a guideline, ask participants to brainstorm their own group covenant. Record their ideas on the newsprint you have posted.

For example, for the seventh Principle, which addresses "respect for the interdependent web," encourage participants to think about how they will respect one another and the environment around them, including the meeting room, the congregational facility, and beyond.

Help participants formulate positive statements, such as, "We will respect the furniture and belongings in our room," instead of, "Do not break things."

Participants may wish to agree together on consequences for breaking the covenant or promises that are made to each other. It's okay to allow some humorous suggestions. You might try writing them on a separate piece of newsprint for everyone to giggle about.

When the brainstorming is done, ask for reflections. Is there anything that someone wishes to change or remove or add? Ask for suggestions of how they want to decorate and write the words. Are there some calligraphers and artists who might decorate it? Could each sentence be given to a pair of children to write it out in a creative way on a strip of paper, which you will then glue onto the poster?

Present the Toolbox of Our Faith poster you have prepared, or have participants prepare it now. Be sure to add a picture to represent this session's tools, a toolbox and a ruler, and write the word "Faith" on the poster.

Post the Toolbox of Our Faith poster and the group covenant in a prominent spot.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tools of the Day — a toolbox and a ruler
- Chalice and candle or LED chalice

- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Woolen or other non-flammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint, and post. It is suggested that co-leaders plan ahead to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches, if needed, for the Reflection.
- Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each

other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in a circle. Light the chalice.

Invite participants to reflect about the story of this session as they pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. Offer the following questions:

- Which are harder to keep, promises (covenants) or rules?
- Why?
- How might you use a covenant in your own life?
- Does our congregation have a covenant?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. You may extinguish the chalice now, or after your closing ritual.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship services, or with one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may wish to choose the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

We gather in community to celebrate

the glories

and mysteries

of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition* using the movements introduced in Activity 3: Expression Music.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fists of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing he/she will do between now and your next session that relates to promises, or covenants.

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU faith, I will . . .

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: "Go, UU, go!"

If the chalice is still lit, extinguish it now.

Distribute Taking It Home handouts.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Gift of Covenant

Engage the group in creating and decorating a poster with the words of your own congregational covenant. Present the poster as a gift to congregational leadership or another group, for a group meeting space, a hallway, or another communal space.

Practicing Collaboration

Practice cooperation and collaboration with another non-profit group such as Campfire or Scouts, or with another faith community, by joining with them in a project or service.

Congregational Stewardship

Participate as a group in a congregational potluck. Offer to be servers and helpers.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

It is not the style of clothes one wears, neither the kind of automobile one drives, nor the amount of money one has in the bank, that counts. These mean nothing. It is simply service that measures success. — George Washington Carver (1864-1943), horticulturist, chemist and educator who started his life as a slave in the United States

IN TODAY'S SESSION . . .

This program uses the toolbox to symbolize our Unitarian Universalist faith. In this session, the group reflected on what we might put in a Toolbox of Faith and what tools our faith can provide. We used a ruler to illustrate rules and promises that are decided together, and we talked about the nature of our faith as something we build together. We discuss the meaning of "to

covenant" as "to promise together." The group made their own group covenant.

This session explored two Unitarian Universalist Principles. Participants learned that we value the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large (fifth Principle), and that Unitarian Universalism affirms that we are part of an interdependent web (seventh Principle).

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about . . .

Which are harder to keep, promises (covenants) or rules? Why?

What role does "covenant" have in the way your congregation is governed?

Does your community have a covenant? Discuss the promises made together in your neighborhood, your town or city, your state, our nation. Does writing a promise down transform it into a covenant, or make it more like a "rule?"

Discuss family rules as a covenant, that is, promises made together to make it possible for each member to be safe and happy. How might promises change as children grow up and the balance of responsibility and freedom in their lives changes?

Have each member of the family share an example of how he/she uses covenants in his/her own life, outside their family time together. For example, someone may be part of a covenant at a workplace, in school, as an athlete, as a member of a sports team or musical group, or as a friend.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try . . .

A FAMILY RITUAL

As a grace before a shared meal or for a chalice-lighting ritual, say together these words by Marjorie Montgomery (Reading 452 in the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*):

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

See if your congregational library has or wishes to [order the book](#) *A Lamp in Every Corner: A Unitarian Universalist Storybook* by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004). This is a collection of 21 short stories that amplify and explore the seven Principles through Unitarian

Universalist history and traditions, including stories about famous Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist men and women. It includes helpful suggestions for the novice storyteller and a list of further storytelling resources. Take turns reading or performing the stories in your family.

STORY: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL

Adapted by Elisa Pearmain from a Japanese and Chinese folk tale.

To tell the story dramatically, tape a spoon to a ruler so that the entire length is longer than your own arm to demonstrate how people ate in hell. When you get to the next paragraph about heaven, tape another spoon to another ruler. Give spoons to two participants. Invite them to pretend to feed each other to illustrate the way the people ate in heaven.

Long ago there lived an old woman who had a wish. She wished more than anything to see for herself the difference between heaven and hell. The monks in the temple agreed to grant her request. They put a blindfold around her eyes, and said, "First you shall see hell."

When the blindfold was removed, the old woman was standing at the entrance to a great dining hall. The hall was full of round tables, each piled high with the most delicious foods — meats, vegetables, fruits, breads, and desserts of all kinds! The smells that reached her nose were wonderful.

The old woman noticed that, in hell, there were people seated around those round tables. She saw that their bodies were thin, and their faces were gaunt, and creased with frustration. Each person held a spoon. The spoons must have been three feet long! They were so long that the people in hell could reach the food on those platters, but they could not get the food back to their mouths. As the old woman watched, she heard their hungry desperate cries. "I've seen enough," she cried. "Please let me see heaven."

And so again the blindfold was put around her eyes, and the old woman heard, "Now you shall see heaven." When the blindfold was removed, the old woman was confused. For there she stood again, at the entrance to a great dining hall, filled with round tables piled high with the same lavish feast. And again, she saw that there were people sitting just out of arm's reach of the food with those three-foot long spoons.

But as the old woman looked closer, she noticed that the people in heaven were plump and had rosy, happy faces. As she watched, a joyous sound of laughter filled the air.

And soon the old woman was laughing too, for now she understood the difference between heaven and hell for herself. The people in heaven were using those long spoons to feed each other.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS AND FAMILIES

Before the Toolbox of Faith program begins, customize this letter for your program and distribute to participants' families as a handout, mailer, or group e-mail. You may like to do this several weeks ahead of the first session, to give families time to gather real tools they can contribute to the program.

Dear [name of participant] and Family,

What do duct tape, a hardhat, sandpaper, and a magnifying glass have to do with religious education? They are some of the real tools that we will use in the Toolbox of Faith program as symbols of the tools we use to be Unitarian Universalists. For example, we will use duct tape to reflect on being flexible in our faith; we will use a hardhat to represent being resilient in our faith; and we will use sandpaper to illustrate how to smooth out rough spots with humor in our faith. Welcome to the Toolbox of Faith program!

In Toolbox of Faith, you may learn how to play the Cloak and Dagger game, how to make a compass and a duct tape lunch bag, and what Athenian ostracism meant in classical Greece. (It's like being "voted off the island," 4000 years ago!). You will hear intriguing, thought-provoking stories about some of the important qualities of our faith, and have Council Circle discussions to reflect on how we live our Unitarian Universalist faith in our everyday lives.

NOTE: We will need several of each of the following tools to use during our sessions. Please let us know if your family can donate or lend:

SESSION 1: Toolbox and Ruler (Faith)

SESSION 2: Magnifying Glass (Questioning)

SESSION 3: Compass (Integrity)

SESSION 4: Duct Tape (Flexibility)

SESSION 5: Mirror (Reflection)

SESSION 6: Paintbrush (Expression)

SESSION 7: Chalk (Democratic Process)

SESSION 8: Hammer (Power)

SESSION 9: Canteen (Spirit of Life)

SESSION 10: Saddlebags, such as bike panniers or backpacks (Courage)

SESSION 11: Stethoscope (Listening)

SESSION 12: Sandpaper (Humor)

SESSION 13: Gloves (Love)

SESSION 14: Flashlight (Justice)

SESSION 15: Level (Atonement)

SESSION 16: Hard Hat (Resiliency)

Please contact us if you can lend some tools. Thanks!

We look forward to seeing you on [first session day, date, at time and place] to begin the program.

(Co-leader names and contact information)

FIND OUT MORE

For an introduction to our faith, check out some of the pamphlets that may be available in your congregation or from [inSpirit: The UU Book and Gift Shop](#).

For stories about the Principles, see if your congregational library has or wishes to order the book, [A Lamp in Every Corner: A Unitarian Universalist Storybook](#) by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004), a collection of 21 short stories about Unitarian Universalist history and traditions, famous Unitarian Universalist men and women, and the seven Principles. It includes suggestions for the novice storyteller and a list of storytelling resources.

SESSION 2: QUESTIONING (MAGNIFYING GLASS)

INTRODUCTION

Question everything! — Maria Mitchell (1818-1889), Unitarian, astronomer

The magnifying glass symbolizes questioning and looking deeper. This session focuses on the value of questioning assumptions and wondering, "Why?" The children hear about astronomer and Unitarian Maria Mitchell, who embodied the truth-seeking quality of Unitarian faith in both her spiritual and scientific life.

Maria Mitchell's story also illuminates the value of questioning gender stereotypes. Allow time for participants to engage the issues of how or if things have changed.

Emphasize that there is a continuing need for questioning, both in science and in society. You may want to look to current events when you lead the session. Guide the group to examine assumptions that are being questioned in the present day.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Teach that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that considers each person's path of questioning and search for truth a key, ongoing part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding
- Introduce the Unitarian Universalist Principle that affirms and promotes free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism takes as one of its Sources 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.
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Discuss the value of using reason to investigate problems, both in science and in society
- Reflect on the variety of ways to look deeper and question as Unitarian Universalists
- Develop questioning skills through play
- Practice looking more deeply at issues through the symbolism of the magnifying glass

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — The Stargazer Who Discovered a Comet	10
Activity 2: "Have You Ever . . . ?" Game	10
Activity 3: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Have You Any Wool?" Singing Game	5
Activity 4: The Power of Magnification	30
Activity 5: Council Circle	10

Faith in Action: Ideas

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on questioning, you may wish to reflect on how you personally respond to times when you have wondered or been skeptical about something, or times when you have found yourself outside a conventional paradigm or set of assumptions. How did it feel? How does questioning something isolate the questioner? What inner voice allows you to persist, or lets you set your questions aside? See if your own experiences can help you introduce the group to the rewards and risks of questioning.

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has different opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own

opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Copies of [Handout 1, Star-Stuff Word Search](#), (included in this document) and pencils, for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1, Star-Stuff Word Search, for all participants.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants as they arrive and give each child a pencil and the word search handout. Encourage open discussion of what participants know about astronomy and space as they work on this word puzzle.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — a magnifying glass
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster; a copy of Handout 1, Star-Stuff Word Search; and tape or a glue stick

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in the Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Participants will consider how a magnifying glass is a metaphor for the quality of questioning in our faith.

Invite the children to gather in a circle in the Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up a magnifying glass. Tell the children it is the Tool of the Day.

Pass around the tool. As children pass it, invite them to share their prior experiences seeing or using magnifying glasses.

Lead a discussion to introduce the magnifying glass as a symbol of the value of questioning assumptions and looking more deeply and closely at things. Ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer.

Say, in your own words:

The magnifying glass represents the value we place on questioning and looking more closely and deeply at issues. Unitarian Universalism is a faith that values each person's path of questioning and each person's search for truth. This is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding. One of the Sources of our faith is the use of reason and science. One of our Principles says that Unitarian Universalism affirms the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We believe that everyone is not only free, but responsible, to question.

You may invite a participant to tape or glue a copy of the Star-Stuff Word Search handout to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster, or, do this later in the session.

Collect the tool. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — THE STARGAZER WHO DISCOVERED A COMET (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[The Stargazer Who Discovered a Comet](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read and prepare to tell the story of Unitarian and astronomer, Maria Mitchell (1818-1889). Note: "Maria" is pronounced "Ma-RYE-ah."

Description of Activity

Gather the group to hear a story. Tell them the story is about Maria Mitchell, who lived from 1818 to 1889 and was a Unitarian and an astronomer. You may tell them she grew up on an island, Nantucket, and was the first woman to have a comet named after her, and the first woman professor of astronomy at Vassar College.

After the story, invite participants to briefly share their reflections and initial thoughts. Tell them you will discuss the story in more depth in Council Circle.

ACTIVITY 2: "HAVE YOU EVER . . . ?" GAME (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of Leader Resource 1, "[Have You Ever . . . ?](#)" (included in this document) Questions

Preparation for Activity

- The game, Have You Ever ... ?, works best with larger groups. A non-competitive option for four or fewer participants is the game, Twenty Questions. Or, try both games.
- Review Leader Resource 1, "Have You Ever . . . ?" Questions. Adapt or expand the list to suit your group.

Description of Activity

The game, Have You Ever ... ?, is an active, fun way to explore and celebrate the rich diversity of experiences that different people bring to any group. In addition, this game will demonstrate the value of questioning as a way to gain information, and help the children in the group get to know each other.

Gather the group in a circle. Explain that you will call out different experiences that may or may not apply to each person. Tell participants, "If the item does apply to you, run into the middle, jump in the air, and do a high five with anyone else who runs in."

Leader Resource 1, "Have You Ever ... ? Questions," lists about 20 items that you can adapt or expand for the group. Most items begin with "Have you ever ... ?, but feel free to ad lib, for example, "Does anyone have ... ?"

Carefully choose items to prevent embarrassment or ridicule. Avoid mentioning experiences that could create a perception of "haves" and "have-nots" in the group.

If it suits your group, consider the "pile-up" version of this game. Anyone can ask a "Have you ever ... ?" question. Anyone who can answer "yes" to the question moves one space to the right and sits in that chair. Participants who cannot answer "yes" stay seated where they are. With each question, some participants may end up on others' laps. Do not use this version if you think anyone in the group may not be comfortable.

Twenty Questions

The game, Twenty Questions, works well with a smaller group. Invite one person to think of an object and not tell the other players what it is. The other players take turns

asking a question which can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." The person who has the object in mind answers each question in turn. Sample questions could be "Is it in this room?" or "Is it bigger than a breadbox?" Lying is not allowed, as it would ruin the game. If a questioner guesses the object, that questioner wins and thinks of an object for others to guess in the next round. If twenty questions are asked without a correct guess, then the first player has stumped the questioners and gets to think of another object for another round.

Including All Participants

With a movement-challenged participant, prompt as needed to emphasize "Have you ever ... ?" questions that are not movement-related, such as "Have you ever accomplished something really difficult?" "Have you ever practiced something over and over?" "Have you ever written a letter to a newspaper?" You may like to add a rule that if a movement-challenged child answers "yes," other participants must gather around that child for the high fives.

ACTIVITY 3: "TWINKLE, TWINKLE, HAVE YOU ANY WOOL?" SINGING GAME (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- You may like to read Bernie DeKoven's website for a description of how he invented this singing game.

Description of Activity

What well known song about stars simply poses Maria Mitchell's scientific and spiritual questions? "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." Lead the group to explore the metaphor of questioning, an aspect of Unitarian Universalist faith, through music.

Gather the group in a circle. Ask who knows the song, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star?" How about the song, "Baa Baa Black Sheep," or the alphabet song ("ABCD, ... LMNOP...")? Allow some demonstrations.

Ask the group if they notice what all three songs have in common. Point out that all the songs share the same tune.

Invite the group to pass all three songs around the circle, using these rules:

- One person begins by singing any one of the three songs.
- When the first person stops, the next person must continue, without missing a beat or changing the tune, using the lyrics from the same song or either of the two remaining songs.

This can become exceedingly difficult. You may want to start with only two of the songs. Or, simplify the game by taking turns only after a full measure of one song has been completed. For example: "ABCDEFGH, Yes Sir, yes Sir, three bags full, Up above the world so high..." In the more complex version, you may end up with measures such as "AB, black sheep, little star" and "Twinkle, CD, Have you any wool?"

ACTIVITY 4: THE POWER OF MAGNIFICATION (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Magnifying glasses for participants to share
- **For Sun Bursts.** Latex balloons, enough for all participants plus some extra, two or three magnifying glasses, string and scissors, and (optional) water
- **For Light Write.** Paper for all participants. Note: The activity works best with dark paper; it will absorb the sunlight whereas white paper will reflect it.
- Optional: Ink pads and paper (for an alternate indoor activity)
- Optional: Sheets of black or dark blue construction paper for all participants, shiny star stickers, and white chalk or crayons (for an alternate indoor activity)

Preparation for Activity

- Find a bright, sunny outdoor area the group can use for this activity. **Sun Bursts** requires a wall or fence to which balloons can be tied with string. **Light Write** requires a paved or concrete (non-flammable) surface that gets strong sun.
- Prepare an alternate activity, in case the day is not a sunny one. You might invite the children to use magnifying glasses to look at various items close up, such as fingerprints made from each child's index finger stamped with ink and printed on a piece of paper. Or look at eyes, hair or ears. You might invite children to make personal constellations using sticker stars in gold, silver, and red, on black or blue paper, and connect the stars using white chalk or crayon lines.

Description of Activity

Use the magnifying glass as a tool to indulge in some investigative science. Encourage the participants to speculate what will happen as you try these experiments.

If you are going outside, take the group to the sunny location you have chosen.

Sun Bursts

Invite each child to inflate and tie a balloon. For added drama, have players fill balloons one-fourth full of water. Form two teams. Ask each team to attach all of its members' inflated balloons to a wall or fence, using string.

Then, have the children in each team line up, one behind another, facing their own team's balloons.

Give the first person in each line a magnifying glass. Instruct them to burn a hole in the balloon they inflated, using the intense beam of light created by a magnified sun ray.

Say "GO!" to start the first people of each team to direct enough light from the sun, via the magnifying glass, to burn into the balloon and pop it. After a child breaks his/her balloon, tell them to pass the magnifying glass to the next team member and run to the end of the line.

The first team to break all its balloons wins.

Light Write

Form small groups of two or three. Give each participant a sheet of paper and each group a magnifying glass. Have participants place their paper on the sidewalk or pavement. You may suggest they place stones on each corner of their paper to keep it from blowing away.

Tell the group:

Taking turns, each person will hold the magnifying glass so that the sun shines through it and makes a dot of light on the paper. Keep adjusting the magnifying glass slowly until it makes the smallest and brightest dot possible. Hold the glass until the paper begins to burn. As the paper starts to scorch, move the dot slowly to form your own first initial. This takes time, so be patient.

As the children become proficient at making letters, have them try a collective drawing. Allow each participant to add a line or dot.

Or, have children work together to write on a single sheet of paper. Passing it along, each person adds another scorched letter. You can form teams, and invite each team to try to spell a word.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a magnifying glass

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, a copy of the handout, Star-Stuff Word Search, and tape or a glue stick

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass

vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to reflect on what questioning means, as they pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. You may say:

Maria Mitchell and her family questioned the assumption that girls do not need an education and should not become scientists. Have you ever questioned an assumption, either in science or in society? How? What happened?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one, last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use

one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing", Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they might like to actively question during the next week. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and question!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., questioning spirit], I will ...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: "Go, UU, go!"

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape or glue a copy of the handout, Star-Stuff Word Search, and/or write the word "Questioning" or a "?" symbol on the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute Taking It Home handouts.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Use a Faith in Action activity to engage the children in exploring why there is a continuing need for questioning, both in science and in society.

People Whose Questions Shaped History

Arrange for the children to participate in a community commemorative day for a person who has questioned. For example, help out at a celebration honoring the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who questioned racial assumptions and injustices.

Or, plan a group research project to investigate a person such as Galileo, who questioned the assumptions of his day about the solar system; Susan B. Anthony, who questioned her time's prevailing opposition to women's suffrage — all questioners whose persistence changed history. Find a way for the children to present their research to a broad segment of the congregation.

Ask Questions Locally

What issues in your local community can you engage in, with the group, to illuminate the value and perhaps the difficulty of questioning assumptions? Call the group's attention to a local issue that invites some questions. Together, write a letter to the editor of your local paper that urges others to question assumptions.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

Question everything! — Maria Mitchell (1818-1889), Unitarian, astronomer

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The magnifying glass symbolizes questioning and looking deeper. The children learned about questioning because Unitarian Universalism considers each person's path of questioning and search for truth to be a key, ongoing part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding; Unitarian Universalism's Fourth Principle affirms a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. The session also demonstrated that Unitarian Universalism takes as one of its Sources 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.

This session focuses on the value of questioning assumptions and wondering, "Why?" We emphasized that there is a continuing need for questioning, both in science and in society. The children heard the story of Unitarian astronomer, Maria (pronounced "ma-RYE-ah") Mitchell (1818-1889), the first woman to discover a comet and have it named after her and the first professor of astronomy at Vassar College. Maria Mitchell embodied the truth-seeking quality of Unitarian faith in both her spiritual and scientific life. Her story also illuminates the value of questioning gender stereotypes.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... To extend the learning of this session, look to current events. What issues are being discussed publicly in your community? in our nation? globally? In what ways do current controversies involve the questioning of assumptions?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... Learn more about Maria Mitchell. Borrow from a library, or purchase, a biography of Maria Mitchell, such as (for 9- to 12-year-olds) *Rooftop Astronomer: A Story about Maria Mitchell* by Stephanie Sammartino McPherson (Minneapolis,

MN: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1990). One reviewer, Margaret M. Hagel of the Norfolk, VA Public Library System, said:

More than just a biography of the female astronomer, this is also the story of Mitchell's contribution to the quest for equality for women. McPherson's easily flowing narrative recounts Mitchell's childhood on Nantucket, a good spot to observe the stars and a place where women, especially whalers' wives, were of necessity independent and respected members of the community.

Of *Maria Mitchell: The Soul of an Astronomer* by Beatrice Gormley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2004), Kirkus Review said:

Gormley successfully paints a picture of a world that failed to mold Mitchell to its standards, focusing on the telling details that bring the story to life. Inspiring and incisive.

Explore the universe. Children interested in astronomy and natural sciences may like to investigate the stars some more, with a Unitarian Universalist-written activity book for children. [The Kids' Book of Awesome Stuff](#) by Barbara Marshfield and Charlene Brotman (Biddeford, ME: Brotman-Marshfield Curriculums, 2004) is a collection of pictures, puzzles, and writings exploring our connection to the natural world through topics from the Big Bang and bugs to snowflakes, frost and "poop and pee and other stinky stuff."

FAMILY ADVENTURE

Is there a museum or planetarium near you, where visitors can have the experience of looking through a telescope like Maria Mitchell did? If the city nearest you does not have an observatory open to the public, find out whether the nearest college or university has an astronomy lab that your family might visit.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Learn about Maria Mitchell on [Wikipedia](#) or read her biography in the online [Vassar Encyclopedia](#). A site search of the Vassar College website will also yield the article, ["Eclipse Chaser,"](#) which describes her trip to Colorado for the eclipse of 1878.

A FAMILY GAME

Play the game, Twenty Questions, together. Find variations and background about the game on [Wikipedia](#). Or, play [Twenty Questions online](#).

STORY: THE STARGAZER WHO DISCOVERED A COMET

From "The Stargazer Who Discovered a Comet" in *The UU Kids Book* by Anne Fields and Charlene Brotman (Biddeford, Maine: Brotman-Marshfield, 1989); used with permission. "Afterward" from *Rooftop Astronomer: A Story about Maria Mitchell* by Stephanie Sammartino McPherson (Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1990).

Read the story aloud. NOTE: The name, Maria, is pronounced "ma-RYE-ah."

Maria always remembered the day she helped her father time an eclipse of the sun. She used the chronometer to count down to the exact second that the moon began to block out the sun. Her father needed to send the timing report to his astronomer friends at the big Harvard University observatory, where they were collecting eclipse information from all over.

"There will be another eclipse like this in 54 years," said father.

"I'm twelve now, I'll be 66 then!" exclaimed Maria. How could astronomers know so far ahead what would happen in the sky? How amazing that the stars and planets spun around in such order!

"I want to study the stars, always!" decided Maria one day. "I want to be an astronomer!"

"Father, can only men be astronomers?" she asked.

Father thought for a moment, while Maria watched his face anxiously. He knew that no matter how smart a girl was, she could not get into any college in the United States to study astronomy. Only boys were allowed to go to college in those days.

Finally he said, "There are no women astronomers in America. There are only a few in the entire world, but I do think it's possible, Maria. I will teach thee all I know about astronomy. Cousin Walter has scientific books he might let thee read. Thee will need to study mathematics. That is as important to astronomy as the telescope. Yes, I do think it is possible thee could be an astronomer."

"Oh, I will study, father, I will!" cried Maria joyfully, hugging her father.

True to her word, Maria spent long hours studying geometry and trigonometry in a tiny room at the foot of the attic stairs . . .

Maria still spent most evenings studying the sky with the telescope and keeping careful records on the stars. One night she saw a fuzzy spot through the telescope that she had never seen before. Quickly she checked the charts to see if a star was supposed to be in that place in the sky. No star was ever there. Could it be a new comet?

"Father, come up and look quick!" she shouted. Her father dashed up the attic stairs to the roof and peered carefully through the telescope.

"Thee's discovered a comet above the North Star!" he exclaimed. "We must write immediately to the Harvard Observatory and tell them! A comet is named for the person who discovers it first but the discovery doesn't count unless it is reported to an observatory."

They wrote the letter that very night, but to their dismay, a storm at sea delayed the mail in leaving the island for two days. Soon the comet was also sighted by someone in Italy, then in England and in Germany. The King of Denmark had promised a gold medal to the first person who discovered a comet that could be seen only through a telescope. Would Maria miss getting the medal because her report was late? Months went by while this was being decided!

Finally one day a package arrived for Maria from the King of Denmark. It was the gold medal! Now Maria was famous. She was the first woman in the world to have a comet named after her!

Women all over America were so proud of Maria that they collected money for a new, larger telescope for her. How excited she was! Now she could learn so much more about the stars and planets!

Maria's life changed in 1865 when a wealthy man named Matthew Vassar had the courage to start a college for women — Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York.

People called Matthew Vassar an old fool. They said girls didn't need a college education, they just needed to know how to sew and do housework and maybe play the piano a little. College would ruin them for doing housework.

There were ministers who thundered, "It's against the will of God for girls to go to college! It will break up families and destroy the country!"

In spite of such talk, Matthew Vassar wanted Maria to come and teach astronomy! She could have an observatory with the third largest telescope on the continent.

"Father, how can I do this?" said Maria softly, trying to keep her voice from trembling. "I've never even been to college myself!" She was also thinking, "If I'm not any good at it, then people will say, "This proves that women have no business teaching in colleges!"

"Thee can do it, and do it well," said her father. "Thee should have no fears."

He was right. Maria's students loved her. The other professors just expected the students to sit and listen to them talk, but Maria taught her students to question everything and experiment, and to think for themselves.

Afterward

In 1986 another young woman discovered a comet. Working at Mount Palomar Observatory near San Diego, California, Christine Wilson had equipment and techniques at her disposal undreamed of in Maria's time. At the start of her career, she had a knowledge of astronomy surpassing all that Maria learned in a lifetime of study.

But Christine Wilson's discovery, while exciting and well publicized, did not catapult her into sudden fame as Maria's had. New comets are not headline news. Thanks to pioneers like Maria, neither are women astronomers. Women now occupy important positions in the scientific community. Side by side with their male colleagues, they fight disease, predict the weather, design computers, and continue to discover comets. Maria Mitchell would be pleased.

HANDOUT 1: STAR-STUFF WORD SEARCH

From *The Kids' Book of Awesome Stuff* by Charlene Brotman, illustrated by Jeila Gueramian (Biddeford, Maine: Brotman-Marshfield Curriculum, 2004). Used with permission.

Find the names of some of the elements that were once inside a star. The names go forward, backward, up, down and on the diagonal. The words are: Oxygen, Copper, Carbon, Iodine, Iron, Sulfur, Calcium, Helium, Hydrogen, Mercury, Lead, Silicon, Gold, Chlorine, Nitrogen, and Sodium.

N	U	I	D	O	S	G	P	X	O	C	N
O	E	O	A	X	D	M	G	X	T	O	E
C	H	G	E	L	E	E	T	G	B	P	G
I	E	O	O	R	H	G	L	R	I	P	Y
L	N	G	C	R	E	C	A	G	O	E	X
I	I	U	L	D	T	C	L	I	D	R	O
S	R	L	A	M	U	I	D	O	S	T	P
Y	O	E	G	Z	L	X	N	D	U	O	E
C	L	T	B	Y	N	O	R	I	L	B	P
R	H	Y	D	R	O	G	E	N	F	D	P
E	C	A	L	C	I	U	M	E	U	A	O
M	U	I	L	E	H	D	O	I	R	C	Z

LEADER RESOURCE 1: "HAVE YOU EVER ...?" QUESTIONS

Adapt this list of suggested "Have You Ever . . .?" items for the group, the setting, and the program goals.

Have you ever climbed using ropes on a rock wall?

Have you ever lived in another country?

Have you ever sung in front of people?

Have you ever been without a shower for more than one week?

Have you ever met a famous person?

Have you ever ridden a horse?

Have you ever eaten frogs' legs?

Can you speak more than one language?

Have you ever been a vegetarian?

Have you swum in ice cold water?

Have you ever flown in a helicopter?

Have you broken any bones in your body?

Have you done volunteer work sometime in the last month?

Have you ever gotten lost?

Have you ever had a close relative who lived to over 100?

Have you ever cooked a meal by yourself?

Have you ever kept an unusual pet?

Have you ever ridden on a roller coaster?

Have you ever done a split?

Have you ever seen a moose?

Have you ever wished to fly?

FIND OUT MORE

Maria Mitchell

Learn more about Maria Mitchell on [Wikipedia](#) or read her biography at the [Vassar Encyclopedia](#) website. A site search of the Vassar College website will yield the article, "[Eclipse Chaser](#)," which describes her trip to Colorado to observe the eclipse of 1878.

The home of Maria Mitchell on Nantucket Island, from which she sighted her comet in 1847, now houses a [museum](#).

The book, *Maria Mitchell and the Sexing of Science: An Astronomer among the American Romantics* by Renee Bergland (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), devotes a chapter, "The Undevout Astronomer (pp 211-223)," to Mitchell's Unitarianism and particularly how it branded her a radical during her years at Vassar College. The chapter provides quotations from Mitchell that reveal her questioning spirit. For example, Mitchell told her students:

We cannot accept anything as granted beyond the first mathematical formulae. Question everything else.

The quotations also portray the way Mitchell's intense scientific and spiritual quests intersected. For example, Mitchell wrote:

We must face the light and not bury our heads in the Earth. I am hopeful that scientific investigation pushed on and on will reveal new ways in which God works and bring us to deeper revelations of the wholly unknown. The physical and the Spiritual seem at present separated by an impassable gulf, but at any second that gulf may be overleapt, possibly a new revelation may come.

Magnifying Glass Hands-on Experiments

The games, Sun Bursts and Light Write (Activity 4: The Power of Magnification), come from *The Outrageous Outdoor Games Book* by Bob Gregson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003).

SESSION 3: INTEGRITY (COMPASS)

INTRODUCTION

What's very important to me is when Dumbledore says that you have to choose between what is right and what is easy. This is the setup for the next three books. All of them are going to have to choose, because what is easy is often not right. — J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter books, in Conversations with J.K. Rowling by Lindsay Fraser

The compass symbolizes integrity. This session provides opportunities for participants to reflect on the directional compass as a symbol for our inner moral compass. Guide the children to explore how we listen to our inner voices. Allow time for participants to identify times when we feel our moral compass swinging toward truth, and articulate how that feels. Emphasize that to discern what is right is often not easy.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Teach participants that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that helps you find ways to decide what is right, and to stand up for what is right, even in confusing times
- Introduce the second Unitarian Universalism Principle, which affirms and promotes justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
- Convey that Unitarian Universalism has as one Source the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the qualities of integrity and the features of a compass, a direction-finding tool which always points north
- Discuss a compass as a symbolism for integrity and one's inner moral compass
- Experience a story about the importance of seeking truth
- Share about ways they have experienced their own moral compass and seen integrity at work in others.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Fire, Water, Truth, and Falsehood	5
Activity 2: Rock, Paper, Scissors, and Compass Games	15
Activity 3: Expression through Music	5
Activity 4: Make a Compass	20
Activity 5: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on flexibility, you may wish to reflect on times when you have had to listen to your inner voice about what to do.

- When has your conscience led you to do something, even though there wasn't an outside force telling you to do it?
- What examples of people with integrity have you encountered or wished to emulate?

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has differing opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own

opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- One or more compasses
- Markers and sticky notes (or tape and small paper squares)
- Toolbox of Our Faith poster

Preparation for Activity

- Set out materials at a worktable.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants and encourage free play with the compass(es). Challenge participants to identify the four directions and place sticky notes for north, south, east, and west on the worktable surface.

You may wish to have a participant prepare a sticky note with a direction written on it, or sketch a compass with the four directions on a sticky note, and post it on the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write the word "Integrity" with a marker on the poster.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — at least one compass

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in a circle.

Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle, in the Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted, for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up a compass and tell the children what it is called. Tell them it is the Tool of the Day. You might ask, "What

do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer. Say, in your own words:

The compass represents integrity. Integrity means doing what is right. Integrity is our inner moral compass. Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you find ways to decide what is right, and to stand up for what is right, even in confusing times.

This is an important part of our faith. When Unitarian Universalist congregations came up with guiding principles to affirm together, the second Principle we chose was justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Just like the compass whose needle always points north, each of us has an inner voice which can help us determine what is right. Some might call the inner voice, "God." When we act with integrity we are connected to a universal sense of what is right.

Pass around the compass(es). Invite participants to share what they know about how a compass behaves and how to use a compass to determine direction. Guide them to discover that a compass will always point to the north.

Collect the compass(es). Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — FIRE, WATER, TRUTH, AND FALSEHOOD (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Fire, Water, Truth, and Falsehood](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: A cup of water, two candles and one candleholder, and matches

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it. The story provides guidance for telling the story with some simple props: a cup of water, a candle, and matches.

Description of Activity

Participants will hear a story about the importance of seeking truth.

Gather participants in a comfortable configuration for listening to a story. Tell them the story comes from Ethiopia, in Northeast Africa.

After the story, invite participants to share their reflections and initial thoughts about the story. Tell them the discussion will be continued in further depth in the Council Circle.

ACTIVITY 2: ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS AND COMPASS GAMES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- For Compass Golf. For every four or five participants: A long rope and tape or markers to draw a large circle on the ground; four pegs or sticks to mark north, south, east, and west; a small tin can and golf, tennis, or other small balls that will fit into the can; a trowel for digging a hole for the tin can in the ground; a golf club or a stick for each participant; and paper and pencil for recording the number of strokes
- For Closed Course. For each team of two or three participants: A compass, a place marker (such as a beanbag, a backpack or bag of gold foil-wrapped chocolate coins), and a copy of the handout, [Closed Course Compass Directions](#) (included in this document)
- For Dutch Compass Game. A long staff (such as a broomstick, a tent pole, or a long straight branch)

Preparation for Activity

- Choose the games to play. Use any combination of these, depending on the children in the group, the space available, and the amount of time you have.
- **Rock, Paper, Scissors — Active Version.** Identify a large open space for a playing field. Use markers to define two "free zones" at opposite ends of the playing field.
- **Compass Golf.** This game requires flat, unpaved ground in which you can dig a hole deep enough to set a tin can. Four or five players can share a playing circle and tin can.
- **Closed Course.** This game requires a large, open space. Photocopy the handout, Closed Course Compass Directions, for each team of two or three children.
- **Dutch Compass Game.** You will need an open space at least twenty feet square for up to sixteen players.

Description of Activity

Participants will embody the events in the story, "Fire, Water, Truth, and Falsehood" by playing Rock, Paper, Scissors and experience what a compass is and does, through games.

Rock, Paper, Scissors

If the group has room to run and more than six children, play the active version of a game that is often played while standing or sitting. If the group has six or fewer children or includes movement-challenged participants, play the stationary version.

Both versions are based on three symbols and three rules.

Three symbols:

A fist is Rock. A flat hand is Paper. Two fingers (held open to resemble the blades) are Scissors.

Three rules:

Paper covers Rock. Rock breaks Scissors. Scissors cuts Paper.

Active Version

Divide the group into two teams, by counting off "one, two" or another way. Show the children the free zones for each team.

Gather the teams in the center of the area. Demonstrate how to make the Rock, Paper, and Scissors symbols and explain the three rules.

Direct each team to form a huddle in its free zone and agree upon a symbol. Teams meet back in the center with symbols in mind. Both teams chant, "Rock, Paper, Scissors . . ." and then all players of each team show their symbol. In a split second, teams can tell which team wins and which loses. Everyone on the losing team runs back to their free zone with the winners in pursuit. Those tagged by the winners become members of the winners' team.

If both teams show the same symbol, teams rehuddle and play again.

Play for a predetermined number of rounds. The team with the most players is the winner.

Stationary Version

If you do not have a large, open space or the group has six or fewer children, form pairs of children to play the game while sitting or standing. Invite each child in a pair to hold their hands behind their back and decide on a symbol. Then, both children chant together, "Rock, Paper, Scissors" and then bring a hand forward at the same time to show the symbol they chose. Based on the

three rules, one of the pair wins and can symbolically perform the actions in the rules. NOTE: Sometimes, in schoolyard play, a child will hit another's "scissors" hard with their fist ("rock"), or a child with "paper" will squeeze a "rock" very hard. Tell the children to make sure their actions are symbolic and not harmful.

If you have time, challenge pairs to see who can win two out of three times, or four out of seven times. You can also invite children to switch partners and play some more.

Compass Golf

Form groups of four or five children. Guide each group to use the rope as a radius and mark off a circle in which to play, and then set their small tin can in the center of the circle so its rim is flush with the ground. Help them use a real compass to mark on the ground. Mark north, south, east, and west with small pegs on the circle's circumference. These are used to tee golf shots toward the buried can. Record how many strokes you need to get in from each point.

Closed Course

Play in a large area such as a field. Make teams of two or three children, and scatter the teams around so each team starts at a different point. Have the teams mark their starting point with a beanbag, backpack, or other marker. (Gold foil-wrapped chocolate coins are a popular option!)

From their starting point, teams follow a set of bearings and distances. If they do it correctly, they should finish at the same point where they started.

Dutch Compass Game

This game requires at least eight players. Arrange participants in a circle ten to twelve feet in diameter.

Choose one child to be the umpire, who stands in the center of the circle holding a staff upright with one end on the ground. On the words, "Fall in," players take up positions on the circle (facing inwards) to represent the compass points, the umpire indicating where a space is to be left to represent north.

The umpire then calls a compass direction, such as "east south east," and simultaneously releases his/her hold of the staff. The player occupying the ESE position on the circle must catch the staff before it falls. If that player succeeds, he/she returns to the circle, and another direction is called.

When a player fails, he/she goes to the north space on the circle. The vacated place becomes the new north, and all of the other players immediately need to figure

out their new compass points. The umpire calls new directions and drops the staff again.

Including All Participants

Rock, Paper, Scissors. If the group includes a movement-challenged participant, play the stationary version of the game.

Compass Golf. Invite a movement-challenged child who can write to keep track of the scores.

Closed Course. A movement-challenged child can remain at the starting place to mark it, and call out the direction and the number of steps for his/her group to take.

Dutch Compass Game. Have a movement-challenged child be the holder of the staff. He/she can remain stationary in the middle of the circle.

ACTIVITY 3: EXPRESSION THROUGH MUSIC (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of [Singing the Living Tradition](#), the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook

Preparation for Activity

- In [Singing the Living Tradition](#), review Hymn 6, "Just as Long as I Have Breath"; Hymn 16, "'Tis a Gift to Be Simple"; and Hymn 401, "Kum ba Yah." Choose a song. If you are not comfortable leading a song, invite a musical volunteer to help lead this activity, or have the group recite rather than sing the words.

Description of Activity

Through music, participants will further explore the compass as a metaphor of integrity, a quality of Unitarian Universalist faith.

Gather the group in a circle after the games. Introduce one of these songs.

If you are singing Hymn 401, "Kum ba Yah," the song's quiet simplicity may evoke thoughts of the quiet inner voice which causes us to act with integrity. Tell the children:

This song is an African American spiritual. "Come by here" is thought to be the original meaning of "kum ba yah." As you sing, try thinking of this phrase as meaning, "Come, truth, and visit me."

ACTIVITY 4: MAKE A COMPASS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Cork and Needle Compass. A magnet for participants to share, and for each compass a plastic bowl or tub with a lid, a cork, a bit of modeling clay, a sewing needle, a toothpick, a marker, a sheet of paper larger than the plastic lid, glue or tape for attaching the paper to the lid, and water
- Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass. A rare earth magnet (preferably a neodymium disk magnet — see Resources), a tub of water, a foam meat tray, a knife (keep separate from the magnet), a permanent marker, and copies of Leader Resource 1, [Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass](#) (included in this document), for each compass

Preparation for Activity

- The magnet you will need for each Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass — and, a good magnet to use for the Cork and Needle Compass — costs about \$5. Decide which type of compass you will make, and how many, to determine the magnets you need to purchase. Do this well in advance, if you need to order "supermagnets" from an online vendor. (See Resources.)
- Photocopy Leader Resource 1, Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass, for each group that will make one of these compasses. The leader resource has detailed directions and pictures.
- Be aware of safety considerations: The magnet needed for the Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass is very strong, and should not be used by fourth and fifth graders without supervision. On its own, it is perfectly safe, even for youngsters. It becomes hazardous when there are ferromagnetic materials nearby. Keep scissors somewhere else. Even worse, if you get two of these magnets close together, they can leap at each other with violent force; if a small finger were caught between them, it could get broken.

Description of Activity

Cork and Needle Compass

For each compass, put a piece of clay in the center of the bottom of your bowl and put the toothpick in the center so that it stands up. Cut away most of the lid so that only the rim remains.

Cut out a ring of paper, and glue or tape it to the top side of the rim. Dig a hole in the center of one end of the cork that is 1/5 inch deep. Balance the cork on the end of the toothpick.

Fill the bowl with water until the cork floats. The toothpick stops the cork from floating to the side.

Magnetize a sewing needle by stroking a real magnet toward the tip of the needle about 50 times. Make sure to stroke it in only one direction, not back and forth.

Paint the tip of the needle and place it on the cork.

The needle should swing around and point north.

Put the rim in place. Mark "north" on the paper.

Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass

Follow the directions with pictures in Leader Resource 1, Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a compass
- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [Harry Potter's Moral Compass](#) (included in this document)
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, [Singing the Living Tradition](#)
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster

- Optional: Clear tape and either (a) a magnet or (b) a sheet of paper, scissors, and pencil or marker for drawing a compass

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Print out Leader Resource 2, Harry Potter's Moral Compass
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice.

Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Read the group Leader Resource 2, Harry Potter's Moral Compass, an excerpt from *The Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling with comments by Edmund Kern.

Invite participants to reflect on times when they have experienced their own inner moral compass and ways they have seen it work in others.

Ask them to pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. You may like to offer these questions:

- Have you ever acted on something your inner voice tells you to do even though the outer world doesn't require it? How?
- Have you felt your "moral compass" swinging toward truth when you have lost your way?
- Have you ever met or read about someone who was described as having integrity? Who? What was their story?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in [Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition](#). Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in [Singing the Living Tradition](#):

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do this week that relates to integrity. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and use your moral compass!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., integrity], I will
...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: "Go, UU, go!"

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape a magnet or a sketch of a compass to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

If the chalice is still lit, extinguish it now.

Distribute Taking It Home handouts.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

High-Tech Directions

If you have access to a GPS (global positioning system) device, bring it for the group to examine together. Spend some time looking at the compass points and satellite positions with the group. Or, bring in a laptop and explore computer mapping programs online. You can engage in an investigation about [geo-caching](#) in your area on this website, which lists geo-caches in any local area if you wish to try a treasure hunt! Reflect on the similarities between a real compass and a moral compass when looking for a treasure.

Integrity Bulletin Board

Create a bulletin board display or poster on a person who is known for their integrity and share it with the congregation.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

What's very important to me is when Dumbledore says that you have to choose between what is right and what is easy. This is the setup for the next three books. All of them are going to have to choose, because what is easy is often not right. -- J.K. Rowling, author of

*the Harry Potter books, in Conversations with —
J.K. Rowling by Lindsay Fraser*

IN TODAY'S SESSION . . .

The compass symbolizes integrity. We defined as our inner moral compass a quality of Unitarian Universalist faith. The children talked about how we listen to our inner voices and what it feels like when our moral compass swings toward truth. We emphasized that to discern what is right is often not easy.

We learned about integrity because:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help us find ways to decide what is right, and to stand up for what is right, even in confusing times.
- Unitarian Universalism values justice, equity, and compassion in human relations (second Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism affirms the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life (Source)

The children heard "Fire, Water, Truth, and Falsehood," a tale from Ethiopia in Northeast Africa that comes from *Wisdom Tales from around the World* by Heather Forest.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about . . .

Discuss family stories about times when a family member chose to act with integrity. What does your family do that promotes integrity?

See how each member of your family answers these questions:

- Have you ever acted on something your inner voice tells you to do even though the outer world doesn't require it? How?
- Have you felt your "moral compass" swinging toward truth when you have lost your way?
- Have you ever met or read about someone who was described as having integrity? Who? What was their story?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER, Try . . .

FAMILY DISCOVERY

From weathervanes to GPS (global positioning systems), our society uses a variety of tools for finding direction. Visit a consumer technology store such as a Circuit City, a Brookstone, or an Apple store with your child, and investigate the GPS products for sale. Look

up compass points and satellite positions for your home and other locations.

Online, you can view maps and live satellite images of your own community and get directions to almost anywhere in the world on Google and other websites. "[Geo-caching](#)" collects the information that supports these online services; learn how geo-caching is done and how the public participates.

The [Compass Dude](#) website is a resource for all things "compass," including alternate ways of finding direction.

Take an [interactive quiz about compasses](#) online, on a website published by illustrator Jan Brett.

STORY: FIRE, WATER, TRUTH, AND FALSEHOOD

An Ethiopian tale, retold by Heather Forest in *Wisdom Tales from around the World* (Little Rock, ARK: August House, Inc., 1996). Another printed version can be found in *The Fire on the Mountain and Other Ethiopian Stories* by Harold Courlander and Wolf Leslau (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1950).

Read the story, or, if you prefer, tell it dramatically. Start by placing a cup of water in front of you. Then place the candle in front of you, light it, and begin telling the story. When describing how Fire and Water each kept their distance, move the candle and the cup of water away from each other.

When describing how Water flowed over Fire, pour the water over the candle until it is out.

When describing how Water washed down upon itself, tumbling down the mountain, pour the rest of the water out, letting it spill onto the floor.

When you say, "Like a small candle in the dark, Truth can change every situation," light a candle. Because the first candle's wick may be too wet, use the second candle.

Long ago, Fire, Water, Truth, and Falsehood lived together in one large house. Although all were polite toward each other, they kept their distance. Truth and Falsehood sat on opposite sides of the room. Fire constantly leapt out of Water's path.

One day they went hunting together. They found a large number of cattle and began driving them home to their village. "Let us share these cattle equally," said Truth as they traveled across the grasslands. "This is the fair way to divide our captives."

No one disagreed with Truth except Falsehood. Falsehood wanted more than an equal share but kept quiet about it for the moment. As the four hunters traveled back to the village, Falsehood went secretly to Water and whispered, "You are more powerful than Fire. Destroy Fire and then there will be more cattle for each of us!"

Water flowed over Fire, bubbling and steaming until Fire was gone. Water meandered along, cheerfully thinking about more cattle for itself.

Falsehood, meanwhile, whispered to Truth. "Look! See for yourself! Water has killed Fire! Let us leave Water, who has cruelly destroyed our warmhearted friend. We must take the cattle high in the mountains to graze."

As Truth and Falsehood traveled up the mountain, Water tried to follow. But the mountain was too steep, and Water could not flow upwards. Water washed down upon itself, splashing and swirling around rocks as it tumbled down the slope. Look and see! Water is still tumbling down the mountainside to this day.

Truth and Falsehood arrived at the mountaintop. Falsehood turned to Truth and said in a loud voice, "I am more powerful than you! You will be my servant. I am your master. All the cattle belong to me!"

Truth rose up and spoke out, "I will not be your servant!"

They battled and battled. Finally they brought the argument to Wind to decide who was master.

Wind didn't know. Wind blew all over the world to ask people whether Truth or Falsehood was more powerful. Some people said, "A single word of Falsehood can completely destroy Truth." Others insisted, "Like a small candle in the dark, Truth can change every situation."

Wind finally returned to the mountain and said, "I have seen that Falsehood is very powerful. But it can rule only where Truth has stopped struggling to be heard."

And it has been that way ever since.

HANDOUT 1: CLOSED COURSE COMPASS DIRECTIONS

Mark your team's starting point with an object.

From the starting point, do all of the steps below. Use a compass to make sure your directions are accurate.

If you do this correctly, you will finish at the same point where you started.

1. Walk 5 paces to the north.
2. Walk 10 paces to the west.
3. Walk 20 paces to the south.
4. Walk 15 paces to the east.
5. Walk 15 paces to the north.
6. Walk 5 paces to the west.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: SUPER-EASY SUPERMAGNET COMPASS

By Windell H. Oskay, from the [Evil Mad Scientist website](#), used with permission.

This compass requires a rare earth magnet, preferably a neodymium disk magnet. The magnet used in this example is part number ZD4 from [K and J Magnets, Inc.](#) It is one inch in diameter by a quarter-inch thick, and made of N42 grade (strong) neodymium-iron-boron, and costs about \$5.

Note: The magnet shown on the web page is very strong, and should not be used by fourth and fifth graders without supervision. On its own, it is perfectly safe, even for youngsters. It becomes hazardous when there are ferromagnetic materials nearby. Keep scissors somewhere else. Even worse, if you get two of these magnets close together, they can leap at each other with violent force. A small finger caught between them could get broken.

When I was a kid, I read in a science book about how to make a directional compass. You magnetize a sewing needle and balance it on a cork floating in a bowl of water. Even today, this is the standard story. For example, the website How Stuff Works [still says](#) that this is how to make a compass. (There are a lot of [other examples](#), too.) It turns out that it's a whole lot easier than that. All you need is a really good magnet.

I stumbled across this quite by accident last week. For reasons that are — believe it or not — genuinely *not related to compasses*, I was attempting to balance a magnet on a little foam tray floating in a pan of water. However, the magnet wasn't behaving itself. It kept pulling its little boat to the edge of the pan of water. None-too-careful inspection of the situation revealed that there was a ten-inch, steel chef's knife sitting on the kitchen counter where I had set the pan of water. (Doh! If you've spent any time playing with strong magnets, you may also have had some of those close calls where your magnet and the nearest sharp knife go flying at each other. It only takes a couple of those experiences to give you a sinking feeling every time that you see a magnet and a ferromagnetic pointy thing within a foot of each other.) Moving the knife away stopped the magnet from drifting to the edge, but it still was turning on its own. Of course, that's when it dawned on me that I was looking at . . . a compass!

I had read a few times about making a compass with a super magnet. I had seen it on Bill Beaty's [Science Hobbyist site](#), as well as at [Forcefield](#). Come to think of it, I had actually once tried one variation of this, which is to hang neodymium magnets on a string and watch them turn to align themselves. It works, but a string is actually a poor torsion bearing and the result is roughly as uninspiring as the floating-sewing-needle version. Since I myself was trained in the slowly moving-magnetized-sewing-needle school of compass design, I didn't think that making compasses was sufficiently interesting to spend more time on. But, that's the difference between seeing it and just reading about it.

Ready to build one? Let's get started:

The first thing that you will need is a rare earth magnet, preferably a neodymium disk magnet. For this and most other purposes, the most efficient magnet geometry is where the thickness is comparable to the diameter. That magnet that I used was part number ZD4 from [K & J Magnetics](#), it's one inch in diameter by a quarter-inch thick, and made of N48 grade (strong) neodymium-iron-boron, and cost about \$5. (Note that hard drive magnets are usually not useful for making a compass because they will have both poles on the same face of the magnet.

To make a floating magnet we'll need some other things: A tub of water, a foam tray, a knife, and a permanent marker. Keep the magnet separated from the knife.

1. Using the knife, make a slit in the foam tray.
2. Shove the magnet into the slit. It should seat firmly in place.
3. Set the tray in the tub of water. The compass rotates until it's happy, which will take about one second.
4. Calibrate your compass by labeling the end that is pointing North (that's the north pole) and the one that's pointing South (that's the south pole of the magnet). If you are presently lost and are planning to use this to find your way home, you'll need some external reference, e.g., the direction of sunset.
5. Completed compass.

I made a [short video](#) (on YouTube) showing exactly this set of steps.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: HARRY POTTER'S MORAL COMPASS

The Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling has many examples of using a moral compass. One such example comes from *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, illuminated by Edmund M. Kern in *The Wisdom of Harry Potter: What Our Favorite Hero Teaches Us about Moral Choices* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003).

Ask the group if any of them have read the Harry Potter book, The Prisoner of Azkaban. Tell them that one theme of the book is that submitting to authority is not always the moral thing to do.

After you read the excerpt aloud, if children in the group have read this or other Harry Potter books, invite them to contribute examples of times when Harry used his "moral compass" to determine his course of action.

[Tell the group: "There is a part in The Prisoner of Azkaban where Dumbledore, the school headmaster, lays out a situation that challenges Harry to find the right direction, and act with integrity."]

Sirius is innocent of the charges against him, but no one knows it, and it can't be proven ... Making matters worse, the Ministry of Magic is intent upon deepening an already long-standing injustice. Dumbledore explains, while Sirius awaits his fate:

"Listen to me, Harry. It's too late, you understand me? You must see that Professor Snape's version of events is far more convincing than yours."

"He hates Sirius," Hermione said desperately. "All because of some stupid trick Sirius played on him —"

"Sirius has not acted like an innocent man. The attack on the Fat Lady — entering Gryffindor Tower with a knife — without Pettigrew, alive or dead, we have no chance of overturning Sirius's sentence."

"But you believe us."

"Yes, I do," said Dumbledore quietly. "But I have no power to make other men see the truth, or to overrule the Minister of Magic ..."

[Tell the children: "To make sure Sirius is not wrongly punished, the children realize that they will need to break more school rules than they already have."]

Harry learns an important lesson. Rules have their place but, at times, they can serve ends other than what their creators intended.

FIND OUT MORE

The [Compass Dude](#) website is a resource for all things "compass," including alternate ways of finding direction, such as navigating by the stars.

Find more compass games on a [resource website for Canadian Girl Guides](#). The game, Dutch Compass, was provided by Bev Spillane.

Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass

This compass (Activity 4) requires a rare earth magnet, preferably a neodymium disk magnet, such as part number ZD4 from [K and J Magnetics, Inc.](#) It is one inch in diameter by a quarter-inch thick, and made of N42 grade (strong) neodymium-iron-boron.

See a [video on YouTube](#) that shows the same compass-making steps described and illustrated in the leader resource, Super-Easy Supermagnet Compass.

The K and J Magnetics, Inc. website includes a page that lists [dozens of uses](#) for magnets. Also read the web page devoted to [safe use of magnets](#), which reads, in part:

The neodymium magnets are extremely strong, and must be handled with care to avoid personal injury and damage to the magnets. Fingers and other body parts can get severely pinched between two attracting magnets ... Eye protection should be worn when handling these magnets, because shattering magnets can launch pieces at great speeds.

The strong magnetic fields of neodymium magnets can also damage magnetic media such as floppy disks, credit cards, magnetic I.D. cards, cassette tapes, video tapes or other such devices ...

Never place neodymium magnets near electronic appliances

Small children should not be allowed to handle neodymium magnets as they can be dangerous... . Like any tool or toy, neodymium magnets can be fun and useful, but must always be treated with care.

SESSION 4: FLEXIBILITY (DUCT TAPE)

INTRODUCTION

*The bend in the road is not the end of the road,
unless you refuse to take the turn. —
Anonymous*

The duct tape symbolizes flexibility. This session provides opportunities for participants to reflect on the value and qualities of developing an open mind and a flexible faith. A theme of discussion is the Unitarian Universalist expectation of change and flexibility in one's understandings and beliefs. Allow time for participants to consider what it means to live with changeable answers. As leaders, you will want to emphasize the importance of being informed and flexible decision-makers.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Teach participants that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will grow and adapt with you as your life changes
- Introduce the Unitarian Universalism Principle that affirms and promotes acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism comes from a flexible, living tradition that has, as one Source, direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the flexibility and strength of duct tape, and learn how duct tape is a metaphor for the quality of flexibility in our faith

- Discuss the symbolism of duct tape and the value of being flexible and open-minded in our faith
- Imagine life without choices or flexibility in the context of hearing a story
- Practice adapting to quickly changing circumstances by playing a game
- Express flexibility through one or more creative art forms
- Reflect on times they were flexible or changing and times they were rigid

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Answer Mountain	10
Activity 2: Active Flexibility Games	10
Activity 3: Duct Tape Lunch Bag	15
Activity 4: Kore Chant	10
Activity 5: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on flexibility, you may wish to reflect on how you personally answer the council questions about times when you have and have not been able to be flexible in your beliefs and in your life.

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has differing opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Rolls of duct tape
- A ruler, a pencil, and scissors (including left-handed scissors)
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster

Preparation for Activity

- From the materials you have gathered for Activity 3: Duct Tape Lunch Bags, set out rolls of duct tape on a worktable.

Description of Activity

This section is intended for the time before the beginning of a session when participants arrive individually over a period of time (that is, "straggle in").

Welcome participants. Invite them to start tearing or cutting strips of duct tape, twelve inches long, in preparation for making a duct tape lunch bag. A standard size paper lunch bag requires eleven strips of duct tape approximately twelve inches long to cover it. Tell the children to lightly adhere a corner of each strip to the edge of a table or a chair for use later.

Now or later in the session, add a frame of duct tape around the Tools of Our Faith poster to represent today's quality of faith: flexibility.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — duct tape

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in your Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Participants will become familiar with the flexible qualities of duct tape, and explore duct tape, as a metaphor for being flexible in our faith.

Invite the children to gather in a circle, in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up the duct tape. Tell the children it is the Tool of the Day.

Pass around the tool. As children pass it, invite them to share their prior experiences seeing or using duct tape.

Lead a discussion to introduce duct tape as a symbol of the value of being flexible and open-minded in our faith. You might ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer.

Say, in your own words:

The duct tape represents flexibility and open-mindedness. Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will grow and adapt with you as your life changes. This is a key part of deepening our religious understanding.

One of our Principles affirms that Unitarian Universalism values acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. What you believe at age 8 might be different than what you believe at age 16, age 30, and age 80. We accept change as part of life.

Unitarian Universalism comes from a flexible, living tradition that includes direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and openness to the forces which create and uphold life. That renewal and openness means flexibility when needed.

You may invite a participant to add a piece of duct tape to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster, or do this later in the session.

Collect the tool. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — ANSWER MOUNTAIN (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Answer Mountain](#)" (included in this document)

- Optional: Three signs that say "The Answer Is No," "The Answer Is Yes," and "The Answer Is under Construction."

Preparation for Activity

- Read and prepare to tell the story, "Answer Mountain." For a dramatic storytelling, you may wish to make signs that say "The Answer Is No," "The Answer Is Yes" and "The Answer Is under Construction." Show each sign when it is mentioned in the story, or engage one or more participants to do so.

Description of Activity

What would it be like if nothing changed? The story, "Answer Mountain," helps participants imagine life without choices and flexibility.

Read the story aloud, or, if you prefer, tell it dramatically using "The Answer Is ..." signs as props.

After the story, invite participants to briefly share their reflections and initial thoughts. Tell them you will discuss the story in more depth in Council Circle.

ACTIVITY 2: ACTIVE FLEXIBILITY GAMES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Outright Lie. A variety of small objects, such as jewelry, to be used to tell incredible stories

Preparation for Activity

- Review the three games offered: Elbow Tag, Outright Lie, and Flex Test. Decide which to include based on the amount of time you have, your meeting space, and which games you think will work best with the particular children in the group.

Description of Activity

Elbow Tag

In this game, participants have to adapt to quickly changing circumstances and/or be flexible. Elbow Tag requires at least six participants and a fairly large open space.

Divide the group into pairs. Have partners link elbows and stand in a very large circle, leaving at least ten feet between each pair. Now choose one of the pairs and designate one partner as "It" and the other as the one being pursued. If Xander can tag Elena, she becomes "It." However, if Elena wants to escape (and take a rest from running), she simply runs toward one of the standing couples and links elbows with one of the pair to make a threesome.

In this game, two is company but three is a crowd: When Elena latches on, the one member of the pair whose arm she did not take must break away at top speed. This player instantly becomes new prey for "It" (Xander), until he/she dashes to yet another pair for safety. The confusing transitions can provide a break for weary runners and give even a slow-moving "It" a chance to catch Elena.

Outright Lie

Who can be most imaginative? Part of being flexible is imaging other ways of being or other points of view.

Pass a small object around the circle and make up incredible stories about it. Example: "This necklace was buried in my grandmother's yard in a sealed envelope from an anonymous admirer." Vote on the best story and elect the best liar in the group.

Flex Test

Everyone's body is flexible in different ways. Sometimes, we can make our bodies more flexible by stretching and practicing a particular movement.

Invite participants to share ways that their bodies are flexible. Who can do splits? Who can bend their thumb so it touches their wrist? Who can do any yoga poses? Invite participants to suggest other large or small ways to demonstrate flexibility. (Touch index fingers behind your back, twist arms together, make a fist, roll tongue into different shapes, expand and contract nostrils, cross eyes, flex and point toes, etc.)

Including All Participants

Elbow Tag. You may find this game too difficult to adapt so that a movement-challenged child can be meaningfully included.

Flex Test. Make sure you know some ways a movement-challenged participant can flex a part of his/her face or body, and invite him/her to demonstrate.

ACTIVITY 3: DUCT TAPE LUNCH BAG (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the leader resource 1, [Duct Tape Lunch Bag](#) (included in this document)
- Brown paper lunch bags for all participants, plus a few extra
- Variety of colors of duct tape
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors)

- Optional: Tools and materials for embellishment, such as stickers, permanent markers, extra pieces of colored duct tape

Preparation for Activity

- Purchase duct tape in colors. (The Duck Tape brand comes in 20 colors.) Each bag will need eleven 12-inch strips of tape to cover with vertical strips.

Description of Activity

As they make their own reusable lunch bags with duct tape, participants gain a hands-on experience with flexibility.

Distribute a lunch bag to each participant and provide a variety of colors of duct tape and several pair of scissors at worktables. Invite participants to lay duct tape horizontally, vertically or diagonally to cover the paper bag with tape. The leader resource, Duct Tape Lunch Bag, gives step-by-step instructions. You may also wish to tell participants:

- Overlapping the strips will make the bag strong and water-resistant.
- Laying the tape vertically will help make the bag easy to fold.
- They can use more duct tape, or stickers, to patch open areas after they are done.

ACTIVITY 4: KORE CHANT (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of leader resource 2, [Chant — Kore Chant](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Listen to a tune for the chant, [Kore Chant](#) online.
- You can also make up your own tune. Or, use this as a spoken chant. Note: If you are not sure how to incorporate the provided counter harmony couplet, you may add it as a final verse.
- If you like, invite a musically or poetically inclined volunteer to help you lead this activity.

Description of Activity

Embody the feeling of flexibility through music.

Gather the group in a circle. Introduce the chant, which is used by contemporary earth-based worship groups. Say or sing the first couplet of each stanza, and invite

participants to repeat the couplet with you. Then, lead the next verse.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — duct tape
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.

- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice.

Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to reflect on times they were flexible or changing and times they were rigid, as they pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. Offer the following questions:

- How have you changed this year?
- Have your beliefs changed since you were little?
- When were you not able to be flexible? Why?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. You may extinguish the chalice now, or after your closing ritual.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

Extinguish the chalice now, or at the conclusion of your closing ritual.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do this week that relates to flexibility. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and be flexible!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or

"Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., flexibility], I will

...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: "Go, UU, go!"

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to add a piece of duct tape to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

If the chalice is still lit, extinguish it now.

Distribute Taking It Home handouts.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Change within Our Congregation

Invite a guest from your congregational leadership to talk about how your congregation has changed over time. Examples might include differences among the ministers who have served the congregation over the years, changes in the order of service, relocation to a new meeting space, demographic changes in the membership or evolution in the way the congregation celebrates particular holidays and events.

"Used to Think" Chapel

Engage participants in preparing a chapel service for younger children based on the exploration of things children (and adults) "used to think," in Edith F. Hunter's book, *Conversations with Children* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961).

Hunter poses the question, "Did you ever think something when you were younger and then, when you got to be older, find out it wasn't that way at all?" She continues:

For example, when I was in the first grade, I used to think that children in the third grade were practically grown-ups, but then when I got to be in the third grade, I didn't feel grown-up at all. But then I thought sixth graders were really old.

Hunter gathered many "used to thinks" from children, including:

- I used to think that we lived on the "inside" of the world ball, not on the outside.
- I used to think you grew bigger on your birthday.
- I used to think that when there were double lines down the middle of the highway that motorcycles were supposed to go in the space between them.

Hunter also notes that over the course of human history, adults have had many "used to thinks," too. She includes:

- The people who lived in Greece several thousand years ago used to think that it was the trees shaking that made the wind blow.
- Many people alive at the time of Columbus used to think that if sailors rode out into the ocean off Spain, after a while their boats would fall off the edge of the world and monsters would eat them up.
- People used to think that tomatoes were poisonous.
- The people who lived when my grandmother was alive did used to think that it was positively dangerous to go 15 miles per hour. They used to think that there never could be a flying machine — it would fall out of the air.
- People used to think that humankind would never get to the moon, or away from our earth at all.

As the group plans to introduce this topic to a younger group, give them opportunities to explore these questions for themselves. You might ask children to share some of their own "used-to-thinks." Then, you might challenge them to consider some of the things they think now, in terms of whether they will still think the same things are true a year from now, or five years from now, or when they are grown. Remind children that there will always be more things to find out.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

The bend in the road is not the end of the road, unless you refuse to take the turn. — Anonymous

IN TODAY'S SESSION . . .

Duct tape was explored as a symbol for flexibility, a tool we find in our Unitarian Universalist faith. The children manipulated duct tape to discover how its flexibility makes it a useful tool. The group explored the Unitarian Universalist expectation of change and flexibility in one's understanding and beliefs. We reflected on the value of developing an open mind, a flexible faith, and an ability to live with changeable answers. We emphasized the importance of being informed and flexible decision-makers.

We learn about flexibility to illustrate that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will grow and adapt with you as your life changes
- Unitarian Universalism values acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations (third Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism comes from a flexible, living tradition that includes direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life (first Source)

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about . . .

As a family, share examples of times when flexibility has appeared or has been needed in each of your lives. Talk about how flexibility can be a tool of one's faith. You may like to use these questions:

- How have you changed this year?
- Describe a time when you felt you changed the most?

- When was a time when it might have been helpful to be flexible, but you were not able to be? Why were you not able to be flexible?

Ask everyone to think of ways in which your family is flexible. For example:

- Do different people take on different roles and responsibilities at different times of day, on different days, or during different months of the year?
- How do shifting needs and priorities determine how you allocate family resources (such as a car, a computer, or a parent's attention)?
- When does flexibility come into play in family decision-making? What happens when all family members are affected by a choice, such as what to do in free time or what to eat at a shared meal (as in the story, "Answer Mountain," which children heard in this session)?
- How may the balance of freedoms and responsibilities shift among individuals, or for each individual, as children in the family mature?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try . . .

FAMILY DISCOVERY

For a hands-on exploration of how flexibility makes duct tape versatile, try some [Duck Tape Club projects](#) such as a picture frame, a rose, a bookmark, and a bracelet.

Two books with more duct tape crafts are:

Got Tape? Roll Out the Fun with Duct Tape! by Ellie Schiedermaier (Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 2002).

The author, a high school student in Wisconsin, suggests twenty-five duct tape projects including a tie, a picture frame, and a crown and tiara.

Ductigami: The Art of the Tape by Joe Wilson (Toronto: Boston Mills Press, 1999). This book provides a brief history of duct tape and instructions for fourteen projects including an apron, a tool belt, and a wallet.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Find a flexibility message in "The Oak Tree and the Reeds," in the book, *Once Upon A Time: Storytelling to Teach Character and Prevent Bullying; Lessons from 99 Multicultural Folk Tales for Grades K-8* by Elisa Davy Pearmain (Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group, 2006). The author provides guidance on how to tell a story, along with activities for a group of children — or a family — to do together.

See if your congregational library has or wishes to [order the book](#) *A Lamp in Every Corner, A Unitarian*

Universalist Storybook by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004). This is a collection of twenty-one short stories that amplify and explore the seven Principles through Unitarian Universalist history and traditions, including stories about famous Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist men and women. It includes helpful suggestions for the novice storyteller and a list of further storytelling resources. Take turns reading or performing the stories in your family.

STORY: ANSWER MOUNTAIN

By Sarah E. Skwire; used with permission. This story appears in *What If Nobody Forgave? and Other Stories* edited by Colleen M. McDonald (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2003).

For a dramatic storytelling, make signs that say "The Answer Is No," "The Answer Is Yes" and "The Answer Is under Construction." Show each sign when it is mentioned in the story, or engage three participants to each hold up their sign at the appropriate time.

Long ago and far away, or yesterday and just around the corner, or maybe somewhere halfway in between, there was a town that sat, quiet and content, tucked into the shadow of a mountain. And carved on the side of that mountain, big and tall so no one could miss them, were the words, "THE ANSWER IS NO."

No one knew where the words came from or why they were there. They'd just always been there.

But, oh my goodness, the people who lived in that town cuddled into that mountain were glad to have those words there. Because whenever the townspeople had a question, all they had to do was to look up the mountain and read it. The answer was always NO.

Making decisions was very simple, and life went on smoothly and easily in the town cuddled into the mountain . . . until one day. Now, on that particular day, Ma Custus was about to make dinner for her family. And she just couldn't decide — because sometimes you can't — whether to make stew or steak, pasta or potatoes, dumplings or doughnuts, so she went out into the yard.

"Should I make liver for dinner tonight?" she asked, and looked up at the mountain. And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS NO."

"All right. I knew that, really. Nobody is crazy about liver. But should I maybe make steak for dinner? "

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS NO."

"Should I make chicken? "

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS NO."

"Should I make tacos or tofu? Baked beans or broccoli? Pork chops or popcorn? "

The mountain said nothing but "THE ANSWER IS NO."

Ma Custus asked more questions until the sun disappeared behind the mountain. She kept on asking questions until the sun came up around the other way. And all the mountain ever said was "THE ANSWER IS NO." Because Ma couldn't get an answer that was any

kind of answer, she and her family went all night and all the next day and all the next night without dinner.

Finally, Ma just gave up and made liver anyway — even though the mountain said no, and even though everyone hated liver — because liver was the first thing she'd thought of. But Ma Custus had had enough. She glared at the mountain, stamped her foot, and shook her fist. "Why is the answer always 'NO?' Why can't you just say 'YES' for once?"

Ma turned around and stomped away to ring the town bell and call a town meeting. Well, when that bell rang, the whole town came running. From the oldest man with the longest beard to the youngest kids who still needed carrying, no one would miss a town meeting. They all came, and they all listened carefully as Ma Custus told her story.

"Seems to me," she said, "that we've got a problem. That mountain just isn't helping us like it should. Seems to me it would be nice if it would say 'YES' for a while."

The townsfolk knew Ma Custus had a point, but they didn't much like this idea — changing something that had been the same for so long. But after they thought and then thought some more, they finally nodded solemnly. The mountain would have to be re-carved.

Mason Sharp, the stone carver, nodded along with the rest of them. He scratched his nose, adjusted his cap, and slowly gazed up the length of the mountain.

Then he cleared his throat and said, in his gravelly voice, "Looks to me like I could do the carving, if that's all right with all of you."

And so it was. Mason spent the next two weeks up on the side of the mountain, chiseling and chipping and carving away, and coming down only when it got too dark to see. And when he was done, the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS YES."

Mason rang the bell to call the town together, and once again they all came running. From the oldest woman with the whitest hair to the youngest kids who still needed carrying, they all wanted to see the new sign, and they all wanted to cheer for the stone carver and all his hard work.

Ma Custus, who had started all of this, came right up to the front of the crowd. She figured she ought to be the person to ask the first question of this new and different mountain, since she'd discovered the problem with the old one. She stepped right up to the foot of the mountain, looked way up to the top, and asked, "Should I make liver for dinner tonight?"

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS YES." Well, now, Ma Custus almost fell over with surprise. "But Pa Custus told me he'd never forgive me if I served liver again, and all my kids threatened to hide in the barn for a week. Should I really serve liver?"

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS YES."

The townspeople began to grumble. They didn't like the sound of this. Ma Custus's family grumbled the loudest.

"But, well, I can't," Ma said. "I mean, I just can't serve liver again. I promised I wouldn't!"

"Are you telling me I should break my promise?"

The mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS YES."

The grumbling got louder. And Ma Custus, well, she glared at the mountain again, stamped her foot and shook her fist, and she turned to the townspeople and said, "This just isn't right! This just can't be right! What are we going to do?"

Once again, the townsfolk put on their thinking caps. Everyone thought: Ma Custus, Pa Custus, and all the Custus kids (who probably thought the hardest of all, because they were worried about the liver — very worried). Finally, the smallest but one of the Custus kids piped up.

"Why does there have to be just one answer? Can't we have more?"

The townspeople gasped. No one had ever thought of such a thing before. They mumbled and grumbled and talked among themselves. Finally they decided that the mountain ought to say, "THE ANSWER IS SOMETIMES YES AND SOMETIMES NO AND SOMETIMES WAIT AND SEE AND SOMETIMES I JUST DON'T KNOW."

Mason the stone carver, who had been listening to all of this talk, cleared his throat, scratched his nose, adjusted his cap, and said, "I think I can do it. I don't mind — not really — even if I did just finish carving in the new change. But, well, it's going to take a lot of time, and I can't work all day long like I did the last time. How about if I work on it when I can, and we'll hang us up some kind of sign on the mountain that lets people know that the answer is coming?"

And so it was.

The funny thing was that, for a little while, Mason worked on the mountain every day. And for a little while, everyone in town waited eagerly to see the new answer. But soon, the stonemason got tired of climbing the mountain every day and everyone else got tired of waiting, and they all started asking each other questions and helping everyone else find answers that seemed to fit. The townspeople realized that different questions

usually had different answers, that sometimes the same question had more than one answer, and that there were many more answers than they had imagined. And all of that was fine with them.

After a while they thought that maybe the answer the mountain was giving them right then, just as it was, was better and more sensible than any other answer it had given. And so they left it as it was.

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION."

LEADER RESOURCE 1: DUCT TAPE LUNCH BAG

Step 1: Lay your paper bag down on a flat surface with the bottom flap of the bag facing down.

Step 2: Rip several strips of duct tape. These will be used to cover the side that is facing up.

Step 3: Tape the front of the bag, overlapping each strip slightly. You can lay your strips horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Overlapping the strips will make the bag stronger and create a water-resistant seal. If a strip is slightly off, fix it later with a patch across the space, even as part of a decoration.

Step 4: Trim off excess tape, or fold it around the bag.

Step 5: Turn the bag over, making sure to fold down (or flip) the flap (bottom) of the bag to fit underneath the side you've just covered. Repeat steps two through four.



LEADER RESOURCE 1: DUCT TAPE LUNCH BAG PAGE 2



Step 6: To tape the sides, open your bag and stand it upright.

Step 7: Cover the sides with duct tape. Laying the tape vertically will help make the bag easy to fold. In addition, placing your hand in the bag will give you a solid surface, making the sides easier to cover. Trim off any excess tape.

Step 8: Cover the bottom of the bag with one strip torn into 2 6" strips, trimming off any excess tape.

*The end result should be a duct tape lunch bag that folds flat after use with the original folds of the paper bag. Add tape or pen decorations, a handle, or whatever your imagination can think of.



From the [Duck® Tape Club](#) website used with permission.

See other [Duck® Tape Club projects](#), such as the Picture Frame, Bookmark, and Bracelet.



LEADER RESOURCE 2: CHANT — KORE CHANT

Listen to a tune for the chant, [Kore Chant](#) online. You can also hear it on the track, [Spider Woman/Kore Chant](#) on the CD, *She Changes: A Collection of Songs from Healing Circles*, by the group *Moving Breath* on a label by the same name.

If you are not sure how to musically incorporate the counter-harmony couplet, you may add it as a final verse.

You can also make up your own tune, or lead this as a spoken chant.

She changes everything she touches

And everything she touches changes

She changes everything she touches

And everything she touches changes.

He changes everything he touches

And everything he touches changes.

He changes everything he touches

And everything he touches changes.

It changes everything it touches,

And everything it touches changes.

It changes everything it touches,

And everything it touches changes.

Change is, touch is. Touch is, change is.

Change is, touch is. Touch is, change is.

Change us, touch us. Touch us, change us.

Change us, touch us. Touch us, change us.

Counter-harmony

We are changers. And everything we touch can change.

FIND OUT MORE

The story, "Answer Mountain," comes from [What If Nobody Forgave? and Other Stories](#), Second Edition, edited by Colleen M. McDonald (Boston: Skinner House, 2002), available from the UUA online bookstore.

The game, Outright Lie, comes from "[Deep Fun](#)," a collection of games and activities published by the Unitarian Universalist Association Youth Office.

Is There Such a Thing As Being Too Flexible?

Valuing flexibility and change may bring the accusation that Unitarian Universalist faith is "wishy-washy," that is, without a moral core. A compelling article by Warren R. Ross ("[Does tolerance disarm religious liberals?](#)" *UU World*, Fall, 2006) discusses this challenge.

Duct Tape

There are a variety of projects to make with duct tape. See other Duck Tape Club projects, such as a picture frame, a rose, a bookmark, and a bracelet, [online](#).

Two books with more duct tape crafts are:

Got Tape? Roll out the Fun With Duct Tape! by Ellie Schiedermayer (Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 2002). The author, a high school student in Wisconsin, suggests twenty-five duct tape projects including a tie, a picture frame, and a crown and tiara.

Ductigami: The Art of the Tape by Joe Wilson (Toronto: Boston Mills Press, 1999). This book provides a brief history of duct tape and instructions for fourteen projects including an apron, a tool belt, and a wallet.

SESSION 5: REFLECTION (MIRROR)

INTRODUCTION

*Hello darkness, my old friend,
I've come to talk with you again,
Because a vision softly creeping,
Left its seeds while I was sleeping,
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains,
Within the sounds of silence.*
— Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, "Sounds of Silence"

The mirror symbolizes reflection. In this session, there are opportunities to explore physical reflection and to consider the tool of reflection in our faith. Discussion may include when, where, and how we take the time to listen inside ourselves for a still, small voice. As leaders, you will want to emphasize that our still small voice can be thought of as our conscience. In addition, some people think of it as the voice of God. Allow time for participants to engage the issue of when they have difficult questions and have used, or can use, reflection to think about the answers.

You will need to obtain some meditative music to help you create a reflective atmosphere for the Opening and for Activity 3: Reflection and Artistic Expression. Choose music ahead of time and arrange to use (or bring) a CD or tape player.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Teach participants that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will nurture your spirit through reflection
- Present reflection as a tool we can use to affirm the fourth Unitarian Universalist Principle which encourages a free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- Illustrate how, as Unitarian Universalists, we look to direct experience of that transcending

mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life justice (Source)

- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the physical qualities of a mirror and use the symbol of a mirror as a way to think about inward reflection
- Learn about the place of inward reflection in their own lives and Unitarian Universalist faith
- Learn the story of the "still, small voice" heard by the prophet Elijah in Hebrew scripture
- Experience the properties of a mirror through active games
- Create a personal symbol of reflection to remind them to listen to the still, small voice inside themselves
- Experience moments of reflection and respond to their own reflections by drawing

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Elijah and the Still, Small Voice	8
Activity 2: Mirror Games	15
Activity 3: Reflection and Artistic Expression	22
Activity 4: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on reflection, you may wish to spend a few moments focusing on situations when you are most reflective, such as around a campfire, on a mountain top, or at

night. What kinds of things do you think about? What does your still, small voice say to you?

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has differing opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Candles and matches or lighter
- Mirrors and other reflective items such as prisms, metal sculpture, glitter
- Pieces of aluminum foil, shiny paper, pencils, and permanent markers for participants to share
- Quiet music CD or tape, and player
- Optional: Clear candleholders for placing candles in
- Optional: Drapes for covering windows, as needed, to darken the room

Preparation for Activity

- Make a reflective display in the Council Circle space. Try creating a centerpiece with mirrors (or other reflective items such as prisms, metal or glitter). Candles in clear candleholders will create extra reflection.
- Set out foil, paper, pencils, and markers in the Council Circle space.
- Darken the room, using drapes if needed. Light some candles and put on quiet music.

Description of Activity

Use this time to help participants find a space that feels reflective and begin to identify internal reflection.

Welcome participants quietly as they arrive. Encourage them to find a comfortable place to sit in the Council Circle space. Invite participants to draw on the foil or paper, and/or use the foil as an art medium. Call their attention to the glimmers from the foil as it reflects the candlelight.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — a mirror
- Toolbox of Our Faith poster and clear tape
- Candles and matches or lighter
- Mirrors and other reflective items such as prisms, metal sculpture, glitter

- Pieces of aluminum foil, shiny paper, pencils, and permanent markers for participants to share
- Quiet music CD or tape, and player
- Optional: Drapes for covering windows, as needed, to darken the room

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in a circle.
- This Opening begins with quiet meditation and/or play with the reflective materials in the Council Circle space. Prepare a reflective display in the Council Circle space. Try creating a centerpiece of mirrors (or other reflective items such as prisms, metal, or glitter). Candles in clear candleholders will create extra reflection.
- Set out foil, paper, pencils, and markers in the Council Circle space.
- Darken the room, light some candles, and put on quiet music.

Description of Activity

With participants gathered in the Council Circle space, and quiet music playing, tell them the session is starting now. You may say:

Today we will begin our session in a quiet tone that suits a mood of reflection. Reflection is the quality of our Unitarian Universalist faith we will explore today, and the Tool of the Day is a mirror.

Begin quieting the participants as preparation for a time of reflection. The dark and the quiet music should set the tone. While this session provides more reflection time for participants later, this brief experience will help participants find a space that feels reflective and begin to identify internal reflection.

Tell the children they may close their eyes and reflect inwardly, or enjoy the beauty of the flickering candlelight while using a medium that is reflective, such as the foil.

If some participants seem to be having trouble focusing inward or there are some who have attention span challenges, you may wish to guide the group to first focus outward, as you formally begin the session. Engage the group to be quiet enough to hear things around them. Ask them to share what they hear. Then, can they be even quieter and hear things even farther away? Once they have quieted, you can ask them if they can hear their breathing. Then ask them to try to hear

their heartbeat. Finally, invite them to listen to the still, small voice inside themselves.

In the quiet, invite the children to open their eyes as you light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted, for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up a mirror and tell them it is the Tool of the Day. Pass one or more mirrors around the circle, inviting children to share their prior experiences with mirrors.

Lead a discussion to introduce the mirror as a symbol of inward reflection. You might ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer.

Say, in your own words:

The mirror represents reflection. The mirror represents times when Unitarian Universalists listen to their hearts and nurture their spirits. We listen to the still, small voice which is inside of us when we reflect. Unitarian Universalism is a faith that values each person's path of questioning and searching for truth. This is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding. One of the Sources of our faith is from each person's sense of mystery and awe — a sense we can exercise in ourselves through reflection.

Ask a volunteer to contribute a piece of foil art they have made before the session began, or invite a participant to choose a piece of foil now, and glue or tape it to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write the word "Reflection" to represent today's theme.

Collect the mirror(s) and extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — ELIJAH AND THE STILL, SMALL VOICE (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Elijah and the Still, Small Voice](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell it to the group.

- If you have darkened the room, bring in some light.

Description of Activity

Read or tell the story.

ACTIVITY 2: MIRROR GAMES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Variety of handheld mirrors
- For Mirror Walk. Objects to create obstacles to walking, such as chairs, rubber safety cones, or empty cardboard boxes

Preparation for Activity

- Decide which mirror games you will use, depending on the group, the space, and the amount of time you have.
- **For Mirror Walk.** You will need a large, open space that you can purposely clutter with chairs, cones, or cardboard boxes to make an obstacle course.

Description of Activity

Participants explore the qualities of a mirror through active games in which they use their bodies in space.

Mirror Walk

Ask participants to try to walk backwards from one side of the area to the other, avoiding the obstacles you have placed and using only mirrors to see.

As a variation, assign each participant a partner who is allowed to talk and help the participants with the mirror. To make the obstacle course harder, have one participant walk backwards without a mirror, while two others accompany him/her on either side, each holding a mirror for the participant who is walking.

Mirror, Mirror

Form pairs, and instruct each pair to choose one person to be the mirror and one to be the actor. Let them start slow. You might suggest the actor improvise a dance or perform an action usually done in front of a mirror, like brushing teeth, or checking out their outfit. After a minute or so, direct them to switch roles.

Then introduce a change, such as:

- Be a fun house mirror.
- Exaggerate your partner's movements instead of reflecting them.
- Be an "opposite" mirror ... and so on.

After a while, let them abandon the switching back and forth, and try to initiate movement and reflect the movement of their partner at the same time.

Including All Participants

Mirror Walk. Partner a sight-limited participant with a child who can see, and have them walk backwards together; it may turn out that a child without sight is less unnerved by walking backwards than one who is used to seeing the path ahead.

A child with limited mobility for whom an obstacle course would be difficult or unsafe can take the role of calling advice to people who are trying to walk the course backwards.

Mirror, Mirror. A child who cannot see can mirror another child by keeping physical contact with his/her partner. You might engage the entire group to try this activity with fingertips, knees, and foreheads touching, so that every pair can experience this type of "mirroring."

ACTIVITY 3: REFLECTION AND EXPRESSION (22 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- CD or tape of meditative music, and player
- Blank paper and color markers for drawing
- Small oval, circular, or rectangular mirrors for all participants
- Permanent markers in a variety of colors, craft decorations, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and glue

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain meditative music such as Pachelbel's *Canon*, classical guitar solos, Native American flute music (R. Carlos Nakai, for one), quiet harp or zither music, Zen flute music, or other music suggested for meditation.
- Obtain small mirrors for all participants to decorate, permanent markers in a variety of colors, and craft items that will adhere to a mirror's surface such as stickers and glitter glue — all available at an arts and crafts store. See the Resources section for sources for small mirrors.
- Set out the mirrors and decorating materials on worktables.

Description of Activity

The children experience using expressive media in a meditative atmosphere, as they draw in response to

their own inner reflections and decorate a personal mirror to keep.

Gather the group in the Council Circle space. Tell them what to expect. You may say:

I'm going to put on some quiet music and ask you to listen to the still, small voice inside of yourself as the music plays. What images does the music bring to mind? Use the next few minutes or so to draw something that you see in your mind's eye or hear in that still, small voice. Perhaps it will be an abstract expression, or maybe a picture of something. Any questions?

Answer any questions. Then ask the participants to get into a comfortable position for listening and drawing. Distribute blank paper and color markers.

Play the music. After a few minutes, invite the participants to withdraw from their reflective mood by turning down the music briefly and telling them they have 30 seconds more to draw. Use your judgment about how long the participants are engaged in this activity.

When you turn off the music, invite participants to share an image that came to mind, or how the reflective experience made them feel. Allow some discussion.

Direct the children to the worktables where you have set the mirror-decorating materials. Ask them to choose a mirror to decorate and take home as a reminder that reflection is a tool of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

Note: Permanent marker can be rubbed off the mirror's surface with a finger until the marker ink dries, which takes about an hour.

Suggest that the children refer to the drawings they have just made, or even cut out and paste parts of their drawings, to decorate their mirrors.

ACTIVITY 4: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a mirror
- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color

- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, a piece of foil, a marker, and clear tape

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice.

Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick and respond to these questions. You needn't pose all the questions; use whichever you need to prompt discussion.

- How does reflection help you see your internal self? How is it similar to the way a mirror helps you see your external self?
- What are the situations when you are most reflective, or most able to be reflective (such as around a campfire, on a mountain top, at night)?
- What kinds of things do you think about? What does your still, small voice say to you?
- What experiences have you had when reflection has given you fresh ideas? Calmed you down? Helped you solve a problem?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Offer this reading, from a contemporary essay by Rabbi Michael Comins. You may wish to tell the group that Rabbi Comins has traveled to the site where Elijah is said to have had the experience of hearing the "still, small voice."

Not all silences are alike. Put in earplugs or enter a soundproof room and the silence is muggy and oppressive. Silence in a forested,

mountain wilderness is rare. The wind howls, leaves rustle, birds chirp, insects buzz, creeks "sing." True silence, perhaps on a peak when the wind stops, is actually quite rare. It hits suddenly, with dramatic impact.

In Israel's deserts and the Sinai [where Elijah's story takes place], where the wind is usually still for at least half the day, the silence is vastly different. Close your eyes and wait for the wind to stop. This silence is total, yet light and natural — even embracing.

And precious. The smallest movement of an insect or the slightest breeze registers audibly. You hear the ruffling of your sleeve, or the call of a raven miles away. This is desert silence. Easily disturbed. A fragile silence.

From this desert silence come words that Elijah hears with his inner ear.

The voice asks, "Ma lekha po, Elijah?" Literally, the sentence reads, "What is for you here, Elijah?" But scholars translate this sentence as an expression, "Why are you here, Elijah?" or "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

If we stop to listen in the stillness, this is a question any of us can hear, anytime we walk the desert.

Who am I, when my achievements, titles, and bank account are left behind? When all that really matters is whether I can find shade and shelter. When the more possessions I carry on my back, the less chance I have of finding water.

Who am I, when the person I have become is a burden I can no longer carry, and the self-image and personality habits I have worked so hard to cultivate in the past, are precisely what might lead me to my death now?

When everything nonessential has been shed like a snake's skin, who am I?

Complete the Closing ritual with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

We gather in community to celebrate

the glories

and mysteries

of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they might like to do to give reflection a larger role in their lives. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and reflect!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., reflection], I will ...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: "Go, UU, go!"

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape or glue a piece of foil (to represent a mirror) and write the word "Reflection" on the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute Taking It Home handouts.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Inward reflection as a spiritual activity rarely just "happens." Design a Faith in Action project to learn about, observe, and engage in an intentional practice of spiritual reflection. Individuals in your congregation may be experienced in a practice that they could share with the group.

Research online about Zen or yoga meditation and locate meditation centers or classes in your area. You can hear guided meditations for children and adults on websites such as [Learning Meditation](#).

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

Hello darkness, my old friend,

I've come to talk with you again

Because a vision softly creeping

Left its seeds while I was sleeping

And the vision that was planted in my brain

Still remains

Within the sounds of silence.

— Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, "Sounds of Silence"

IN TODAY'S SESSION . . .

The children explored the physical reflective properties of mirrors. We used a mirror as a symbol to teach about reflection as a tool we find in our Unitarian Universalist faith. We talked about using reflection when we have difficult questions and need to think about the answers. And, we talked about when, where, and how we take the time to listen inside ourselves for a still, small voice.

The children learned that we often think of our own "still, small voice" as our conscience and that some people think of it as the voice of God. The group heard the story, adapted from Hebrew scripture (I Kings 19:11-12), of the prophet Elijah and his experience hearing a "still, small voice."

We learned about reflection to illustrate that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you nurture your spirit through reflection
- Unitarian Universalism encourages a free and responsible search for truth and meaning (fourth Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism learns from direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life (first Source)

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about . . .

When are times that different people in your family find it easy to be reflective? Around a campfire? on a mountaintop? at night?

Talk about the kinds of things each of you think about when you are being reflective. Does reflecting give you fresh ideas? Calm you down? Help you solve problems?

What does your "still, small voice" say to you?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try . . .

Talk about ways you have used, or could use, reflection to help find meaningful, truthful answers to difficult questions in your lives.

FAMILY ADVENTURE

Many cultures and faiths use meditative practices to foster inward reflection. Explore forms of [meditation](#) that members of your family could learn together. Research online about [Zen meditation](#) or yoga meditation and locate meditation centers or classes in your area. You can hear guided meditations for children and adults on websites such as [Learning Meditation](#).

A FAMILY RITUAL

Try setting a time, such as during a family meal or before children go to sleep, to be deliberate about reflecting on events and issues. Ask each other to reflect on something unusual about your day or something that happened which made you think. Share your reflections with one another.

STORY: ELIJAH AND THE STILL, SMALL VOICE

Adapted from Hebrew scripture (I Kings 19:11-12).

Read or tell the story.

There are many stories from Hebrew scripture and Jewish tradition about a prophet, Elijah. Elijah believed there was one, single god when many others believed that there were a number of different gods, one stronger or more powerful than another. One of the popular gods of the time was called Baal. Elijah challenged the followers of Baal to a contest to prove whether his god or their god had more power. Elijah won. When the queen, Jezebel, found out, she was very angry at Elijah. He fled into the wilderness to escape.

After a day's journey, Elijah rested under a juniper tree. He felt afraid, and tired, and very much alone. As he dozed, an angel came to him and said "Wake up, and have something to eat and drink." When Elijah opened his eyes, there was cake and water for him. He ate and drank, and then dozed off again.

After a while, the angel returned and woke Elijah again to eat and drink, saying Elijah would need his strength because he still had a long distance to travel. Elijah continued on, to a mountain called Horeb, where his god was said to be. He found a cave in the mountainside and went inside.

While Elijah sat in the cave, he heard a voice ask him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He believed the question came from his god, so he answered, "I am not sure what I am doing here, except that I'm very scared and frustrated. I defended you and won a contest that proved you were the one, true god, stronger than the god Baal. Even so, there are still many people who do not believe in your power, and many who refuse to keep their covenant with you. And Jezebel the queen is after me. She's angry that I won the contest. Now I'm afraid for my life, and I do not know what to do."

The voice spoke to Elijah again. Because he believed the voice belonged to his god, Elijah did what it asked him to do. He came out of the cave, and stood at the mouth of the cave, atop Mount Horeb, hoping he might feel his god's presence and understand what to do next.

Suddenly, while Elijah stood there, a great, strong wind whipped around the mountains, breaking off pieces of rock all around which went crashing down. But Elijah did not hear the voice of his god in the wind.

Then an earthquake shook the mountain up and down, with a terrific rumbling, but Elijah again did not hear the voice of his god.

Then came a fire, sweeping across the rocks and brush outside the cave. But Elijah knew his god was not in that fire, either.

After the fire, it was quiet. And then, in the calm, Elijah heard the still, small voice.

FIND OUT MORE

Two sermons offer Unitarian Universalist interpretations of the passage from scripture about Elijah and the still, small voice:

["The Still, Small Voice of Calm,"](#) given March 18, 2001, by Reverend Gary E. Smith in Concord, Massachusetts, relates the story of Elijah, a tired prophet, to modern UUs' lives. He says, in part:

Up until this point, the Israelites have depended heavily upon the wind, the earthquake, and the fire to prove the power and the might of the one they hold most holy. What if instead the God of our forebears is to be found in the power of silence, found not in this booming anthropomorphic bellow of an angry father, but in a "small voice of calm?" This is a radical theological change and not one with which the storyteller necessarily lingers.

... I think we often find ourselves in Elijah's place: overworked, overstressed, burned out, tired of trying to prove ourselves, under-appreciated, at the end of our rope, alone, and tired ... We can find ourselves in Elijah's place in the wider world, particularly in our passion for politics and change. It all sometimes seems so hopeless. What difference can one person make?

... Elijah is a caricature for all of this, it seems to me, to the point that he is reduced to challenging his detractors to a fire ignition contest. Better that he had skipped that and gone directly to what he does next. He heads for the wilderness. He rests. He dreams. Better yet, he listens to his dreams.

The essay, ["Elijah and the 'Still, Small Voice': A Desert Reading,"](#) by Rabbi Michael Comins can be found on the Torah TrekR website. Rabbi Comins proposes the translation "voice of fragile silence," based on his own experience reflecting on Elijah's story while sitting under the shadow of Mt. Sinai and reflecting on Elijah's experience. He says, in part

Not all silences are alike. Put in earplugs or enter a soundproof room and the silence is

muggy and oppressive. Silence in a forested, mountain wilderness is rare. The wind howls, leaves rustle, birds chirp, insects buzz, creeks "sing." True silence, perhaps on a peak when the wind stops, is actually quite rare. It hits suddenly, with dramatic impact.

In Israel's deserts and the Sinai, where the wind is usually still for at least half the day, the silence is vastly different. If you are in the desert now, close your eyes and wait for the wind to stop. This silence is total, yet light and natural — even embracing.

And precious. The smallest movement of an insect or the slightest breeze registers audibly. You hear the ruffling of your sleeve, or the call of a raven miles away. This is desert silence. Easily disturbed. A fragile silence.

A sermon by Rabbi Janet Marder, given in September 2004 at Temple Beth Am, Los Altos Hills, California, articulates a contemporary message she finds in the story of Elijah and the still, small voice. Read ["Does God Still Speak to People?"](#) online. She says, in part:

The text says that God passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks, but God was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came fire, but God was not in the fire. Finally, after the fire came "kol d'mama daka" — a phrase that is sometimes translated "a still, small voice." That is the only answer that Elijah gets; but it is enough to send him back to the world to do God's work.

Most important for us, today, though, may be our experiences of the still, small voice — the quiet yet overpowering consciousness inside us of what is right, of what is real, of what matters in this life and what is essential for us to do. The still, small voice speaks the deepest truths we know. It comes to us at moments of intense joy and also in sadness, when we feel most alone. The still, small voice can lift us out of despair, as it did Elijah; it can remind us that our lives have meaning and purpose, and that there is work to be done in this world.

SESSION 6: EXPRESSION (PAINTBRUSH)

INTRODUCTION

Beauty without expression is boring.

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The paintbrush symbolizes personal expression of our inner life and thoughts. In this session, participants engage in and reflect on various means of personal expression, such as painting, writing, music, and theater. Allow time for participants to engage the issues of what they might like to use as a tool for their own personal expression. Emphasize that there is no one way that will feel comfortable for everyone. In addition, you will want to note that there may well be ways of expression that go beyond the arts, such as building a trail, inventing a computer or creating a personal identity.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Teach that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you express your inner voice and your inner thoughts
- Introduce the Unitarian Universalist Principles that affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person and acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth
- Demonstrate that personal expression is one way Unitarian Universalism affirms the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Reflect on expression as a quality of their Unitarian Universalist faith
- Engage in a variety of games which emphasize different forms of expression

- Experience an exploration of paint and movement that is focused on the process, not a finished product
- Consider which type of expression they feel most comfortable with and might use in the future
- Gain understanding that personal expression is an aspect of Unitarian Universalist faith that honors the inherent worth and dignity of every person

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — The Cellist of Sarajevo	10
Activity 2: Word Bodies	10
Activity 3: Skits in a Bag	10
Activity 4: Responding to Music with Paint	15
Activity 5: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on expression, reflect on how you personally prefer to express yourself, and ways you might like to try.

Take an inventory of your own experiences with personal expression. Are you accustomed to expressing your inner thoughts, feelings, and self? How? Using an artistic medium, or some other way? What modes of expression draw you when you feel happy? when you feel sad?

In this session, you will encourage children to explore different ways of expressing themselves. If you have ever experienced "holding back" your own expressions — perhaps because you feared others might judge your creations, and by extension, your self — let your experiences help you create a safe environment for the children in the group to express themselves freely.

The experience of expression is more important than any artwork a child may produce. Prepare yourself to enable children's expressive process.

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has different opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Unruled index cards or small squares of blank paper
- A variety of materials for doodling, such as colored pencils, markers, watercolors, tempera paint, and brushes or rubber stamps and ink pads
- Optional: Magazines, scraps of paper, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and glue sticks for collage-making

Preparation for Activity

- Set out materials at one or more worktables. You may wish to place different media at separate tables — for example, make one table a "collage table."
- Optional: Make a sign that says "Doodle Table" and place it with the materials.

Description of Activity

This activity is intended for the time before the session when children arrive individually, that is, "straggle in."

Welcome participants as they arrive. Invite them to sit at the "Doodle Table" and explore a variety of artistic expression materials. Try calling the work "doodling" to keep the expectations informal and without pressure.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — a paintbrush
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster and clear tape

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in the Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Participants will reflect on the quality of expression as a part of their Unitarian Universalist faith.

Gather the children in a circle, in the Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted, for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up the tool of the day, tell the children what it is called, and pass it around the circle. As the children pass it, invite them to share their own experiences with paintbrushes.

Lead a discussion to introduce the paintbrush as a symbol of the value of expressing our inner selves. Ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer.

Explain that the paintbrush represents the expression of our inner thoughts and lives. Say, in your own words:

Unitarian Universalism is a faith that that will help you express your inner voice and your inner thoughts. This is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding. One of the sources of our faith comes from the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life. One of our Principles says that Unitarian Universalism values acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. We use personal expression as a way to grow spiritually.

You may tape one or several of participants' doodle works onto the Toolbox of Our Faith Poster, and write the word "Expression." Or, add a paintbrush to the poster during the Closing.

Collect the tool. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — THE CELLIST OF SARAJEVO (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

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

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell or read it to the group.

Description of Activity

Gather participants in a comfortable configuration for listening to a story.

ACTIVITY 2: WORD BODIES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper and pencils for writing the words assigned to each group

Preparation for Activity

- Review this activity, Activity 4: Skits in a Bag, and Activity 5: Responding to Music with Paint. Decide how to allocate the time, depending on the amount of time you have, the space you are using, the children in the group, and the size of the group.
- Write out the words you want the children to form with their bodies. Keep the words short to fit the number of children in the small groups; some letters may require two or three people. Words can be random, such as CLOCK, VOTE, TAPE, SPELL. Or make up a set, based on animals (FISH, APE, LEMUR) or actions (FLY, RACE, JUMP).

Description of Activity

Participants express themselves in a different way from the artistic media by using their bodies to create letters and spell a word. This is a non-threatening way to introduce a movement activity that is inclusive of all, even those who wouldn't touch "dance" if it was introduced as such.

Explain that the children will work in small groups. Each group will be given a word, which they must spell with their bodies. For example, to spell "DOG," the group might have two people make a "D", one make an "O," and how might they make a "G"? What about the word, "CAT"? Walk through a few examples so the participants can get warmed up.

Form small groups of four or five children. Give each group a different word to express, and send the groups to separate corners or rooms to figure out how they will write the word with their bodies for the other group(s).

When the groups return, allow each to present their word. The first group to guess the word correctly gets to go next.

Variations

Participants can generate their own words and give them to a team to illustrate.

Or, try making one long word with everyone helping, such as FLAMING, CHALICE, RELIGION, or EXPRESSION.

With four or fewer participants, you can play the game non-competitively. Challenge the group to work together to create the letters of the word. Or, you might send one person out, have the others spell the word with their bodies, and then have that one person try to guess the word.

Including All Participants

With a movement-challenged child in the group, make sure there are letters in the words that can be formed incorporating that child. In fact, braces or a wheelchair might be assets for creating a word!

ACTIVITY 3: SKITS IN A BAG (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large grocery bags, one for each small group of four or five children
- For each grocery bag: a kitchen implement, something for the head, something for the feet, something electronic or from a desk, and a toy or silly item

Preparation for Activity

- Gather the items for the grocery bags. In each bag, place a kitchen implement (such as a whisk, a grater, a garlic press, or tongs), something for the head (such as a party hat, a bandana, a scarf, a helmet, ear muffs, or ear phones), something for the feet (such as flip-flops, boots, slippers, or moon boots), something electronic or from a desk (such as a telephone, a clock/radio, a surge protector, a stapler, or a protractor), and a toy or silly item (such as a rattle, a small car, a doll, or a whistle).

Description of Activity

Here's another game which uses a bit of theater arts for expression.

Form groups of four or five participants, and hand each group one of the filled grocery bags. Invite the groups to invent and then act out a very short, one-minute tale based on the items in the bag.

You might suggest they start with "Once upon a time there was a . . ." ("Once upon a time there was a cowboy who hated boots and only wore flip flops . . .") and end with "And that's why . . ." ("And that's why cowboys sing, 'Git along little flip-flops . . .").

Allow five minutes for groups to come up with a skit. Have the groups perform for one another. Make sure to clap for each group.

ACTIVITY 4: RESPONDING TO MUSIC WITH PAINT (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Music CDs or tapes, and player
- Cafeteria trays or large sheets of aluminum foil or glossy paper for all participants
- Tempera paints or finger paints
- Optional: Pudding to use as paint, large #10 cans
- Newspapers for covering worktables
- Optional: Large sheets of paper for making monotypes of tray designs
- Buckets of water and sponges, rags or paper towels for paint clean-up

Preparation for Activity

- Choose stirring music such as "Pictures at an Exposition" or "Night on Bald Mountain," classical music, or world beat music such as African drumming. You may wish to play a variety of musical tempos and moods.
- You will need access to one or more water sources, ideally, large sinks.
- Have tempera paints or finger paints ready to use. Another medium is to use pudding as finger paint. It makes clean-up very tasty! (Just be sure to use it on trays or foil; pudding will sink into paper and become a soggy mess.)
- Cafeteria trays make ideal surfaces for playing with finger paints. Borrow them from a school or a restaurant, or obtain extra-wide aluminum foil to make paint trays for all participants.
- Cover worktables with newspaper. Set out trays, paints, water, and sponges (or rags or paper towels).

Description of Activity

By this age, participants' schools have usually put away the painting trays. Bring them out and let the children try it again! Try using paintbrushes and tempera, or finger paints and allow participants time for exploring movement using the paint instead of concentrating on a finished product. Invite participants to lay paint any way they want to directly on their individual trays, and

improvise and change their designs easily, responding to the music.

If someone wants to keep a design, lay a piece of paper on top on the paint on the tray to print the design — a monoprint. Or, encourage children to simply wipe away their designs and make new ones.

Gather the group at worktables. Invite participants to work in their individual trays, using their hands to manipulate and move the paint to make designs that express the mood of the music, or their own mood. Encourage them to flow with the music and not worry too much about a finished product. Try several pieces of music which evoke different moods.

Leave time for participants to clean up. Rinse the trays of paint and wipe up spills on the table or floor with sponges and buckets of water. Roll up and discard the newspapers.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a paintbrush
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other non-flammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster
- Optional: Tape and a thin paintbrush

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of

Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.

- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice.

Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to reflect on their own experiences of personal expression. Ask them to pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. You may offer these questions:

- Which form of expression today was your favorite? Least favorite? Why?
- What form of expression will you continue to use? What might you like to try?

- How might you express your inner thoughts or inner life if you were very sad? Very happy?
- How might you continue to explore ways to express yourself?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Read this benediction:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.

— Christian scripture (Romans 12)

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive	Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.
To you I give	Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.
Together we share	All grasp hands.
By this we live	Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do to express their inner thoughts and selves. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and express yourself!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., expression], I will ...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape a paintbrush to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster, and write "Expression" on the poster.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute Taking It Home handouts.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

To experience personal expression as a quality of Unitarian Universalist faith, create a Faith in Action project where the children share their own expression with others or appreciate expression made by others.

Make and Donate Art Cards

Engage the children in making illustrations that reflect an inner thought or mood. Replicate their pictures as cards by color photocopying onto card stock. Donate cards to the congregation's social justice committee, another committee, or your minister, for use when someone is in need.

Experience Expression Together

Tour an art exhibit or attend a performance in your local area that portrays, in some way, the expression of an inner life. Arrange for the group to attend together. You will need to review your plan with your director of religious education and make sure you have enough adult volunteers to come with the group.

Meet afterward to share what the children saw, heard, and experienced.

This project gives a good opportunity to point out that someone's personal expression through art, music, dance, or another medium may be understood quite differently by any other person — and that that is OK.

Artistic Expressions of Faith

Visit another worship center particularly to see or hear its expressive artwork or music. Set up a time to visit stained glass windows in a Catholic church, an ornate shrine in a Buddhist temple, a special organ in a Protestant church, a statue in a Hindu temple, or a menorah that decorates the lobby of a Jewish synagogue.

Or, bring to the group a variety of artistic representations from different faiths, such as books of religious art, CDs of religious music, and artifacts. Invite the children and their families to also bring in examples. Reflect together on the variety of expressions. Look for similarities and differences. Write an article for your congregation's newsletter about your experience.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

Beauty without expression is boring.

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

IN TODAY'S SESSION . . .

The paintbrush symbolizes personal expression of our inner life and thoughts. In this session, there were opportunities to reflect on the various means for personal expression, such as painting, writing, music, and theater. The children heard about a variety of ways that people have expressed themselves through all times, from cave painting to modern dance. We allowed time for participants to explore hands-on and talk about media they might like to use as a tool for their own personal expression. We emphasized that there is no one way that will feel comfortable for everyone. In addition, we noted ways of expression that go beyond the arts, such as building a trail, inventing a computer, or creating a personal identity.

We learned about expression to illustrate that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you express your inner voice and your inner thoughts
- Unitarian Universalism affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and values acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth
- Unitarian Universalism looks to the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life

The children heard a story, "The Cellist of Sarajevo," about a man who used music to protest the violence of war in his city.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about . . .

Talk about different ways each individual in the family expresses their inner thoughts, emotions, and personalities. Who uses art forms, such as drawing, knitting, playing music, writing, carpentry, gardening, or dancing? Does anyone in your family express themselves in other ways, such as in the way they clean

and organize a room, prepare a meal, or invent ways to earn extra money?

You might ask your child what he/she enjoyed about exploring different modes of expression in today's session. Then, see how other members of your family answer these questions:

- Which form of expression is your favorite? Why?
- What other forms of expression might you like to try?
- How might you express your inner thoughts or inner life if you were very sad? Very happy?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try . . .

Look for books, movies, websites, and excursions your family can share, to investigate the variety of ways people have expressed themselves through all times, from cave painting to modern dance.

FAMILY ADVENTURE

Find easy and open-ended art projects in *Scribble Art: Independent Creative Art Experiences for Children* by MaryAnn Kohl, illustrated by Judy McCoy (Bright Ring Publishing, 1994). The projects in this book encourage process, discovery, and exploration.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Discover an adult finger-painting artist and her works! The website of [Mary Ann Brandt](#) has fascinating images and some how-to information.

The picture book, *The Big Orange Splot* by D. Manus Pinkwater, puts a lighthearted spin on the idea of expressing yourself. When a seagull drops a can of paint on Mr. Plumbean's house, he gets ideas about how to decorate it that cause ripples in the whole neighborhood. Eventually, each house becomes a reflection of the owner.

A FAMILY RITUAL

Have a variety of artistic media available for your family members to express their inner thoughts and lives. Drawing, poetry, sculpture, and music are among the ways that people have expressed themselves. Set aside a space and/or a time for family members to use different media as they wish.

STORY: THE CELLIST OF SARAJEVO

Read or tell the story.

You do not have to be rich or famous or even an adult to make a difference in the world. You do not need to have special training or be the ruler of a country. Many people who feel passionately about injustice in the world speak up about it. Speaking up can take many forms because different people have different ways of expressing themselves.

Here is one example:

In 1992, the country of Bosnia-Herzegovina was involved in a civil war. In a civil war, different groups within a country fight against each other for control. War always affects not just soldiers but everyday people, too. This war was no different. One day, at 10 a.m., a bomb exploded in the city of Sarajevo and killed 22 everyday people who were waiting in line to buy bread.

Near the bakery lived someone who had bought their bread at that bakery. They were terribly distraught at the violent acts being committed in their hometown and decided to speak up. The day after the bombing, at 4 p.m., they went to the square where the bomb had exploded, sat down, and began to play the cello. You see, this person was a cellist with the opera orchestra in Sarajevo. Music held a special place for them. And it was through their music that they chose speak to anyone who would listen about what had happened in the bakery line.

For the next 22 days — one day for each person who had died — the cellist played the same piece of music. They called this music "a daily musical prayer for peace."

When they spoke up with their cello, people listened. One person who heard was Beliz Brother, a performance artist in Seattle, Washington, in the United States. She arranged for a performance of 22 cellists to play at 22 different public places for 22 days. This performance echoed the musical prayer from Sarajevo and was her way of speaking up.

Both of these acts came to the attention of a young boy in Indiana. He started a campaign to let other people know about the cellists' performances. The boy thought it was important for people to know that none of us who call for peace and reconciliation are truly alone. Perhaps he also wanted the cellist, Ms. Brother, and others to know they, too, had been heard.

The boy, Jason Crowe, wrote about these acts of inspiration in a newspaper that he published called "The

Informer." He also started a fund-raising project called The Cello Cries On, to raise money to build a statue for the city of Sarajevo, to be placed on the site of the bakery. It is called the Children's International Peace and Harmony Statue. The statue would not only honor those who had died, it would also remind everyone of the high price too many people pay in war.

Jason Crowe hoped to inspire more people to work harder for peace. Perhaps if everyone thought of how war harms the children, they would strive for peace. Maybe children just like you will see the statue. Perhaps your generation will listen to all those speaking up for peace, and war will become a thing of the past.

Should people never disagree, or argue? That's not what most people mean when they talk about working for peace. We hope we will someday have a world where people will settle their differences not with violence, but by peaceful negotiations.

Someone, in a terrible act of violence, took the lives of 22 people in Sarajevo. No one remembers this person's name. But the people who reacted to that violence — not with more violence, but in a universal call for peace and reconciliation — we do remember. We honor them by passing on their story. When you tell their story, you are speaking up for peace, too.

FIND OUT MORE

The Cellist of Sarajevo

In the children's picture book, *Echoes from the Square* by Elizabeth Wellburn and illustrated by Deryk Houston (Rubicon Publishing, 1998), a young boy is helped to cope with war by cellist Vedran Smailovic's actions.

A [Peacemaker Hero article](#) describes the projects Jason Crowe, a teen in Indiana, undertook, inspired by Vedran Smailovic.

Word Bodies

A picture book by Cheryl Willis Hudson, written for younger children, may inspire the group with illustrations of children bending their bodies to form the letters of the alphabet: *Afro-Bets ABC Book* (East Orange, NJ: Just Us Books, 1988; Cartwheel, 2002).

SESSION 7: DEMOCRATIC PROCESS (CHALK)

INTRODUCTION

The price of the democratic way of life is a growing appreciation of people's differences, not merely as tolerable, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human experience.

— Jerome Nathanson (1908-1975), a leader of New York Ethical Culture

Democracy means not "I am as good as you are," but "you are as good as I am."

— Theodore Parker

The chalk symbolizes the democratic process. This session provides opportunities to reflect on a variety of decision-making processes, including voting and consensus making. Reflections may include whether "majority rule" is fair. Allow time for participants to engage with the issues around consensus making and voting and the importance of negotiation and informed decision-making. Emphasize that as Unitarian Universalists we hope that people have a say in the things that concern them.

In Activity 4: Voting in the Demos Role-Play, participants will enact democracy, Athenian-style. You may like to gather sheets for togas. Or, invite parents ahead of time to supply sheets for this session and encourage their children to bring or wear sandals.

For Activity 5: Consensus, have ready some food treat options for the group to vote on. Make sure to avoid foods to which a participant may be allergic.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Teach that Unitarian Universalism is a faith in which each voice counts, in our congregations and in our world
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism values the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large (fifth Principle)

- Affirm the living tradition of Unitarian Universalism by drawing from words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love (Source)
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Engage in voting processes, using ballots and chalk
- Share insights and reflections about the democratic process
- Learn about a time in United States history when women did not have a vote and how a Universalist worked to change that
- Experience a variety of contexts for and modes of group decision-making
- Reflect on the challenges and implications of using voting and consensus building to make group decisions

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Olympia Brown — A Voice and a Vote	10
Activity 2: Cloak and Dagger Game	10
Activity 3: Voting in the Demos Role-Play	10
Activity 4: Consensus Role-Play	10
Activity 5: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on democratic process, you may wish to reflect on your

own experiences and feelings about voting, consensus-building, and democratic processes.

Think about social and political issues that raise the same level of controversy today as women's suffrage did in Olympia Brown's time, such as marriage equality, immigrant rights, and other civil liberties. How well do you think our democratic processes help us toward outcomes? What does your vote — your voice — in the democratic process mean to you? In what ways do you use your voice in group, congregational, or political decision-making? How does your participation reflect Unitarian Universalist values and Principles?

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has different opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A chalkboard and chalk
- Dark paper, light-colored chalk, and containers for "ballot boxes"

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare and post (or set on worktables) sheets of newsprint where participants can vote for their favorite television shows, flavors of ice cream, outdoor sports, books, holidays, political leaders, etc. On each sheet, offer multiple choices and leave room for children's tally marks under each "candidate." Set markers near newsprint.
- Optional: If you have a chalkboard, use it instead of newsprint for tally-mark voting.
- Make one or more ballot boxes using containers such as plastic food storage containers or empty shoe boxes. Make a sign for each box, using newsprint, to indicate what participants should vote for (favorite food, favorite song).
- Cut dark paper into ballot-size pieces and provide chalk for children to mark their votes to place in the ballot boxes.

Description of Activity

This activity is intended for the time before the session when children arrive individually, that is, "straggle in."

Welcome participants. Ask the children to put a mark under their most favorite on each sheet of newsprint you have provided (or on the chalkboard), and to write their favorites with chalk on ballots, fold their ballots, and place them in the appropriate ballot boxes.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Newsprint or chalkboard with participants' tally marks
- Dark paper, light-colored chalk, and containers for "ballot boxes"

- Tool of the Day — chalk
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster and clear tape

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in the Council Circle space.
- Display the newsprint, ballots/ballot boxes (and chalkboard) with participants' votes for favorite television shows, flavors of ice cream, etc. (See Welcoming and Entering.)

Description of Activity

Participants will gain a visual introduction to voting processes using tally marks, ballots, and chalk.

Gather the children in a circle, in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted, for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up a piece of chalk. Tell the children what it is called and that it is the Tool of the Day.

Pass the piece of chalk around, inviting the children to share their prior experiences seeing or using chalk.

Lead a discussion to introduce the chalk as a symbol for democratic process. Ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer. Then explain, in your own words or these:

A piece of chalk represents the democratic process.

Chalk can mark a vote. Chalk is also erasable, so that folks can modify their decisions. Unitarian Universalism is a faith that values the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. We believe that people should have a say in the things that concern them. Voting is one way that people have a say. Whoever gets the most votes wins, because it is the majority vote.

Consensus decision-making is another way to vote. A group might talk about their options until they reach consensus about what to do. Consensus means that most of the people in the group agree. A consensus process gives a way for the group to hear and address any objections of a minority. That helps the group shape a decision that every single person can support.

Call participants' attention to the voting that some of them did before the session (Welcoming and Entering). Invite a few volunteers to tally and announce the votes for "favorites" on the newsprint (or chalkboard) and in the ballot box(es). Allow some discussion as participants react to the voting results.

Tape a piece of chalk — or a dark piece of paper with a vote chalked on it — to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster, and write the words "Democratic Process" alongside. Or, you may do this during the Closing.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — OLYMPIA BROWN — A VOICE AND A VOTE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Olympia Brown — A Voice and a Vote](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell or read it to the group.

Description of Activity

Participants will learn about a time in United States history when women did not have a vote and how a Universalist worked to change that.

Gather participants in a comfortable configuration for listening to a story. You may like to introduce it in these words, or your own:

This is a true story about the first woman ever ordained to be a minister. Olympia Brown was a Universalist who risked exhaustion and ridicule to help people understand the issues for giving women a vote.

Read or tell the story.

ACTIVITY 2: CLOAK AND DAGGER GAME (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Index cards for all participants
- Optional: One or more sets of the board game, Apples to Apples (five players per set)

Preparation for Activity

- The game, Cloak and Dagger, works best with eight to 15 players. Decide whether the group will play together or play in smaller groups.
- Optional: To include the game, Apples to Apples, in this activity, make arrangements to purchase/borrow the commercially available board game. While game participants don't actually vote, there is a component of hilarious influencing and judging that make a nice segue into the democratic process. If you do not know the game, view a [demo of Apples to Apples](#) online.

Description of Activity

Use games to introduce a variety of ways that groups can make decisions.

The game Cloak and Dagger is a popular game played in many Unitarian Universalist youth groups. This game is also played in Session 14 of *Toolbox of Faith*, where justice is the theme. Participants will enjoy revisiting it in a later session, having learned it here.

The leader of this game orchestrates and does not participate. The leader writes an identity on an index card for each member of the group. Two of the cards should say "Spy," one should say "Informant," and the rest should say "Civilian."

Invite the group to sit in a circle. The leader distributes cards, instructing everyone to read in secret.

Then the leader says, "It is nighttime, everyone go to sleep." Everyone closes their eyes. The leader says, "Spies, wake up." Those with "Spy" written on their cards open their eyes. They must agree, without speaking, to kill one of the civilians. They point to this person, and the leader makes a mental note. Then the leader says, "Spies go to sleep. Informant, wake up." The two Spies close their eyes, and the one who has "Informant" written on their card opens their eyes. The Informant selects one person to know more about, by pointing. If that person is a Spy, the leader nods, if a Civilian, the leader shakes their head "no."

Then the leader says, "It is daytime, everybody wake up." Everyone opens their eyes and the leader tells them who was killed by the Spies while they were asleep. Then the entire group comes to consensus on who they think is a Spy — who *they* should kill — by pointing to that person. The true Spies should try to hide their identities by engaging in the debate. The Informant should try to use their information to protect Civilians and kill Spies, but without revealing their identity as the

Informant (or risking their own life for the next night of Spy prowling).

Every person who comes under suspicion has a chance to defend their civilian status. When the group decides and kills, the leader informs them whether the person they killed was a Spy or a Civilian. Round two begins by the leader saying, "It's nighttime . . ." Continue until all Civilians are dead or Spy members are found out and killed.

ACTIVITY 3: VOTING IN THE DEMOS ROLE-PLAY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Pieces of pottery (such as from smashed-up clay flower pots), large enough to write a name on, for all participants
- Pencils for participants to share
- A vessel such as an urn, bowl, or vase for collecting votes
- Several plastic toy figures or stuffed animals to portray characters to be ostracized
- Optional: Sheets (for togas) and sandals for dress-up as Athenians
- Optional: Copies of Handout 1: [A History of Ostracism](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Contact parents before this session, via a handout or group e-mail, to encourage them to send sheets (for togas) and sandals for their children.
- Review Handout 1: A History of Ostracism, which excerpts a Wikipedia article about ostracism in ancient Athens. Print out a copy for yourself to infuse the activity with more historical detail, and/or print out the handout for all participants.
- Set the urn, bowl, or vase for collecting *ostraka* (pottery shards with votes scratched on them) on a table.
- Optional: Use the newsprint to post a sign near the table to identify the *agora* (marketplace), where citizens cast their votes for ostracism. You may also use newsprint to write and post the names of the "citizens" the participants suggest for ostracism.

Description of Activity

The children experience voting and ostracism as practiced in ancient Athens' system of direct democracy.

If you are using costumes, invite the children to put them on.

Gather the group in a circle. Explain Athenian ostracism in these words or your own:

Five thousand years ago, Athenians — the ancestors of modern Greeks — ruled themselves using a system called "direct democracy." Every Athenian citizen — which meant the adult males who were not slaves or foreigners — had the right and the obligation to be part of Athens' government.

Instead of the elections for presidents, senators, and mayors we have today, the Athenian citizens held a lottery each year to choose 500 citizens to be in the senate. They were in charge and made decisions together.

One kind of decision the Athenians made was called ostracism. When a majority of the senate thought it best for the safety of Athens, they could send someone away. To ostracize someone was kind of like "voting someone off the island." A man who was ostracized did not have to give up his possessions, his home or his money, but he had to leave Athens for 10 years.

Tell the group that today they will have a chance to participate in direct democracy. Show them the toy figures and/or stuffed animals you have brought. Form small groups and give each group one of the figures, saying that it is a citizen of Athens.

Ask the small groups to invent a name for their character and some reasons why the other citizens might want to ostracize him from Athens. Remind them that ostracism was a solution when the group believed one of the citizens was a threat to the community's safety.

After a minute or two, bring the groups back together. Invite each group to briefly introduce their "citizen" and the reason other citizens might vote to ostracize him. Now distribute a pottery shard and a pencil to each participant. Invite the children to vote on which citizen to ostracize by scratching one of the names on a piece of pottery.

Count the votes, or have a participant do it, to learn which "citizen" will be ostracized from Athens. You may wish to then remove the toy figure or stuffed animal from the room.

ACTIVITY 4: CONSENSUS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Sheets of green, red, and yellow construction paper and scissors
- Optional: Sheets of orange and blue construction paper
- A variety of snacks, all desirable, such as cookies, ice cream, and candy (or various dried and fresh fruits)
- Paper plates, napkins, and/or utensils as needed for snack

Preparation for Activity

- Purchase three different varieties of food treats — enough of each type to feed all the participants. Make sure no participants have allergies to any of the snack options.
- Obtain paper plates, napkins, and/or utensils, as needed.
- Cut colored construction paper into cards to provide each child with a set of color cards: one green, one yellow, and one red.
- Optional: To include orange and blue cards, cut additional construction paper.
- Optional: On newsprint, write a brief description of when participants should hold up a green, yellow, or red (or orange or blue) card. Post the newsprint where children can see it during the discussion.

Description of Activity

Tell the group you have a treat for them, but first they must reach a consensus about which of several treats to have.

Explain in these words or your own how consensus differs from voting:

In a vote, the majority wins. In consensus decision-making, the whole group considers the objections of the minority as well as the wishes of the majority to shape the most agreeable decision. Consensus seeks a decision that is at least acceptable to everyone in the group.

Ask if anyone has experienced consensus decision-making in a group. If no one volunteers, ask the children how a group of friends decides what game to play or what movie to watch together. Allow some comments.

Tell the group:

Consensus decision-making can be an effective way for a group to pursue its common goals. Consensus takes more time than voting, but it has advantages for groups that want to do their best to address the needs of every single person in the group. Groups that use consensus might be a group of friends, people who own a small business together, a church committee, or an intentional community such as co-housing, where families or adults live together by choice.

A good consensus requires open discussion, but the discussion has to move toward a timely and sound decision supported by everyone. It cannot go on forever. One process for moving to a consensus decision uses color cards.

Distribute the color cards to all participants. Explain how they will use them to discuss the decision they will make about the snack.

- Holding up a green card means "I have something to say" or "I have a question." When several group members hold up a green card, they are noted and placed in a "stack" of people waiting to speak. Each person speaks in turn.
- Holding up a yellow card means "I can clarify" or "I need clarification (on what was just said)."
- Holding up a red card asks members to look at the process. For example, an individual who displays a red card might say: "Are we getting off track, here?" or "What is our objective in doing this?" or even "How about we take a break?" It gives all members an equal chance to be facilitator.

Announce the three snack choices, and tell the group you will facilitate their discussion. Invite them to use their green, yellow, and red cards and try to reach consensus on which snack to have.

When you perceive the group coming to consensus, help them articulate a proposal. (You may want to set a time limit for discussion.) Invite the children to show their cards as follows:

- Holding up a green card means, "I agree."
- Holding up a yellow card means, "I can live with it." (Sometimes referred to as "standing aside.")
- Holding up a red card means, "I don't agree, but am willing to work to find a better way, taking into account what has been said by all group members." Thus, a red card does not block progress, but signifies that the person is willing to work with others to bring the question back to

the group at a subsequent meeting. Since this is time-consuming, red cards are not used lightly, but when the decision to be made is complex, it may be necessary.

If you are also using orange and blue cards, explain:

In the Unitarian Church of Australia, orange and blue cards are used to mean "I am warm toward this" or "I am cool toward this." The use of orange and blue allows people who have difficulty distinguishing red from green to participate in the discussion.

Facilitate discussion until the group reaches consensus. Then, serve the snack.

Including All Participants

Find out from parents or the religious educator about foods to avoid due to allergies before choosing snacks for this activity. Also find out if the group includes any participants who have difficulty distinguishing colors. If so, use a bold marker to differentiate the green, yellow, and red cards with different, large symbols, such as an asterisk, a triangle, and a solid dot, in addition to their colors.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a piece of chalk
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, clear tape, and a piece of chalk (or, a sheet of dark paper with a "vote" chalked on it)

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick, invite participants to reflect on the story they heard today. Then invite their reflections on the pros and cons of

using voting or consensus-building to make group decisions. You may also offer these questions:

- Can you think of issues today about which people feel as strongly as many did about women's suffrage in Olympia Brown's time? (Issues may include topics such as marriage equality, abortion rights, or immigrants' rights.)
- When you think about an issue that means a lot to you, what form of decision-making would you like to see used? How would you use your voice, or your vote?
- When did voting seem to work well today? What about consensus? What problems did you see with either of these decision-making methods?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Share with the group the Aesop's fable, "The Donkey's Shadow:"

A traveler hired a donkey and a driver to take him to the next town. When they stopped to rest, the sun was beating down, and the traveler sat in the donkey's shadow, where there was room for only one person.

"Get up, I want to sit there," said the donkey's owner. "You hired the donkey, not his shadow."

"Nonsense," replied the traveler, "When I hired the donkey that included its shadow."

While the two men were arguing, the donkey ran off.

In quarreling about the shadow, we often lose the substance.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do to express their inner thoughts and selves. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and use your voice and your vote!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., democratic process], I will ...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape a piece of chalk — or a dark paper ballot with a "vote" chalked on it — to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write "Democratic Process" on the poster.

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

One idea that has caught on is a "Take Your Child to Vote" Day. If you are near an election time, consider the words of Dayton, Ohio, *Daily News* reporter Scott Eliot, published on Tuesday, November 7, 2006 (Election Day).

There's two things I hope you'll do today. The first thing is I hope you vote. The second is I hope you'll take your children with you to the polls, let them watch while you vote and talk to them about who you're voting for and why.

That's my plan this morning. Think of it as a one-on-one civics lesson. It's really our best hope for intelligent, engaged citizens in the future, that they learn from adults around them that political participation is an important duty, a thoughtful exercise and that it actually can be exciting and fun.

If this session takes place near the time of a congregational meeting, consider arranging for participants to help collect ballots or count hands in a vote, or to sit in on a decision-making discussion.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

The price of the democratic way of life is a growing appreciation of people's differences, not merely as tolerable, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human experience.

— Jerome Nathanson (1908-1975), a leader of New York Ethical Culture

Democracy means not "I am as good as you are," but "you are as good as I am."

— Theodore Parker

IN TODAY'S SESSION . . .

A piece of chalk symbolizes the democratic process, a value imbedded in the fifth Unitarian Universalist principle: We value the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. The children learned about and experienced various modes of democratic process to illustrate that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help make each voice count, both in our congregations and in our world.

The children reflected on advantages and disadvantages of consensus-making and voting. They discussed whether majority rule is a fair process. We emphasized that we hope people have a say in the things that concern them. They experienced how consensus incorporates negotiation and a forum for every voice to be heard, helping a group to achieve informed decision-making.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about . . .

Today, we face social and political issues that raise the same level of controversy as women's suffrage did in Olympia Brown's time. Some of these are equal marriage, abortion rights, and prayer in school. In our congregations, as well, we often face controversy.

Think about these questions, and share your reflections with your child:

- What does your vote — your voice — in democratic process mean to you?
- In what way(s) does your use of your voice or vote in group, congregational, or political decision-making reflect a Unitarian Universalist spiritual practice?
- How well do you think our democratic processes help us toward outcomes?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try . . .

Use the democratic process as a family to decide on age-appropriate projects, such as what to eat for dinner, which movie to watch, or where to go on a weekend outing. Mention that Unitarian Universalism encourages people having a say in the things that concern them.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

On the PBS Kids website, find some fun, educational interactive pages in a section called [The Democracy Project](#). Learn about times in United States history when one vote has made a difference. Young users can cast a vote about current issues.

STORY: OLYMPIA BROWN GETS THE VOTE

By Polly Peterson.

Read or tell the story.

A farm wagon bumped along through the Kansas prairie, under a blazing August sun. Next to the wagon's driver sat a young woman in a long black dress. She had been up since four a.m. and, after a hasty breakfast, had taken her leave. Now, as her eyes took in the great sweep of prairie that spread out around her, Olympia Brown had plenty of time to gather her thoughts. It was a long way to the next town where folks would come to hear her speak.

She had met the driver only the day before. The track they were traveling wasn't really a road at all. They made their way through the sea of tall grass, with no hint of a town or a village ahead. But after a month of similar days, Olympia had faith that she would indeed reach a town where people would gather to hear her speak. She had faith that someone would provide her a meal and a place to sleep (though it might be no more than a rough mattress on the floor of a sod house). And she had faith that someone would transport her to the town where she was scheduled to speak the following day.

Olympia Brown was not a complainer. She had a job to do, and she did it with strength and conviction and enormous good will. But her travels in Kansas were not at all what she had expected. How had she come to be in this place?

Olympia Brown was the minister of a Universalist church in Weymouth Landing, Massachusetts. She had struggled long and hard to become an ordained minister, and she loved her job. But in 1867, two leaders in the fight for women's rights, Lucy Stone and her husband Henry Blackwell, had persuaded Olympia to go to Kansas to campaign for an amendment to the Kansas constitution—an amendment that would give women the right to vote. Another amendment on the ballot would give black men the right to vote. If both amendments passed, Kansas would be the first state to grant universal suffrage—the right of all adult citizens—black, white, women and men—to vote.

Olympia Brown already supported universal suffrage, passionately. She was a powerful speaker on that subject. Her congregation generously gave her a leave of absence for the Kansas campaign. Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell had assured the young Universalist minister that speaking engagements, lodgings, a

traveling companion, a conveyance and a driver, had all been arranged.

When Olympia got to Kansas, she found she *did* have speaking engagements, but no companion, no lodgings, no conveyance and no driver. Members of the Republican party who had promised to provide these had not held up their end of the agreement. They said they had run out of money, but it was more likely a political decision. The party had decided not to support the woman suffrage amendment after all.

Fortunately for Olympia, the people of Kansas were generous and helpful. For four months, she followed a schedule that most people would have considered impossible. Against all odds, Olympia attracted large, receptive audiences in towns throughout the state. Still, when it came time to vote, the men of Kansas defeated both amendments. Fewer than one third of them supported woman suffrage. Olympia felt the defeat keenly, but Susan B. Anthony, the leading woman suffrage leader, wrote her an uplifting letter. "Never was defeat so glorious a victory," she wrote. "We shall win. The day breaks."

Olympia's work in Kansas won her many friends among those who were committed to the struggle for women's rights. From then on, she divided her energies between her ministry and her work as a suffragist. In 1868, the fifteenth amendment to the United States Constitution passed, and in 1870, it was ratified. This amendment gave the vote to black men, but women were still excluded. This was a terrible disappointment to Olympia Brown.

Women's rights advocates all over the country renewed their efforts to convince voters, all of whom were men, that every citizen should have the right to vote. Many people believed that women would surely win the vote soon. It was the only fair thing to do.

Olympia Brown continued her work as a minister, now in the city of Bridgeport, Connecticut. She married John Henry Willis in 1873, but she did not change her name. She had a son the following year, but she did not give up her work. In 1876, she spoke to a Congressional committee in Washington, D.C. She made an eloquent plea for the right of women as citizens to enjoy the same political rights as any other citizen. That same year, on the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Susan B. Anthony read a Declaration for the Rights of Women to a cheering crowd in front of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. But still women had no right to vote.

By 1878, Olympia Brown had a daughter as well as a son. She became minister of a church in Racine, Wisconsin. In 1884, she became president of the Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association, and in 1887, she resigned her ministry to work full time for women's rights. It was now twenty years since she had campaigned in Kansas, and still she had no right to vote.

At that time, individual states could grant women the ballot even if Congress refused to do so. By 1896, some women were voting—but only in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho. It was now thirty years since Olympia Brown had campaigned in Kansas, and still she had no right to vote.

In 1906, Susan B. Anthony died. Sixty years of tireless work had not won her the ballot. And now it was forty years since Olympia Brown had campaigned in Kansas, but still she had no right to vote.

In 1913, two young activists named Alice Paul and Lucy Burns invited Olympia Brown to join them in a new political party called the Congressional Union. The sole purpose of the Congressional Union was to pass an amendment to the Constitution stating that the right of citizens to vote could not be denied because of sex. Olympia joined them at once. In 1916, the party changed its name to the Woman's Party, and they worked hard trying to defeat President Woodrow Wilson's bid for re-election. He narrowly won the election, and in 1917, the United States entered the war known as World War I. President Wilson called it the war that would "make the world safe for democracy". Women were told they should not oppose the President while the country was at war.

"We cannot say that the United States is a democracy as long as women cannot vote," said Olympia Brown. "We are being asked to give up our suffrage work until the war is over. Women were asked to do this same thing during the Civil War. They were told that as soon as the war was over and the Negro enfranchised, they would be given the ballot. But that did not happen. Instead they were ridiculed for wanting to vote and we still do not have the ballot." It was now fifty years since Olympia Brown had campaigned in Kansas, and still she had no right to vote.

When President Wilson went to France at the end of the war, the Woman's Party staged a demonstration in front of a fire. A frail, old woman, tiny but full of energy, stepped up to the flames to burn a copy of President Wilson's speech. "America has fought for France and the common cause of liberty," said Olympia Brown, who was now 83 years old. "I have fought for liberty for seventy years, and I protest against the President's

leaving the country with this old fight here unwon." The crowd burst into applause and cheers.

When President Wilson returned, he finally gave his support to woman suffrage, and Congress passed the 19th amendment. On Election Day morning, Nov. 2, 1920, Olympia Brown made her way to the polling station. She was one of the first to vote. It was 53 years since she had campaigned in Kansas, and she had won the right to vote at last.

HANDOUT 1: THE HISTORY OF OSTRACISM

Excerpted from an online Wikipedia article, "[Ostracism](#)," accessed April 4, 2008.

A Wikipedia article on [ostracism in ancient Athens](#) includes a photo image of three potsherds inscribed with the names of citizens who, at one time, were selected for ostracism by some of their peers. The article reads, in part:

Each year, the Athenians were asked in the assembly whether they wished to hold an ostracism... If they voted "yes," then an ostracism would be held two months later. In a roped-off area of the *agora* [marketplace,] citizens scratched the name of a citizen they wished to expel on potsherds (pottery fragments), and deposited them in urns. The presiding officials counted the *ostraka* submitted; if a minimum of six thousand votes were reached, then the ostracism took place. The officials sorted the names into separate piles, and the person receiving the highest number of votes was exiled for ten years.

The person nominated had ten days to leave the country — if he attempted to return, the penalty was death. Notably, the property of the man banished was not confiscated and there was no loss of status. After the ten years he was allowed to return without stigma.

FIND OUT MORE

Children, Democracy and Unitarian Universalist Faith

Read an [essay by Tracey L. Hurd](#). She writes, in part:

Whether active or passive, we're all part of the political process and the choices we make for our participation influence our children. Recent research shows that young adults who vote are more likely to have accompanied their parents to the polls or to have talked about politics in their families when growing up, compared to young adults who don't vote... What we do and how we talk with our children, matter. Families can nurture democracy... .

Accompanying our children through a presidential election can be a walk of faith. It's not a linear process, but one of honoring children's different stages of development, and inching them forward. There's no one right way to nurture democracy, just as there is no singular way to nurture faith. But standing together we move forward.

Consensus

To learn more, see the Wikipedia article on [consensus decision-making](#).

PBS Kids — On Voting

On the PBS Kids website, find some fun, educational, interactive pages in a section called [The Democracy Project](#). Learn about times in U.S. history when one vote has made a difference. Young users can cast a vote about current issues.

Also on the PBS Kids website, the program, *Zoom*, sponsors a wealth of interactive learning about [U.S. presidential elections](#) and about voting, in general.

Kids Voting USA

Check out the national [Kids Voting USA](#) website to see if there is an affiliate in your area.

Through local affiliates, the organization provides K-12 educational programs for teachers to incorporate into their curricula. It was started by three U.S. businessmen who were inspired by Costa Rica's voting turnouts — around 90% — while vacationing there. The website says:

This high turnout was attributed to a tradition of children accompanying their parents to the polls. The men were intrigued by the idea, but also recognized a missing link to education. They

launched a school-based pilot project in a Phoenix suburb that has since grown into the national Kids Voting USA organization.

On the website, find a [large selection of links](#) to resources and interactive sites for teaching children about becoming engaged as citizens by exercising their right to democratic process.

A Philosophical Game about Lawmaking

An adult game which makes a philosophical exploration of lawmaking and which has a cult following is "Nomic: A Game of Self-Amendment," created in 1982 by Peter Suber. In Nomic, changing the rules is a move in the game, and voting determines the course of the game. Find [game rules for Nomic](#) online.

In an Appendix to his book, *The Paradox of Self-Amendment* (New York: Lang, 1990), Suber writes:

Nomic is a game in which changing the rules is a move. In that respect, it differs from almost every other game. The primary activity of Nomic is proposing changes in the rules, debating the wisdom of changing them in that way, voting on the changes, deciding what can and cannot be done afterwards, and doing it. Even this core of the game, of course, can be changed.

Peter Suber retired from full-time philosophy teaching at Earlham College in 2003 and is now a research professor. He is also a leader in the open access movement to "put peer-reviewed scientific and scholarly literature on the Internet" (from his blog).

Games for Unitarian Universalist Groups

The game, Cloak and Dagger, in Activity 2 was adapted from a version in the online publication, ["Deep Fun"](#) from the Unitarian Universalist Association website. "Deep Fun" also presents many additional games popular with Unitarian Universalist youth groups.

"The Donkey's Tale"

The Aesop's fable in this session's Closing was adapted from a similar tale in *Peace Tales: World Folktales to Talk About* by Margaret Read MacDonald (Little Rock, ARK: August House Publishers, 2005).

SESSION 8: POWER (HAMMER)

INTRODUCTION

The power to question is the basis of all human progress.

— Indira Gandhi

I became convinced that non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. No other person has been more eloquent and passionate in getting this idea across than Henry David Thoreau. As a result of his writings and personal witness, we are the heirs of a legacy of creative protest.

— Martin Luther King, Jr., *Autobiography*

The hammer symbolizes power. In this session, there are opportunities to reflect on the power each of us has to work for good. Sometimes, when we see injustice, we can feel powerless to change it. We sometimes feel that the real power resides with an authority outside ourselves, such as the government. Yet, in fact we can find our own power and use it for good. This session explores the power to seek truth, the power to question authority or the status quo, the power to speak out against injustice, and the power to band together with others who share our values and goals to make a difference for what is good and just.

In leading this session, emphasize that power can be used for good or for evil. In addition, emphasize the distinction between strength and power.

Allow time for participants to engage with the idea of civil disobedience as a strategy to protest a law that is unjust.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Teach participants that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you learn about the power you have and help you decide how to use your power for good
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism values the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large (fifth Principle)

- Teach that Unitarian Universalism affirms that we are part of an interdependent web of all life (seventh Principle), and that when one part of the web suffers injustice, the entire web suffers injustice
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Connect the symbol of a hammer with the power for good
- Hear a story about a Unitarian minister and a community of abolitionists who used their power to question government authority and defy the Fugitive Slave Law, contributing to the anti-slavery cause
- Experience power and strength in a variety of games
- Learn a song that uses the hammer as a metaphor for an individual's power to fight injustice
- Reflect on the implications of using power, and how it can be used for good or for bad

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Feel the Power	5
Activity 2: Story — Theodore Parker and the Fugitive Slaves: Refusing to Follow an Unjust Law	10
Activity 3: Active Games of Strength and Power	15
Activity 4: Singing "If I Had a Hammer"	10
Activity 5: Council Circle	15
Faith in Action: Ideas	
Alternate Activity 1: Word Art — "If I Had a Hammer"	25

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation.

Consider this session's story, "Theodore Parker and the Fugitive Slaves: Refusing to Follow an Unjust Law."

Reflect on how you would answer the questions you will pose to the children in Council Circle:

- Do you think there are times when it is right to use violence to fight against injustice?
- How do you think you would have reacted to the Fugitive Slave Act if you had lived in Boston in the 1850s? If you were a white? If you were a free black?

Throughout the history of the United States, questioning authority and civil disobedience have played significant roles in many reforms that we take for granted today — laws that guarantee civil rights, votes for women, and the power of labor unions, among others. How do you think we should teach children when it is right to question authority and when it is important to follow the rules?

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- A hammer
- A few slender nails
- A sheet of paper large enough for tracing the outline of a hammer
- A pencil, color markers, clear tape, and a pair of scissors
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster

Preparation for Activity

- Set out the materials on a worktable.

Description of Activity

This activity is intended for the time before the session, when participants arrive individually over a period of time — that is, "straggle in."

As children arrive, invite them to work together to trace the outline of the hammer on the sheet of paper. Ask them to cut out the hammer shape and write "Power" on it. Suggest they use the nails to form some of the letters in "Power" by taping the nails onto the hammer shape.

If the children finish before the session begins, you may invite them to add the hammer, symbolizing power as a tool of our faith, to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — a hammer

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in your Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Invite the children to gather in a circle in the Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists

with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up the hammer. Tell the children it is the Tool of the Day. Ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is truly no one answer. Then offer the explanation that the hammer can represent power. You might say:

Unitarian Universalism is a faith that values using our power to work for good. Unitarian Universalists support the importance of questioning as part of the democratic process. This is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding. Unitarian Universalism values the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large, as our fifth Unitarian Universalist Principle states.

Another Unitarian Universalist Principle, the seventh, affirms that we are part of an interdependent web of all life. When one part of that web suffers injustice, the entire web suffers injustice. That is another reason we believe we should use our power for good.

Pass the hammer around the circle. Invite the children to share their experiences seeing or using hammers.

Collect the hammer. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: FEEL THE POWER (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Hammers, enough for all participants, if possible
- Nails of different lengths and materials, at least four nails for each participant
- Lengths of scrap wood, thick enough to accept the longest nails you have brought, at least one piece for every two participants
- Large sheet of paper, a marker, scissors, clear tape, and the Toolbox of Our Faith poster

Preparation for Activity

- This activity will be loud. Decide whether you want to bring the group outside, or identify a room where you will not disturb others in the building.

Description of Activity

To help participants become familiar with using the power of a hammer efficiently and safely, invite them to

practice pounding nails into wood. Suggest they try a variety of ways of hammering, free form, at first. Often those inexperienced with using a hammer will hold one close to the head and use their wrist to pound. Teach the group the way that carpenters use hammers to get the best and most efficient effect from the power of the hammer and the power of the arm:

Hold the hammer at the end of the handle to take advantage of the hammer head's weight when you strike the nail. By holding at the furthest end from the hammer head, the hammer becomes a lever, which gives it — and you — more power.

Invite participants to feel the difference between hammering by holding the hammer close to the hammer head, and then holding the hammer farther down the handle. Offer these suggestions:

- Swing your entire arm from the shoulder instead of just using the wrist, to make your body more efficient.
- Feel the power! Pound a nail with a few taps to hold it upright. Then swing the hammer, letting the weight of the hammer drop onto the nail head from a distance. (This technique keeps thumbs safely out of the way, too!)

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THEODORE PARKER AND THE FUGITIVE SLAVES: REFUSING TO FOLLOW AN UNJUST LAW (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Theodore Parker and the Fugitive Slaves: Refusing to Follow an Unjust Law](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare to read the story or tell it dramatically. You may wish to engage a few participants to give voice to the roles of Theodore Parker and Millard Fillmore, both of whose written words are quoted in the story.

Description of Activity

Participants will hear about a time when a Unitarian minister used his power for good. By questioning the authority of the government — in particular, its enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law — Theodore Parker aided the anti-slavery cause. The story presents, too, the way President Millard Fillmore — also a Unitarian, personally opposed to slavery — chose to use his power.

Gather participants in a comfortable configuration for listening to a story. To introduce the story, you might say:

This is a true story that happened in the 1850s, before the U.S. Civil War. At that time, treating some people as property — slaves — was still the official policy of the U.S. government. As the story of Ellen and William Craft unfolds, you will see how a Unitarian minister, Theodore Parker used his power to question authority.

Read or tell the story. After the story, invite participants to briefly share their reflections and initial thoughts. Tell them they will discuss the story in more depth in Council Circle.

ACTIVITY 3: ACTIVE GAMES OF STRENGTH AND POWER (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- For Pyramid. Optional: Tumbling mats
- For Carry the Load. Two markers, such as orange rubber cones, or masking tape to make two finish lines

Preparation for Activity

- Review the three games offered: Fugitives (Sardines), Pyramid, and Carry the Load. Decide which to include based on the amount of time you have, your meeting space, and the children in the group.
- **For Fugitives.** This game is based on a version of "hide and seek" that is also known as Sardines. It works best in a space that has multiple options for hiding spaces that will conceal several children together.
- **For Pyramid.** Find an open space, preferably carpeted. You may wish to lay out tumbling mats to protect children who may fall.
- **For Carry the Load.** You will need an open space where you can mark a start line and a finish line, about 30 feet apart. Place markers or lay down masking tape to indicate the two lines.

Description of Activity

Participants will physically experience power and strength in a variety of games.

Fugitives (Sardines)

Rename this popular version of "hide and seek" to reflect the fugitive slave experience. The goal of this game is similar to "hide and seek," except that the

person who is "It" hides first. Everyone else then tries to find "It." When someone finds "It," they hide with "It" in the same spot. The game ends when everyone finds the hiding spot of "It."

Children will experience the "safety in numbers" which escaped slaves may have felt upon reaching a community of abolitionists and free blacks in the North. They may also experience a feeling of powerlessness; as the hiders become increasingly conspicuous, the larger their group gets.

Pyramid

This game illustrates the power of cooperating together and gives each child a chance to experience how his/her own strength contributes to a group endeavor.

Tell the group you will ask them to work together to make a human pyramid, but first they need some safety guidelines:

- Keep your arms and legs vertical to give your body and the pyramid for maximum support.
- Communicate with each other.

Give the group a safety word, such as "STOP." Tell the children that if anyone is in pain or becomes afraid, they may call out the safety word, and the others will immediately dismantle the pyramid.

Form teams of six to eight people or challenge the whole group to build a three-level human pyramid.

Carry the Load Use this game to illustrate that sometimes power means using the strongest and weakest together in a strategy. Create teams of six to eight players. If the group has a dozen or fewer participants, allow them to work as a single team. The object of the game is for a team to move all of its players from one area to the other, under the following rules:

- To get to the other area, players must be carried.
- The player who carries a person across **must** be the next player carried across.
- You may use more than one player to carry another, but then the group will need to make sure this "team" of children are the next ones carried. Expect to make a new rule, on the fly, to address such a situation; with participants' help.
- The last player gets a free pass across, but only one player.
- If a team gets stuck or the players agree they have made a mistake, they may start over.

- If a player touches the ground, in any way, he/she must go back.

You may like to warn the group that sometimes larger, stronger children may be inclined to just grab someone and go, but then they may find themselves stuck for a "ride." Or, you may prefer to let the participants find this out for themselves.

If a team succeeds at this challenge, issue the next challenge: They must try it again, but this time no player can carry the same person he/she carried when the team was successful. In addition, if anyone being carried touches the ground, the team must begin again.

Let participants be creative in how they carry each other, but stress safety, and watch for dangerous moves.

Including All Participants

If the group includes movement-challenged participants, adapt these games to create an active role for everyone. For Carry the Load, add a rule which enables a child who uses a wheelchair to contribute to a team solution, but which does not require other children to carry the child together with his/her wheelchair. Some children may be willing and able to have peers carry them from their wheelchair to another chair. However, check with a parent as well as the child, before initiating something like this.

ACTIVITY 4: SINGING "IF I HAD A HAMMER" (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of Leader Resource 1, "[If I Had a Hammer](#)" lyrics (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Listen to a recording of the song, "If I Had a Hammer," to make sure you know the tune. The YouTube website has vignettes of several [performances of the song](#).
- If you are not comfortable singing or leading a song, invite a volunteer from your congregation to lead the singing and/or provide musical accompaniment.
- Optional: Write the first verse of the song's lyrics on newsprint and post. You may wish to underline the words that change from verse to verse.

Description of Activity

Participants will learn a song in which the hammer is used as a metaphor for justice.

Gather the group in a circle. Introduce the song, in these words or your own:

This song is called "If I Had a Hammer." It was written by Pete Seeger, a Unitarian, with Lee Hays, when they were musicians in a group called The Weavers, in the 1950s. Many other musicians and people who gather to demonstrate against injustice continue to sing this song.

You may be able to lead the group in singing the song straight through the first time, especially if you have posted the lyrics. Once the group can sing it comfortably, encourage them to feel its power as they sing it together again.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a hammer
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, a picture of the Tool of the Day, a marker, and tape or glue

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use

the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.

- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.
- If you have not already made one, you will need to trace a picture of a hammer.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to reflect on what it means to use one's power for good, as they pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. Offer the following questions:

- When are some times when you have used your power to do good?
- When are some times when you could have, but did not? Why?

You may say:

Questioning authority is part of the democratic process. Sometimes, people break laws in order to prove that the laws are unjust. This is called "civil disobedience." When people decide to break a law that they consider immoral and unjust, they also choose to take the consequences for breaking the law. Taking the consequences — such as arrest and even jail — is part of the ethical use of civil disobedience.

An example of civil disobedience is stepping into the yard of a nuclear power plant to protest nuclear power, knowing you will be arrested. When many people choose to be arrested for a cause, the injustice receives attention in the news media, and it causes others to join the fight, or at least to think about the issues, and ultimately change laws or practices.

Throughout the history of the United States, questioning authority and civil disobedience have helped bring about change and make laws more just. Some examples are laws that protect civil rights, including voting rights, and laws that give working people a bigger say about their jobs by empowering labor unions.

Ask the group:

- Do you think there are times when it is right to use violence to fight against injustice? Why or why not?
- If you lived in Boston in October of 1850, and you knew where the slave-catchers from Georgia could find Ellen and William Craft, what would you do? Would you act differently if you were white than if you were black? Would you act differently if you were a grown-up, or a child?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. You may extinguish the chalice now, or after your closing ritual.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

We gather in community to celebrate

the glories

and mysteries

of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do this week that relates to using one's power for good. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and use your power!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., power], I will...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to add a picture of a hammer and the word "Power" to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Or, tape a slender nail to the poster, and write the word "Power."

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Lead the Congregation in Song

Arrange for the children to lead the congregation in the song, "If I Had a Hammer," during a worship service or other gathering. Guide the children to prepare signs with the lyrics (see Alternate Activity 1: Word Art — "If I Had a Hammer"). The children can hold up the signs, so the congregation can join in. Invite a musical accompanist to support the group in song-leading.

Demonstrate Collective Power

Arrange for the group to join a local demonstration against injustice, such as a walk against hunger. In the Boston area, Project Bread sponsored the 40th [Walk for Hunger](#) in May, 2008. The [Food Bank of El Dorado County](#) (northeast California) runs an annual hunger walk in November. [CROP \(Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty\) Walks](#) have been initiated in locations around the United States by the non-profit organization, Church World Service, a service ministry of 35 U.S. Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations. Find information online about [CROP Walks in your area](#).

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

The power to question is the basis of all human progress.

— Indira Gandhi

I became convinced that non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. No other person has been more eloquent and passionate in getting this idea across than Henry David Thoreau. As a result of his writings and personal witness, we are the heirs of a legacy of creative protest.

— Martin Luther King, Jr., *Autobiography*

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The hammer symbolizes power. In this session, children reflected on the power each of us has to work for good. We talked about times when people have used their power to question authority. Participants had time to engage the issues of civil disobedience when a law is unjust. We emphasized that power can be used for good or for ill. In addition, we emphasized the distinction between strength and power.

- We learned about power to illustrate that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you identify the power you have and use it for good. We explored ways we can use our own power to live in affirmation of Unitarian Universalist Principles.
- Unitarian Universalism values the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large (fifth Principle).
- Unitarian Universalism affirms that we are part of an interdependent web (seventh Principle); when one part of that web suffers injustice, the entire web suffers injustice.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

The children heard the story, "Theodore Parker and the Fugitive Slaves: Refusing to Follow an Unjust Law." The story describes the escape from the south of Ellen and William Craft, and their success in eluding capture by slave-catchers who came looking for them in Boston. Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister, was a spokesperson for the fugitive slaves, along with free African Americans and white abolitionists who resisted enforcement of this federal law in the 1850s. The story also tells how President Millard Fillmore, also a Unitarian, upheld the Fugitive Slave Law in the hope of keeping the United States from a civil war.

Throughout the history of the United States, the readiness of citizens to question authority and at times undertake civil disobedience has played a significant role in achieving reforms that we take for granted today — the legal protection of our civil rights, including our voting rights, and the formation of labor unions, among others. How do you think we should teach children when it is right to question authority and when it is important to follow the rules? As a family, you may want to explore these questions:

- Do you think there are times when it is right to use violence to fight against injustice? Why or why not?
- If you lived in Boston in October of 1850, and you knew where the slave-catchers from Georgia could find Ellen and William Craft, what would you do? Would you act differently if you were white than if you were black? Would you act differently if you were an adult than if you were a child?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A FAMILY ADVENTURE

Experience a demonstration or march against injustice, or join in a walk for justice, such as a CROP Walk. [CROP \(Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty\) Walks](#) were initiated in locations around the United States by the non-profit organization, Church World Service, a service ministry of thirty-five U.S. Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations. A web page about the Newton, Massachusetts, CROP Walk describes it as "neighbors walking together to take a stand against hunger in our world. Together we raise awareness and funds for international relief and development, as well as local hunger-fighting." Find information online about [CROP Walks in your area](#).

FAMILY EXPLORATION

Singing is a traditional hallmark of civil disobedience actions. Singing together helps demonstrators feel the power of their numbers. At a family campfire or at a

family meal, sing together the song, "If I Had a Hammer." Learn and sing together other folk, traditional, and political songs. You may want to consult the book, *Rise Up Singing*, conceived, developed, and edited by Peter Blood and Annie Patterson (Bethlehem, PA: Sing Out Publications, 2004).

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WORD ART — "IF I HAD A HAMMER" (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large sheet(s) of poster board and markers
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, "[If I Had a Hammer](#)" (included in this document) lyrics

Preparation for Activity

- Decide where you will display the poster of song lyrics, in your meeting space or elsewhere in the congregation. If you will have the group lead others in singing the song, "If I Had a Hammer" (Faith in Action), guide the children to write the lyrics large enough and legible enough to serve as a song-leading tool. Plan for small groups of participants to work on separate posters to display each verse.

Description of Activity

Invite participants to write the words to the song on a poster (or posters) and decorate it. Have participants add a border, illustrate the lyrics, and be creative in their portrayal of the song.

STORY: THEODORE PARKER AND THE FUGITIVE SLAVES: REFUSING TO FOLLOW AN UNJUST LAW

Written by Polly Peterson.

For a more interactive storytelling, assign a few participants to give voice to the words of Theodore Parker and Millard Fillmore, both of whose writings are quoted in the story.

This is the story of Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister who was determined to do whatever he could to end slavery in the United States. His powerful sermons were legendary. This is also the story of Millard Fillmore, whose actions earned him the contempt of Theodore Parker and abolitionists everywhere. He became the President of the United States in 1850.

But the story begins with two runaway slaves, a married couple from Macon, Georgia, who planned a daring escape from slavery. Ellen Craft had skin so light that she could easily pass for white. She decided to disguise herself as an ailing Southern gentleman traveling to Philadelphia for medical care. Her husband, William Craft, whose skin was dark, would pretend to be the "master's" dotting slave. Together they would travel 1000 miles to freedom in the North.

On December 21, 1848, they both obtained passes to travel to the next town for Christmas. Instead of celebrating the holiday, however, they bought train tickets to Savannah, Georgia. From there, in their disguises, they traveled by train and steamboat up the coasts of South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Maryland. By Christmas Day, they had arrived in Philadelphia, a Northern city. After spending three weeks with a Quaker farmer and his family, the Crafts traveled to Boston, where they found a home. William worked as a cabinetmaker, and Ellen worked as a seamstress. They lived with Lewis Hayden, a free black, whose boarding house often served as a safe house for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad. The Crafts became members of Theodore Parker's Unitarian congregation.

In September, 1850, the U.S. Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law. The law not only provided for the return of fugitive slaves to their masters in the South, but also required private citizens in the North to assist in their capture. Abolitionists in Boston immediately began organizing resistance to the law. Theodore Parker was one of the founders of a Vigilance Committee, designed to protect "the colored inhabitants of Boston from any invasion of their rights." The Vigilance Committee

included blacks as well as whites. Lewis Hayden and William Craft were members.

On October 20, 1850, two agents arrived in Boston, sent by the Crafts' former owners to catch the fugitives. The agents took for granted that Boston officials would assist them, but in this they were disappointed. Vigilance Committee members protected the Crafts and relentlessly harassed the two slave-catchers. The coordinated actions of the abolitionist community and African Americans throughout the city thwarted the agents at every turn. The slave-catchers stayed in Boston for more than a month, trying to waylay the Crafts, but in the end, they had to return to Georgia empty-handed. The Crafts went hurriedly overseas to England, where they would be safe.

Theodore Parker wrote an angry letter to President Fillmore, telling him the story of the Craft escape and challenging him to enforce his monstrous law. "Suppose I had taken the woman to my own house, and sheltered her there till the storm had passed by: should you think I did a thing worthy of fine and imprisonment?" he asked. He made it clear that he would obey the laws of God, even if it meant breaking the laws of men.

Strange to say, Millard Fillmore, the President who had signed the Fugitive Slave Law, was also a Unitarian who hated slavery. How could his beliefs concerning the law be so different from Parker's?

"God knows I detest slavery," he wrote to Daniel Webster, his secretary of state, "but ... we must endure it and give it such protection as is guaranteed by the Constitution till we can get rid of it without destroying the last hope of free government in the world."

President Fillmore had sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitution allowed rights to slaveholders. He had promised to abide by the decisions of the Congress, and they had passed a Fugitive Slave Law. He threw the weight of his influence onto enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law because he believed it was the only way to keep the Union together, and he believed that safeguarding the Union was his sworn duty as President.

Those who supported the Fugitive Slave Law often stated that the purpose of government was to protect property. They argued that, since slaves were property, no one, including the slaves themselves, had any right to deprive the slaveholder of rightful ownership. A runaway slave was nothing more than a thief, in this view. They also fooled themselves into believing all sorts of falsehoods about the natural inferiority of black people. Many even convinced themselves that black people were happier in slavery than they would be if left to fend for themselves in the world.

Theodore Parker was incensed. How could the United States have strayed so far from the Revolutionary ideals of its founders? His own grandfather, Captain John Parker, had fought in Lexington, Massachusetts, in one of the very first skirmishes of the Revolutionary War. In those days, Americans had not been afraid to stand up for liberty, though it meant breaking the unjust laws imposed on them by their government in Britain. Now, this very country, founded on a principle of liberty and justice for all, was enforcing laws designed specifically to deny liberty and justice.

"There hangs in my study ... the gun my grandfather fought with at the battle of Lexington ... and also the musket he captured from a British soldier on that day," Parker wrote in his letter to President Fillmore. "If I would not peril my property, my liberty, nay my life to keep my parishioners out of slavery, then I should throw away these trophies, and should think I was the son of some coward and not a brave man's child."

Many other abolitionists were against using violence, but after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Parker did not agree with them. He often used the proud history of the Revolution as a way of bringing people to his point of view. He also saw that over the years there had been a practice of erasing the memory of black participation in the Revolution, and he was dedicated to reminding his fellow Americans of the historic role blacks had played.

Conflict between the northern and southern states was reaching a boiling point. Theodore Parker believed that the North must stand up against a government dominated by the interests of the Southern slaveholders. He hadn't wanted to put the abolition of slavery into the center of his life and ministry, but he felt he had no choice. Millard Fillmore hadn't wanted to support the

institution of slavery, but he also felt he had no choice. He did not want his country to divide in two.

In the end, Fillmore's signing of the Fugitive Slave Law probably did keep the country together for another ten years. And, in the end, that law probably strengthened the resolve of people in the North, making it possible for them to win the Civil War. Up to that point, it was easy for Northerners to see slavery as none of their business. Whether they hated slavery or not, few Northerners considered themselves personally responsible until they were forced to participate in the capture of fugitives and to witness the kidnapping of innocent free blacks by slave-catchers.

Until the time of the Fugitive Slave Law, abolitionists had been very unpopular, even in Massachusetts. Now, Theodore Parker, who had been despised by many for his radical views, suddenly became enormously popular. Every week, his sermons and speeches were heard by thousands of people and read by many more. One person who read everything by Theodore Parker that he could get his hands on was William Herndon of Illinois, Abraham Lincoln's law partner. Herndon often passed along Parker's writings to Lincoln, who expressed his admiration for it. In one sermon, Herndon had underlined the following words that he thought would interest Lincoln: "Democracy is direct self-government, over all the people, for all the people, by all the people."

Ten years later, Abraham Lincoln became the President of the United States, and the Civil War began. By then, Theodore Parker had died. He did not live to see the abolition of slavery in the United States. Yet, he had helped to lay the groundwork by convincing many people that they must not blindly follow unjust laws. His words had the power to persuade many people to join the fight to end slavery.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: IF I HAD A HAMMER LYRICS

The song, "If I Had a Hammer," was written by Pete Seeger and Lee Hays in the 1950s while they were members of the band, The Weavers, and popularized in the next decade when Peter, Paul, and Mary recorded and performed it. Permission pending from The Richmond Organization.

If I had a hammer,
I'd hammer in the morning
I'd hammer in the evening,
All over this land.
I'd hammer out danger,
I'd hammer out a warning,
I'd hammer out love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.
If I had a bell,
I'd ring it in the morning,
I'd ring it in the evening,
All over this land
I'd ring out danger,
I'd ring out a warning
I'd ring out love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.
If I had a song,
I'd sing it in the morning,
I'd sing it in the evening,
All over this land
I'd sing out danger,
I'd sing out a warning
I'd sing out love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.
Well I've got a hammer,
And I've got a bell,
And I've got a song to sing, all over this land.
It's the hammer of justice,
It's the bell of freedom,
It's the song about love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.
It's the hammer of justice,
It's the bell of freedom,

It's the song about love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.

FIND OUT MORE

Hear "If I Had a Hammer"

The YouTube website has vignettes of several [performances of the song](#), "If I Had a Hammer." One video includes clips of performances by Peter, Paul, and Mary; Trini Lopez; the Mitch Miller Band; and Pete Seeger, who wrote the song with Lee Hays when they were members of The Weavers.

Pete Seeger and Protest Music

A rich resource for sing-along songs from folk and political traditions is *Rise Up Singing*, a spiral-bound resource book of song lyrics and guitar chords conceived, developed, and edited by Peter Blood and Annie Patterson (Bethlehem, PA: Sing Out Publications, 2004).

Rent or purchase the DVD documentary, [If I Had a Hammer: Pete Seeger and the American Quest for Justice](#), produced by Tim Brachocki.

Pete Seeger has been a singer and songwriter since 1939. He traveled the country performing with Woody Guthrie and together they became part of The Almanac Singers. In the early 1950s, Pete was a member of The Weavers and they had a number of national hit songs. Seeger was blacklisted and cited for Contempt of Congress by the House Committee on Un-American Activities for refusing to testify in 1955. The song, "If I had a Hammer," was written in support of progressive movements in 1949 and has since become known around the world. He was a vocal critic against the Vietnam War and his song "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" has become a popular anti-war anthem... He has employed music throughout his life to entertain, educate, and organize people concerning issues of peace and social justice.

Civil Disobedience

Read a short introduction to the various movements for reform in our democracy. Read ["The Role of Civil Disobedience in Democracy"](#) by Kayla Starr, adapted by Bonnie Blackberry.

An essay by Peter Suber which originally appeared in *Philosophy of Law: An Encyclopedia* edited by Christopher B. Gray (Garland Pub. Co., 1999) may be read online: ["About 'Civil Disobedience' by Henry David Thoreau, 1849."](#) Here is an excerpt from Suber's essay:

While Walden can be applied to almost anyone's life, "Civil Disobedience" is like a venerated architectural landmark: it is preserved and admired, and sometimes visited, but for most of us there are not many occasions when it can actually be used. Still, although it is seldom mentioned without references to Gandhi and King, "Civil Disobedience" has more history than many suspect. In the 1940's it was read by the Danish resistance, in the 1950's it was cherished by people who opposed McCarthyism, in the 1960's it was influential in the struggle against South African apartheid, and in the 1970's it was discovered by a new generation of anti-war activists. The lesson learned from all this experience is that Thoreau's ideas really do work, just as he imagined they would.

SESSION 9: SPIRIT OF LIFE (CANTEEN)

INTRODUCTION

Spirit of Life, come unto me.

— Carolyn McDade

The spirit is really the bouquet of life. It is not something breathed into life, it comes out of life.

— Joseph Campbell in a conversation with Bill Moyers

The water and the water bottle symbolize the Spirit of Life. In this session, participants reflect on different ways our faith leads us to think about and connect with how the Spirit of Life works in our lives. Reflections may include how pain and hurt as well as joy and wonder can bring a sense of the Spirit of Life, when one may feel connected to everything. You will guide participants to explore the idea of the Spirit of Life as a part of everything—fluid and pervasive, like water.

For the Welcoming and Entering and Opening activities, you will need to fill large, shallow containers with water for participants to share.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Convey that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that helps people connect to the Spirit of Life, and a faith which supports us all to continuously explore the world's possibilities and expand ourselves
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism values acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations (third Principle)
- Exemplify Unitarian Universalism's affirmation of the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life (Source)

- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the qualities of water through discussion and hands-on experiences
- Make a symbolic connection between the fluidity and pervasiveness of water and the fluidity and pervasiveness of the Spirit of Life
- Develop a personal sense of the Spirit of Life, by reaching into our Jewish and Christian heritage, our Unitarian Universalist love of reason, and our willingness to seek the divine in everything
- Reenact the water communion through visualization and emphasize how all water is connected, just as all things are connected by the Spirit of Life
- Learn the Unitarian Universalist hymn, "Spirit of Life"
- Focus on one of the sources of the Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition, "the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life"

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Creation	10
Activity 2: Water Play	8
Activity 3: Water Communion	10
Activity 4: Singing "Spirit of Life"	10
Activity 5: Council Circle	12
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in

peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on Spirit of Life, you may wish to reflect on how you personally would answer the council questions about the Spirit of Life. When have you felt the Spirit of Life, or something akin? What does the Spirit of Life feel like to you? Do you have other names to call it?

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has different opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Shallow basins of water, one for every two or three participants
- Straws for all participants
- Newspaper to cover worktable(s)

Preparation for Activity

- Gather large, shallow containers such as pie tins. Purchase straws.
- Cover worktable(s) with newspaper. Fill basins two-thirds full with water and set, along with straws, on worktable(s).

Description of Activity

This activity is intended for the time before the session when children arrive individually, that is, "straggle in."

Welcome participants. Invite them to choose a straw and explore the water in the basins — without spilling or drinking any — using the straw, or their hands. Save the straws for a later activity.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Light-colored construction paper, several sheets for each participant
- Shallow basins of water, one for every two or three participants
- Straws for all participants
- Newspaper to cover worktable(s)
- Bubble solution, or hand-wash dishwashing liquid), a half cup for each basin
- Tempera paint, a quarter cup for each basin
- Tool of the Day — a water bottle, filled with water
- Toolbox of Our Faith poster and a glue stick or clear tape

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in the Council Circle space.

- If you have not done so for Welcoming and Entering, cover worktable(s) with newspaper. Include a worktable where children can place their bubble prints to dry. Fill large, shallow containers (such as pie tins) two-thirds full with water and set on worktable(s), along with straws and other materials.
- Optional: To see examples of bubble artwork, visit the [online Air-Blown-Art Gallery](#) of the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Description of Activity

The children will blow into a basin of water to explore the qualities of water and make a bubble print, an ethereal, beautiful, almost marbled piece of art. In this activity, you will guide them to connect the properties of water with some qualities of the Spirit of Life.

Gather the children in a circle, in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted, for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up the water bottle and tell the children it contains water, the Tool of the Day.

Pass around the tool. As children pass it, invite them to share prior experiences with water. Encourage each child to mention something that no one else has said.

Lead a discussion to introduce the water in the water bottle as a symbol for the Spirit of Life. Ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer.

Explain, in these or your own words:

Just as water is around us all the time, sometimes unseen and unrecognized, so is the Spirit of Life around us all the time, sometimes unseen and unrecognized. Water is healing and life-giving, and so is the Spirit of Life. Unitarian Universalism is a faith that can help each person connect to the Spirit of Life and be endlessly expanded by the possibilities in the world.

As we talk more about the Spirit of Life today, you will come to understand it better. It is something that can be defined in different ways. Here is a definition which may work for you: The

Spirit of Life is a force which creates and upholds life.

Unitarian Universalism affirms the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life. Recognizing and welcoming the Spirit of Life is one way to grow spiritually. This is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding. One reason we are exploring the Spirit of Life today is that Unitarian Universalism values acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

Collect the tool. Extinguish the chalice.

Invite the children to arrange themselves at the worktable(s) in groups of two or three around a basin of water. Help each group mix bubble solution and tempera paint in their basin, and guide them to create bubble prints. Tell them:

Use your straw to blow into the water and make bubbles. Gently press a sheet of construction paper on top of the bubbles, for just a second. Then lift the paper straight up to remove it, and let it dry.

Indicate where the children can lay their bubble prints to dry. After a few prints have dried, invite a participant to write the words "Spirit of Life" on one and tape or glue it to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Or, do this during the Closing.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — CREATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Creation](#)" (included in this document), a retelling of a story in Genesis, in the Hebrew scriptures

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and decide whom you will ask to read the roles of "Appreciating Voice" and "Bible Voice."

Description of Activity

Gather the group to hear a story. You may tell them:

This story is based on the first of two versions of the creation story found in Hebrew scripture in the Book of Genesis, Chapters 1 and 2. This story reaches into our Jewish and Christian heritage, our love of reason, and our Unitarian Universalist tradition of seeking the divine in everything — all in a bundle called Spirit of Life.

ACTIVITY 2: WATER PLAY (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Shallow basins of water, one for every two or three participants
- Water play items, such as funnels, whisks, rubber ducks, sieves, spoons, eye droppers, and straws — a few for each basin
- Optional: Bubble solution (or hand-wash dishwashing liquid) and/or food coloring
- Optional: One large basin and/or clean vinyl gutters or plastic tubes
- Rags and towels for clean-up

Preparation for Activity

- You may wish to refresh the basins used for bubble prints in the Opening with clean, warm water.
- Gather a variety of water play items and tools, and set out several with each basin of water.

Description of Activity

Allow children to explore, in free play, the way water embodies various qualities of the Spirit of Life.

Invite participants to gather in groups of two or three at the filled basins of water, and enjoy some free-form experimentation with water and tools. When the play lags, suggest participants add dish soap and/or food coloring.

As the children play, encourage them to feel the water run through their fingers, listen to the water pour out, and try to visually track where the water goes as they squirt it, splash it, or stir it.

Variations

If your space can accommodate it — or, if you have an outdoor space — convene the group at one large basin. Or, use vinyl gutters to create sluices from one basin to another.

ACTIVITY 3: WATER COMMUNION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- An attractive, clear vase or pitcher
- Clear plastic drinking cups for all participants
- A large, glass bowl for mingling water

- Plain white paper and markers for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Fill a clear vase or pitcher with water.

Description of Activity

Gather participants around the table where you have placed the vase or pitcher, the plastic cups, and the large bowl. Tell them, in these words or your own:

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations hold a water communion at the end of the summer, in which participants of all ages bring "living waters" from wherever their travels led them and mingle them for later use by the congregation in ceremonies, such as a child dedication.

Tell the group you will enact a water communion together, to demonstrate how all water is connected, just as all things are connected by the Spirit of Life.

Indicate the water in the clear vase or pitcher. Point out that water molecules never stop existing, they just get recycled over and over, so that water molecules from the local tap could have once been in the Amazon River, in a New England pond, in the blood of a tiger in India, in the saliva of a salamander, in the local swimming pool, or in snow on top of the Rocky Mountains. See if the children can think of more places where a water molecule in the vase or pitcher might once have been.

Give each child a plastic cup to hold. Pour into each cup some water from the pitcher or vase. Ask the children to close their eyes and meditate on their own experiences with water and think of their own personal "water stories" they could share with the group. Prompt them by suggesting they might have had an experience with a river, a creek, a pond, a puddle, a fish bowl, a swimming pool, a lake, a bathtub, a rain storm, or an ocean. Allow a few minutes of quiet time.

Then, gather the group around the large bowl. Invite each participant to share his/her personal water story and pour water from the cup into the bowl. As each child pours his/her water, have them recite, "This water is part of the living water that makes up our world."

ACTIVITY 4: SINGING "SPIRIT OF LIFE" (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. If you are not comfortable teaching and leading the hymn, "Spirit of Life," you may wish to invite a guitar or piano player to accompany you or a musical volunteer to assist you. Or, plan to share the words with participants as a poem or a prayer.
- Optional: Write the words to the hymn on newsprint and post.
- Optional: Watch a video clip online to [learn the arm and hand motions](#) created by Penny Wollan-Kriel of Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Springfield, Illinois, for the hymn, "Spirit of Life," on the website, The Great Story.

Description of Activity

Participants learn and sing the Unitarian Universalist hymn, "Spirit of Life."

Gather the group in a circle. Teach and lead hymn #123 "Spirit of Life." If you wish, teach the arm and hand motions, as well.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — water in a water bottle
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, clear tape or glue, and a bubble print made on construction paper by one of the participants

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Guide participants to reflect on the Spirit of Life — what it is, what it feels like, how it is like water. Ask them to pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. You may offer these questions:

- What does the Spirit of Life feel like to you?
- Have there been times when you felt the Spirit of Life? When?
- How do you recognize the Spirit of Life?
- Do you have another name you might like to call it?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Build a water story with the group. Pass the water bottle and water around the circle. Ask each participant to imagine a form that the water took during its never-ending journey in the universe. Invite them to be as imaginative as possible. You might say, to start:

Today, we talked about the fact that a water molecule, once formed, never ceases to exist in nature, and might travel far and wide, across time.

This molecule of H₂O — two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom — started in the Big Bang. The hydrogen was formed by a burning star. This one bit of water was part of an icy asteroid that crashed together with others and formed the planet, Earth. This very bit of water then became part of a brontosaurus's blood that spilled when it tripped. That bit of blood seeped into the soil. It eventually became part of a flower eaten by a woman gatherer. She passed the water in a stream of urine next to a tree. Later, this bit of water was carried in a piece of grass. The grass dried in the sun, and this water evaporated into the sky...

Allow each participant to add to the story. You may want to go around the circle twice. To end the story, say "As

water is a never-ending part of the universe, so is the Spirit of Life."

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

We gather in community to celebrate

the glories

and mysteries

of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do to express their inner thoughts and selves. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and feel of the Spirit of Life!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU Equality of faith, e.g. Spirit of Life], I will...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape a bubble print to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write "Spirit of Life" on the poster.

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

"Spirit of Life"

Arrange with your minister or lay worship leaders for the congregation to sing the song, "Spirit of Life," when the children can join in.

Engage the group in illustrating a poster with the words and pictures representing the images in the song.

Candlelight Vigil

Take part together in a candlelight vigil. Moments of shared connection and transcendence cannot be orchestrated, yet they often do happen when people gather for a common purpose and a common good.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?

- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

Spirit of Life, come unto me.

— Carolyn McDade

The spirit is really the bouquet of life. It is not something breathed into life, it comes out of life.

— Joseph Campbell in a conversation with Bill Moyers

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Water in a water bottle symbolizes the Spirit of Life. In this session, children reflected on how the Spirit of Life works in our lives. The group heard a creation story based on the Book of Genesis in Hebrew scripture. Reflections included how pain and hurt as well as joy and wonder can bring a sense of the Spirit of Life, when one may feel connected to everything. Participants discussed how the Spirit of Life is a part of everything, just as water is pervasive.

The children learned about the Spirit of Life to demonstrate that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help people connect to the Spirit of Life and be endlessly expanded by the possibilities in the world
- Unitarian Universalism values acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations (third Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism affirms the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life (Source)

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Think about these questions, and share your reflections with your child:

- What does the Spirit of Life mean to you?
- Have there been times when you felt the Spirit of Life? When?
- How do you recognize the Spirit of Life?
- What does the Spirit of Life feel like to you?
- Do you have another name you might like to call the Spirit of Life?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

Today, we talked about the fact that a water molecule, once formed, never ceases to exist, and might travel far and wide across time. Make up a water story together. Invite each person to imagine a form that the water took during its never-ending journey in the universe. Be imaginative. You might start by saying:

This H₂O — two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom — started in the Big Bang. The hydrogen was formed by a burning star. This one bit of water was part of an icy asteroid that crashed together with others and formed planet earth. This very bit of water then became part of a brontosaurus's blood that spilled when it tripped. That bit of blood seeped into the soil. It eventually became part of a flower eaten by a woman gatherer. She passed the water in a stream of urine next to a tree. Later, this bit of water was carried in a piece of grass. The grass dried in the sun, and this water evaporated into the sky.

Invite each person in the family to add to the story. To end the story, say "As water is a never-ending part of the universe, so is the Spirit of Life."

STORY: CREATION

This story is based on the first of two versions of the creation story found in Hebrew scripture in the Book of Genesis, Chapters 1 and 2. It comes from *Stories in Faith: Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales* by Gail Forsyth-Vail (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, 2007).

Designate volunteers to take the roles of "Appreciating Voice" and "Bible Voice." Have adult co-leaders read aloud the respective roles, or invite participant volunteers who are strong readers to do it. Allow volunteers an opportunity to read the text ahead of time, so they will be comfortable reading it aloud.

Before beginning the story, you may like to paraphrase or read aloud for the group the introductory matter that precedes the first piece spoken by the "Appreciating Voice."

To make this story more interactive, and to give the children an experience of speaking biblical words, you might instruct the listeners to repeat back the last sentence, each time "Bible Voice" speaks.

In this version, man and woman are created together, both in the image of God. The seven-day creation story, while not scientifically accurate, contains ancient wisdom. It is a hymn of praise to all of creation, poetry that names and lingers over all the wonders of the world. It is presented here as a reading in two voices: a "Bible voice" that is the text itself, and an "Appreciating Voice" that lingers in gratitude and praise over the wonders enumerated in the text.

In this well-known passage of scripture, God "talks the world into being." His or her actions bring order out of chaos. He or she divides, differentiates, and categorizes, bringing about the order of night and day, sea and sky, plants and animals. By naming things God identifies each as separate and different from one another. In turn each is given meaning. The God of Genesis blesses each creature. This gesture acknowledges, rather than confers, the sacredness of all living things. It invites us also to name and bless all of the wonders of our world.

Appreciating Voice:

Sometimes, when I look up at the stars, or feel the rain on my face, or hear the buzzing of a bee, I wonder where it all comes from. How did we begin? I know the wisdom that comes from science, which says that microscopic one-celled creatures evolved over millions of years into countless complicated forms of life. But sometimes, when I behold the wonder of it all, I love to

hear the words spoken long ago by the ancient Hebrews about how the earth and the sky and all things living were called into being and blessed by the Spirit of Life we sometimes call God.

Bible Voice:

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness. A wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God called the light Day, and the darkness Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Appreciating Voice:

From the beginning, light and darkness, activity and rest, day and night.

Bible Voice:

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

Appreciating Voice:

From the mountaintop, the treetop, the airplane, or our own backyards, we see the daytime clouds and nighttime stars that reach further than we can even imagine. From the canoe, the rocky bluff, or the sandy shore, we see the vastness of the sea, deeper and wider than we can fully understand. In the presence of sky or of sea, we feel connected to the mystery of life.

Bible Voice:

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were called together Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Appreciating Voice:

Chestnuts, acorns, dandelions, and beans—each carries the beginning of a brand-new plant. We plant apple seeds and peach pits, wheat, peas, and corn. We watch day by day for the avocado seed in a glass to sprout or the bean to split and put down roots. We are grateful for the plants and the trees that bring us beauty, joy, and good food—and for those plants that protect themselves with thorns, poison leaves, and tall, winding branches.

Bible Voice:

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years." God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And there was evening, and there was morning, the fourth day.

Appreciating Voice:

We give thanks for the orbit of our earth around its sun. It brings the seasons: times for planting and for harvest, time to enjoy the warmth of the sun, and time to pull closer to the fire for warmth. We give thanks also for our earth's moon, which causes the tidal coming and going of the oceans.

Bible Voice:

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

Appreciating Voice:

Blessing all the creatures of the earth, the sea, and the sky, God acknowledged that each is sacred.

Bible Voice:

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals, and everything that creeps upon the ground." And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image."

So God created humankind in his image,

In the image of God he created them

Male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

Appreciating Voice:

We, too, can bless the animals of every kind on the face of the earth. We can recognize the divine, the Creative Spirit, the Spirit of Life in each of them and in each of us. We rejoice in the blessing of being alive and sharing the gift of life with the creatures of this, our planet home.

Bible Voice:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work. And on that day God rested. So God blessed the seventh day.

FIND OUT MORE

The website, [The Great Story](#), blends evolutionary and creationist views of cosmology, presenting many resources about "the sacred narrative of an evolving Universe."

The hymn, "[Spirit of Life,](#)" and its author Carolyn McDade, were featured in the Fall 2007 issue of *UU World*.

SESSION 10: COURAGE AND CONVICTION (SADDLEBAGS)

INTRODUCTION

From caring comes courage.

— Lao Tzu

Conscience is the root of all true courage.

— James Freeman Clarke, nineteenth-century British abolitionist

This session addresses courage and conviction. Saddlebags symbolize the courage and conviction bequeathed us by the early Universalist circuit riders. Though they were often not welcomed, and sometimes even violently derided for their beliefs, they rode from town to town to preach their message of faith, hope, and love and to build Universalist communities.

Using, activities, reflection, and the example of the words and deeds of these prophetic women and men, participants explore courage and conviction in their own lives. They think about the challenges and the importance of taking a stand, and they learn how the resources of their Unitarian Universalist faith can help them discern what they feel strongly about and stand up for what they believe.

Make sure there is ample time for a discussion of how people can work in their spiritual lives to decide what is important enough to become a "conviction." If it proves difficult to obtain saddlebags to use as the Tool of the Day, bicycle panniers or a rucksack will do. In any case, you will need a photo or drawing of saddlebags to add to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. You can prepare two copies of this image — one for the poster, and one to be the Tool of the Day.

Before the session, collect images of people showing courage and conviction and post them before participants arrive. Pictures may be obtained from magazines, newspapers, wall calendars, websites, and history picture books. Include images of itinerant preachers from North American Universalist history. Find sources for images in "Find Out More."

For Activity 3: Making Courage Stones, you will need a few stones for each participant. Look for stones that are large enough to draw or paint on, yet small enough to keep in a pocket.

GOALS

This session will:

- Deepen Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Convey that Unitarian Universalism affirms courage and conviction as integral aspects of a life of faith
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that values an unending search for truth and meaning, encourages individuals and faith communities to discern convictions that they find spiritually imperative, and supports them in standing up for these convictions in their lives and communities
- Show how Unitarian Universalism helps people find courage to stand up for what they believe
- Present Unitarian Universalism as a faith with a long tradition of courageous leadership in matters of the spirit, exemplified by the early pioneers of the Universalist movement who traveled and preached, often at great peril, because they believed strongly in religion that values faith, hope and love over anger, punishment, and fear
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn about the work and lives of nineteenth-century Universalist circuit-riding preachers and how they acted on the courage of their convictions
- Explore the purpose and importance of conviction and courage in a religious context
- Gain an introduction to Universalist beliefs
- Acquire and test guidelines for discernment of their own important convictions
- Both provide and receive support in their faith community for building a sense of courage of their convictions.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY

MINUTES

Welcoming and Entering

Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Eliza Tupper Wilkes: Riding for Faith, Hope, and Love	10
Activity 2: Moments of Courage — Acting It Out	15
Activity 3: Making Courage Stones	15
Activity 4: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

courage and their convictions? Let your wishes for the group guide you in the session you are about to lead.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

After you have read the story, "Eliza Tupper Wilkes: Riding for Faith, Hope, and Love," think about the convictions you hold in your own life and moments of courage that you have experienced, or avoided.

Find some time to sit in a quiet place, even if only a few minutes, and reflect on these issues in your own life. What are your convictions? What are your resources for the courage to stand up for what you believe? What would you or do you stand up for, even if it might be dangerous or inconvenient to do so?

Use these questions, if you find them helpful:

- What beliefs do you hold strongly? What beliefs would you call your convictions?
- What would you be willing to stand up for, even, perhaps, at your own peril?
- How have you come to decide what convictions are most important to you?
- What are the moments in your life when you have felt called to take a courageous stand, or to be courageous?
- What are the moments in your life when you wish you could have been more courageous?
- What resources do you find in your faith, and in your faith community, to support you in your courage and your convictions?
- What resources in your faith and in your faith community do you wish could be strengthened, to support you better in your courage and your convictions?

Focus on the children who will be in the session today. What convictions do you hope a new generation of Unitarian Universalists will hold dear? What kinds of courageous actions would you wish for them to take? What resources do you wish them to have in their lives and in their faith community to support them in their

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Photographs or other images of people demonstrating courage and conviction

Preparation for Activity

- Collect images of people demonstrating courage and conviction (see "Find Out More" for suggestions).
- Before participants arrive, post the images around the room, display them as a gallery, or arrange them on a table.

Description of Activity

This activity is intended for the time before the session when children arrive individually, that is, "straggle in."

Welcome participants. Invite them to wander around the room, looking at the pictures, and thinking about what they see in them. Encourage participants to talk with one another about what they think is happening in the pictures.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — saddlebags, bicycle panniers, or a rucksack
- A photo or illustration of saddlebags
- Toolbox of Our Faith poster and a glue stick or clear tape
- Scratch paper and pencils for all participants
- Optional: Image of a Universalist itinerant preacher

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in the Council Circle space.
- Collect images of people demonstrating courage and conviction (see "Find Out More" for suggestions). Include one or more images of Universalist itinerant preachers.

- Before participants arrive, post the images around the room, display them as a gallery, or arrange them on a table.

Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted, for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up the saddlebags, bicycle panniers, or rucksack — or a photo/illustration of saddlebags — and tell the children what it is. Pass this Tool of the Day around. Invite children to share prior experiences with saddlebags.

Tell the group that saddlebags are the Tool of the Day because they were used by the early Universalist itinerant preachers. These preachers, male and female, showed the courage of their convictions by traveling from community to community, spreading a message of religion based on faith, hope, and love.

You may say:

The topic for today's session is courage and conviction.

A person's convictions are the beliefs and ideas that they feel are so important, that they are willing to stand up for them, even when it is hard to do so because acting on their beliefs might cause them a lot of inconvenience, or ridicule, or even harm.

Collect the tool. Invite a participant to attach the picture of saddlebags to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster, and write the words "Courage and Conviction" on the poster. Extinguish the chalice.

Now, engage the group in an experiential introduction to conviction and courage. Invite them to comment on the images they have seen around the room. If more structure would be useful, give each participant one image and invite the children to share their images with one another in pairs.

You may use these questions to spark discussion:

- Which of these images have you seen before? When/where?
- What do you think all the images have in common?

You need not try to make a particular point or dig deeply into any of the comments (unless the emotional safety of the group calls for it). This activity provides an opening, and sets the stage for the topic of the day.

If the group has dispersed, re-gather them in a circle and distribute scrap paper and pencils. To encourage them to think about their own convictions, ask participants to write down three or four things they feel strongly about, beliefs they might call their convictions. Tell them they can write whatever they like, and that they can change what they have written during the session. Tell them they will have an opportunity to share some or all of what they write in the Council Circle. Allow a minute or so for participants to write. Then, say:

Many people think "courage" means "not being afraid." But, courage is a quality that people can draw on when they must do something, even when they are afraid. Courage is what allows you to have convictions, and to stand up for what you believe, even when it is hard to do so. The images you have seen around our room today all represent times when people acted with courage.

If you have time, draw out participants' ideas about what might be called courageous in some of the images. Tell the group:

We will explore today the ideas of conviction and courage in our faith community, starting with the example of some courageous women and men from the earliest days of the Universalist movement in North America—itinerant preachers of the late 1700s and early 1800s.

An "itinerant" preacher was one who did not have a church of their own, but instead traveled from town to town preaching and gathering believers. If they were successful at starting a group, they might return to the same places over and over, in a particular order, or "circuit." Since they most often rode horses to get from place to place, they became known as "circuit riders." They carried all their clothes, some food, and a copy of the Bible in their saddlebags.

Being a circuit rider was hard work. Since they didn't have a regular job, they didn't have regular pay. What they did have was the fire of conviction—a fire that burned in their hearts. As Universalists, they had discovered through prayer, reading the Bible, and just plain

reasonable thought that God was a force for love among all people. At that time, many other preachers spoke about God as a force bringing punishment and fear. Because the Universalist message was usually a new one, itinerant preachers risked being ridiculed, physically threatened, or even beat up for the beliefs they preached.

Our story today is about these early Universalists and their work, and the courage and convictions they carried with them in their hearts and in their saddlebags.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — ELIZA TUPPER WILKES RIDING FOR FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Eliza Tupper Wilkes: Riding for Faith, Hope, and Love](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to read it aloud or tell it dramatically.

Description of Activity

Gather the group to hear a story. After the story, invite participants to share their reflections and initial thoughts about the story, the circuit riders, and their courage and convictions. The discussion will be continued in further depth in Council Circle.

Remind participants that they can update their own lists of convictions now, or later in the session.

ACTIVITY 2: MOMENTS OF COURAGE — ACTING IT OUT (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [Moments of Courage Skit Rules](#) (included in this document) for each group

Preparation for Activity

- Review Handout 1: Moments of Courage Skit Rules. You may want to adapt the handout to specify how much time you will give participants to (1) plan and (2) perform their skits. Print out a handout for each group.
- Identify some spaces in or near your meeting room where small groups can create their skits without being easily overheard. Plan where all

will gather to watch one another's skits. This activity would work well outdoors on a nice day.

- Be ready to offer suggestions if groups struggle for moments of courage to enact.

Description of Activity

Form groups of three or four. If the group has fewer than six children, have them stay together as one group, with co-leaders as the audience.

Instruct each group to come up with a moment to enact in which a person shows particular courage and conviction. It can be a famous person or a famous moment, or an everyday moment.

Distribute copies of Handout 1: Moments of Courage Skit Rules and go over them with the group:

- All members of the group must be included in some way in the acting.
- They can make noise in their acting if it is relevant to what they are trying to convey, but they cannot use recognizable language (i.e., they cannot speak).
- There will be a time limit for practicing (which you can set and enforce — a couple of minutes is usually fine).
- The performance should be brief, and participants should be prepared to repeat it or offer a hint or two, in case the audience cannot guess what they are doing (For example, "This is a famous moment in the twentieth century," or "This is something you might see at school.").

Give participants the time you have allotted to create a skit. Visit all the groups as they work to make sure they are on track and to offer help as needed.

When time is up, bring the groups together. Have each group perform, and invite the other groups to guess the moment of courage being acted out. Once an audience member has identified the moment of courage, ask the performing group what courage and convictions were displayed in their chosen moment.

Repeat for two or three rounds, as time allows.

Variations

If you feel that participants have appropriate experiences to draw from, ask them to choose moments from their own lives, or moments they have witnessed. If they have previously studied a particular time frame or area of Unitarian Universalist history, ask them to identify and enact a moment from our tradition. You may like to add a round in which groups act out a future

moment that might call for their courage, including a demonstration of how they would hope to act.

ACTIVITY 3: MAKING COURAGE STONES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Several small stones for each participant
- Optional: Cloth on which to place the stones
- Participant lists of their own convictions
- Permanent markers and/or paints and paintbrushes
- Newspaper
- Optional: Chalice candle and lighter and extinguisher

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain stones that are large and smooth enough to draw or paint on, yet small enough to keep in a pocket.
- Cover worktables with newspaper, and set out markers and/or paints. Prepare a safe place for painted stones to dry.
- Set out the stones on a cloth if you have brought one.

Description of Activity

Participants will create a tangible reminder of the support their Unitarian Universalist religious community provides for their actions of conviction and courage.

Invite the children to look at their list of convictions and choose one or two which are most important to them. Tell them they will then create an object they can use to focus their courage in a time of need.

If it is appropriate for the group, create a brief space of meditation or prayer. Lead participants to:

- Ask (or look within themselves) for guidance concerning what convictions are worthy of their actions and their courage.
- Imagine themselves in a situation where that conviction is being challenged, and what they would hope to do—what kind of people they would hope to be.

Invite participants to choose one or two stones that they can keep with them to remind them of their convictions and of the support of their religious community in helping them act with courage. Settle the group at the worktable and invite them to decorate the stone(s) in any way they choose. You might suggest they use a chalice or

another symbol that will remind them of the conviction the stone represents.

If time is a constraint, participants can choose a stone to keep as a symbol of their convictions without decorating it. They could choose a stone now or at the Council Circle.

If appropriate for the group, when children finish decorating their stones, hold a brief ceremony. Here are some suggestions:

- With everyone sitting in a circle, pass each stone one at a time around the entire circle. Ask each participant to briefly hold each stone and offer a silent prayer or blessing over it. Suggest these words: "May this stone remind [name of owner] of the support of their faith community and our Toolbox of Faith group."
- Place each stone in the center of the group, one at a time. Have each participant reach a hand toward each stone, and repeat a group blessing, or a moment of silence over each stone.
- Place the stones in a pile, close together, and offer a blessing to all the stones together. This alternative is a good choice if the painted stones are too wet to pass around.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — saddlebags, bicycle panniers or a rucksack, or an image of saddlebags
- Participant lists of their own convictions
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray

- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, clear tape, and a photo or drawing of saddlebags
- Optional: Copies of Handout 2: [Courage and Conviction Letter](#) (included in this document) for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Optional: Decide whether you would like to incorporate an additional song into the Closing, to particularly mark today's theme. In *Singing the Living Tradition*, Hymn 168, "One More Step," and Hymn 396 "I Know This Rose Will Open," each speak to courage and conviction.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Optional: Customize, print out, and photocopy Handout 2: [Courage and Conviction Letter](#) for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three

rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to reflect on the story as they pass around the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. You may say:

The early Universalist circuit riders gave up the comforts of life to ride into villages and preach what they believed. What do you think kept them going in that hard work? What did they hope to accomplish? Do you think they were successful?

Has your courage ever been tested? What did you do or not do that was courageous? What did you do or not do that you wish you had done differently and with more courage?

What items would you want in your saddlebag if you were heading into our world in these days to live the courage of your convictions? How can you support others in keeping up their courage and their convictions?

Now ask participants to look at the list of convictions they have made during this session. Say:

Is there something on that list that you would hope to hold on to, even at the risk of your comfort or safety? If you are willing, share one item from your list with the group, and say a few words about what that conviction means to you.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into

the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do to express their inner thoughts and selves. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world, find your convictions, and use your courage!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., courage and conviction], I will...

Or, if you feel participants all will be willing and able to fill in their own blanks, you might have each child say:

I will fill my saddlebags with UU courage, and go out into the world and stand up for (a conviction they are willing to share with the group)!

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to attach the photo or illustration of saddlebags to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write "Courage and Conviction" on the poster.

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. If you have prepared it, also distribute Handout 2: Courage and Conviction Letter.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Plan a Faith in Action activity to help participants extend the core learning of this session into action in the congregation and wider world. Consider any action that allows participants either to develop and express their convictions, or to support others in courageously taking a stand.

Some suggestions include:

- Learn who in your congregation has been particularly courageous in living out their

convictions. Invite that person to speak with the group and answer questions about the challenges and rewards of living one's convictions.

- Invite your minister or another experienced religious professional to talk about the spiritual value of discernment and ways to practice contemplation of one's convictions. Ask this person to lead the group in some discernment practices.
- Meet with a congregational group that is involved in courageous action. If appropriate, arrange for the children to join in their work. Ask the group's members how they keep their courage up when things are challenging.
- Engage the children to research one or more contemporary or historical groups whose members have spoken out at the risk of ridicule or injury. Challenge the children to look for statements of personal commitment that shed light on individuals' sense of conviction and how they maintain their courage. Exchange information about these groups and their work, including (for contemporary groups) what the children can do to support them.
- Invite participants to work up brief "stump sermons" on a topic about which they feel conviction. Let the congregation know where such itinerant preaching will be going on. Make sure to meet afterward, so children can compare notes about how many people attended, and how it felt to share deep convictions in front of others. If an appropriate place exists in your community, participants may wish to try this exercise with an even broader audience.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

You may want to reflect on the aspects of courage and conviction that seemed personally meaningful to you. If you have made your own list of convictions, what might you find useful to do with this list? As you asked the

children to consider, which of these deserve the energy and attention of your life? What support for your courage and your convictions do you find in your religious community, your family and friends, or your work? How might you strengthen that support? How has leading this session changed you? How do you think this session may change the participants?

What follow-up conversations or activities would you like to engage in as a result of this session? With the Toolbox of Faith group? In your own life? In your congregation?

TAKING IT HOME

From caring comes courage.

— Lao Tzu

Conscience is the root of all true courage.

— James Freeman Clarke, nineteenth-century British abolitionist

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today's session in Toolbox of Faith focused on the qualities of courage and conviction in religious life. The session explored how:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that helps us find courage to stand up for what we believe
- Unitarian Universalism values an unending search for truth and meaning, and encourages us to build convictions we find spiritually important and that we will stand up for in our lives and communities.

Today's story, "Eliza Tupper Wilkes: Riding for Faith, Hope, and Love," included some scenes from the life of a Universalist circuit-riding minister who lived and rode and preached in the very early 1800s. We used the early Universalist itinerant preachers as an example of people who lived lives full of courage and conviction. These preachers were called "circuit riders" because they traveled particular routes or "circuits" on horseback, riding into small villages and preaching the Universalist gospel of God as a loving presence, rather than God as a punishing force to be feared. Their message was often not well received, particularly by the leaders of more orthodox churches.

The children learned that these itinerant preachers carried everything they needed in simple saddlebags, had very little money, and sometimes encountered opposition, and even violence, when they preached. They learned that Eliza Tupper Wilkes and others believed so strongly in the message of their Universalist faith that — even though it was hard and dangerous

work — they felt they had to keep spreading the good news of Universalism.

In the session, we invited the children to begin to think consciously about their own convictions — the beliefs and ideas they feel to be so important they would stand up for them even when it was hard to do. We discussed the need to search your heart, with prayer or meditation, or thought, to discern the convictions that merit the energy and faith of a lifetime. We began to build a sense of our religious community as a source of courage.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Take some time to contemplate, or refresh, your own sense of courage and conviction. Think about:

- What beliefs do you hold strongly — that you would call your convictions?
- What would you be willing to stand up for, even, perhaps, at your own peril?
- How have you come to decide what convictions are most important to you?
- At what moments in your life have you felt called on to be courageous? When do you wish you could have been more courageous?
- What resources do you find in your faith, and in your faith community, to support you in your courage and your convictions?
- What resources in your faith and in your faith community do you wish could be strengthened, to support you better in your courage and your convictions?
- What convictions do you hope your children will come to hold dear?
- What kind of courageous actions would you wish for them to take?
- What resources do you wish them to have in their lives and in their faith community to support them in their courage and their convictions?

Find some time to talk with your child about your thoughts concerning these ideas. Tell your child about your own process of discernment that has led you to your convictions, and about the sources of courage that you have found in the course of your life. Your conversation will help your child develop their own essential Toolbox of Faith.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

Use the Internet, newspapers, or your local library to learn about contemporary or historical groups whose members have spoken out at the risk of ridicule or injury.

Challenge the children to look for statements of personal commitment that shed light on individuals' sense of conviction and clues that suggest how these individuals maintain their courage. Try to articulate the convictions that motivate these courageous people, and talk about whether members of your family might share the same convictions. If they do, find out how you can stand up for them, too.

STORY: ELIZA TUPPER WILKES: RIDING FOR FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

Written by Polly Peterson.

A useful visual aid for this story is a map of the United States to show Reverend Wilkes extensive travel all over the country. Other visual aids might include pictures of Universalist circuit riders and pictures of frontier life and transportation modes of the mid-nineteenth century.

This story is long, and you may want to edit it before sharing it with the group.

Imagine traveling by horse and buggy along dusty dirt roads in summer heat, fording streams, swatting mosquitoes, wearing clothes with long sleeves and a high collar. Or, making the same trip on icy roads, beginning in the dark of a cold winter morning, whipped by bitter wind, with sleet stinging your face.

Imagine that a church congregation is waiting for you when you reach your destination. You preach a sermon, lead the hymns, meet with the church officers, give counsel to troubled parishioners, and help organize a church supper or an evening discussion group. Then, at the end of a long day, perhaps you receive news of a death in another town and know that you must soon be on the road again, to comfort the grieving family.

A day like this might have been a typical Sunday for a Universalist minister in the group known as the Iowa Sisterhood. These ministers were among the first female ministers in the United States. They endured many hardships to bring liberal religion to the small communities that were springing up throughout the Midwest after the Civil War.

Eliza Tupper Wilkes led the way in this new style of ministry. This is her story.

Eliza Tupper was born in Maine in 1844. Her father was a Baptist minister, and her mother was a writer and editor. Her mother's job was very unusual. In those days, married women rarely had a profession outside of housekeeping.

When Eliza was five, her family moved to Iowa, a territory that had gained statehood only a few years earlier. People were flocking to this promising new state on the rolling prairie; its population had doubled from about 75,000 when Eliza was born to more than 150,000 by the time her family moved there.

Pioneer life suited the Tupper family very well. A good high school education was hard to find on the frontier, though, so Eliza went back to Maine in 1860 to live with her grandfather and go to school. She returned to Iowa three years later and began studying at a new Baptist college. She wanted to become a missionary. After graduation, she took a job as a teacher in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. While she was there, her ideas about religion began to change. The Baptist religion's teachings about hellfire and damnation no longer seemed true to her. To the horror of her family, she decided to join the Universalists. When she was baptized in her new faith, she quipped that she had "left the devil behind."

The Universalist church was the first denomination to welcome women ministers. This was lucky, for Eliza Tupper. Her interest in missionary work was still strong. Soon she began preaching from the pulpit of the Mt. Pleasant Universalist church. She moved to Wisconsin where she had her own pulpit as a minister. While in Wisconsin, she met William Wilkes, a young law clerk, and she married him in 1869.

The United States was a country on the move in those days. By 1869, you could take a train across the entire continent, from the east coast to the west. More and more people were striking out for new territories in the West. Young people like Eliza and her husband William had a world of opportunity before them. The couple first moved to Rochester, Minnesota, where Eliza was ordained as a Universalist minister in 1871. She served as minister there for three years. Then they moved on, to Colorado. William became a lawyer and Eliza, now the mother of a young son, organized a new Universalist congregation in Colorado Springs and preached there regularly to get it started.

The high altitude of Colorado Springs proved to be bad for Eliza's health, though. In 1878, the family was on the move again. They traveled to the Dakota Territory and settled in the frontier town of Sioux Falls. The family eventually had six children. Unlike other prosperous husbands in those days, Eliza's husband approved of her career. He willingly paid for household help and tutors for the children so that Eliza could continue her missionary work.

Eliza was interested in many kinds of social reform, but she dedicated her life most of all to the establishment of new churches. She knew that among the pioneers on the frontier there were many freethinking people who hungered to hear the liberal message, and there were few places to hear it.

From her home base in Sioux Falls, Eliza organized seven churches in South Dakota, Iowa, and Minnesota. Her plan was to turn each one over to another minister after it was established, as she moved on to establishing the next. But ministers were in short supply. Often she needed to serve several churches at once. Reverend Eliza Tupper Wilkes spent many years "on the circuit," traveling from town to town, ministering to as many people as she could. On Sundays, she often preached in Rock Rapids, Iowa, in the morning, then traveled fifteen miles to Luverne, Minnesota, for an afternoon service. Nowadays such a trip would be a quick drive on the highway. For Eliza, it was a long, arduous journey over difficult roads.

Eliza Tupper Wilkes was a trailblazer, but she was not alone. Other women were establishing Unitarian congregations in Iowa and the surrounding states. Women ministers encouraged other women to come into the ministry, and the "sisterhood" grew. They often faced people who were hostile to the idea of women in the ministry, but they proved to be so effective that their congregations in the Midwest and the West quickly grew.

After Eliza had started a new congregation, she always preferred to turn it over to another woman minister. She believed that women from the local areas were more competent as prairie pastors than the men sent out from the East. The women worked harder and were more willing to accept the low wages that struggling homesteaders could pay. They better understood their parishioners' lives and were more likely to talk about things in the same kind of way as the people they served — unlike some of the young men sent out to the frontier, fresh from college. Along with their religious message of optimism and hope, the women ministers tended to bring a comforting, homelike quality to church meetings that attracted both women and men. And, beyond their religious duties, they often organized cultural and social events that were much appreciated by people living isolated rural lives.

Eliza was delighted when Carrie Bartlett, a dedicated, energetic, and well educated young minister, agreed to take over the pulpit of the Sioux Falls Unity Church. Eliza had founded the church, and it was where her family attended services. On Sundays when Rev. Carrie Bartlett was not in the pulpit, Eliza or a guest minister from the Iowa Sisterhood would usually preach in her place. One Sunday, Rev. Bartlett traded pulpits with a male colleague instead. Eliza's little daughter, Queenie, was astonished. She exclaimed in amazement, "Look, Mama! There's a man up there in the pulpit!"

Women ministers were still very rare in the rest of the world. Even among Unitarians and Universalists, many

people still disapproved of them. But for the young congregation of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, female ministers had become the norm, thanks to the dedication and hard work of a few courageous women.

HANDOUT 1: MOMENT OF COURAGE SKIT RULES

- All members of the group must be included, in some fashion, in the acting.
- You may make noise in your acting, if it is relevant to what you are trying to convey. But, you may not use recognizable language. That is, actors may not speak.
- There will be a time limit for planning and practicing your skit.
- There may be a time limit for performing your skit.
- Be prepared to repeat your skit, if needed, and provide a hint or two, if other groups cannot guess what you are doing. (For example, "This is a famous moment in the twentieth century," or "This is something you might see at school.").

HANDOUT 2: COURAGE AND CONVICTION LETTER

You had a chance today to think about some of your own convictions — the things you believe are so important you would stand up for them, even when it is hard to do. Keep your list of convictions, if you made one, or make one later, if you didn't. Keep thinking about the beliefs and concerns that are worth your energy and your commitment. Talk with the people you trust in your life about their convictions, and about what you're thinking of as your own.

Keep building your courage, as well — not your courage to be a daredevil or famous (though that may be OK too), but more importantly, your courage to be the person you want to be. You will need courage to be the kind of person who lives out their convictions, and stands up for what they believe. And remember, when you need it, your religious education group and your Unitarian Universalist religious community will help you along.

FIND OUT MORE

Images of Courage and Conviction

Cut out, photocopy, or print out images from magazines, newspapers, textbooks, websites, wall calendars, and/or non-profit organizations' annual reports and fund-raising appeals. Visit a library that has a photocopier and peruse history picture books. You may also find images among your congregation's photo archives, or your own.

Be sure to include everyday moments of courage, as well as heroic moments, and include images of children. Some suggestions:

- Rosa Parks
- Jackie Robinson
- Mahatma Gandhi leading the 1930 Salt March for Indian independence
- Famous historical news photos, such as the man standing in front of the tanks at [Tiananmen Square](#), or the young woman kneeling over a student killed during an anti-war protest at [Kent State](#)
- Images from the civil rights movement, such as the anti-segregation [lunch counter sit-ins](#) or Rev. Martin Luther King speaking
- Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation
- A child — or anyone — performing alone on a stage
- A child — or anyone — learning to read
- Women working on micro-enterprise projects in developing countries
- Striking workers
- People clasping hands (to indicate the courage of standing with a friend or ally)
- A photo of your congregation breaking ground for a new building
- Photos of your congregation's social action activities
- [Lou Gherig](#) retiring from his baseball career, after diagnosis with ALS
- Photos of [marriages of same-sex couples](#), from *Courting Equality* by Pat Gozemba and Karen Kahn, photographs by Marilyn Humphries (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007)

- Parents with their newborn or newly adopted children
- Someone standing up to a tyrant, bully, or other oppressor
- A person asking for help

The website of [photographer David Bacon](#) has many social justice images, including workers' strikes and immigrant rights demonstrations. The International Longshore & Warehouse Union website has photos from a [1934 strike in San Francisco](#), and other, more recent labor protest images.

Universalist Itinerant Preachers

Reinforce the session theme by representing Universalist itinerant preachers among the images you collect. Find a drawing of [Nathaniel Stacy](#) in the online [Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography](#). Though they came somewhat later than the preachers portrayed here, you may like to include a photo of [Olympia Brown](#) or a photo of late nineteenth-century Universalist itinerant preacher [Quillen Shinn, on his horse](#).

Read about [Maria Cook](#), a very early Universalist woman preacher, in the online [Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography](#). Also see *Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1880-1930* by Cynthia Grant Tucker (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

Online, read "[Of sand bars and circuit riders: voices from our Universalist past](#)" by David Reich from the July 1993 edition of *UU World*. The article includes a number of brief and often humorous stories that participants may enjoy. From the introduction:

With their quick wits, their talent for improvisation, and their radically democratic bent, the circuit riders and their followers were quintessentially American, and their lives were the stuff of which good stories are made.

The online [Dictionary of Unitarian Universalist Biography](#) includes additional, interesting Universalists, including noted itinerants Hosea Ballou, William Farwell, and Caleb Rich; see the [index of Universalist articles](#). It is also interesting to read some of the many [obituaries of Universalist clergy and laypeople](#) from the [Universalist Register](#), on the Unitarian Universalist Association website.

Universalism

There are many resources for Universalist history, both on the Internet and in readily available books. A very accessible, brief history of Universalism can be found in

The Larger Faith by Charles A. Howe (Boston: Skinner House, 1993). *Universalism in America: A Documentary History of a Liberal Faith*, edited by Ernest Cassara (Boston: Skinner House, 1997), includes many wonderful excerpts from Universalist primary source documents.

Though it is out of print, ministers and congregations may have access to the two-volume collection, *The Larger Hope* by Russell Miller (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1979), which includes a number of stories and many photos.

Be aware that Universalism has been a controversial subject since its earliest days. If you search on the web or in a large library for Universalist resources, you may find as many anti-Universalist resources as you do favorable ones. Further, a strain of modern evangelical Christianity has embraced the classical Universalist teaching of the goodness of God. Often listed under the name, "Biblical Universalism," these movements are not necessarily at odds with Universalism in its historical form, but they are not part of the heritage that has become Unitarian Universalism.

You can also find many resources concerning courage and conviction in religious life. In addition to the Unitarian Universalist resources listed above, you may wish to explore books by the Buddhist author Pema Chodron, such as *Comfortable with Uncertainty: 108 Teachings on Cultivating Fearlessness and Compassion* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2003) and *The Places that Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2007).

SESSION 11: LISTENING (STETHOSCOPE)

INTRODUCTION

Nature has given [people] one tongue but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak.

— Epictetus, the Greek Stoic philosopher

A stethoscope, seashell, or other listening tool symbolizes listening. In this session participants reflect on and practice the skills of listening and consider the impact of embracing listening as a quality of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

Emphasize that listening skills take practice. Help participants articulate how they have felt at times when they weren't listened to, and how they can become better listeners. Allow time for participants to engage with the difficulties of listening. Let them explore some of the reasons people have trouble listening.

An auto mechanic's listening tool would be ideal for the Tool of the Day and can be purchased online (see "Find Out More"). A medical stethoscope is another option. A toy spy listening device, a seashell, audio headphones, or a cupped hand could do in a pinch. Make sure you have a small listening tool or a picture of a listening tool to attach to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Introduce listening as a quality of Unitarian Universalist faith and the idea that, as Unitarian Universalists, we develop and practice listening skills
- Connect listening with the Unitarian Universalist Principle which affirms and promotes acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations (third Principle)
- Present listening as a method Unitarian Universalists use when we seek wisdom from the world's religions in our ethical and spiritual lives (third Source).

- Engage participants in rituals of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concern, and intentional discussion to nourish them and help them grow spiritually.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Use listening skills to identify sounds
- Connect the meaning of listening to the development of a strong faith
- Learn about a time when listening to one another helped Unitarian Universalists make difficult decisions together
- Practice listening skills through games and play involving noises, rhythm, songs, and/or chant
- Focus on listening to each other with special care in this session's Council Circle
- Reflect on times they listened well and didn't listen well, and what they can do to continue developing and practicing listening skills.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — James Luther Adams and the Chicago Church Desegregation	10
Activity 2: Listening Games	10
Activity 3: Listening Workout	15
Activity 4: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. To prepare for this session on listening, reflect on your own experiences. When have you found it hardest to listen well? When is it easiest? What might you do to listen more carefully? Do you see listening as a spiritual practice?

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your

personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has different opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Recorded sound effects and other sounds, and appropriate media player
- Tool of the Day — a listening tool
- Optional: Large sea shells for "hearing the ocean"
- Optional: A small, symbolic listening tool to attach to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster, such as a small sea shell, disposable audio headphones, or a picture of a stethoscope

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain sound effects recordings and recordings of bird songs, Halloween sounds, animal noises, and musical instruments. You will find useful recordings at most public libraries, perhaps even a sound effects compilation. If you have the time and the technology, make your own CD or computer music file of a variety of sounds.
- Before the children arrive, begin playing recorded sounds. Place the Tool of the Day on a worktable, along with large sea shells if you have brought some.

Description of Activity

This activity is intended for the time before the session when children arrive individually, that is, "straggle in."

Welcome participants. Invite them to listen to the recorded sounds and try to identify them. If you have brought sea shells, show participants how to "listen to the ocean" by holding one to their ear.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Recorded sound effects and other sounds, and appropriate media player
- Tool of the Day — a listening tool
- Optional: Large sea shells for "hearing the ocean"
- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, clear tape, and a small or symbolic listening tool (such as a small sea shell, disposable audio headphones, or a picture of a stethoscope)

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post where it is visible in the Council Circle space.
- Obtain sound effects recordings and recordings of bird songs, Halloween sounds, animal noises, and musical instruments. Public libraries are good sources. Speak with a librarian. If you have the time and the technology, make your own CD or computer music file of sounds.
- Begin playing recorded sounds. Bring the Tool of the Day into the Council Circle space, along with large sea shells if you have brought some.

Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle, in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Introduce the Tool of the Day and the theme, listening. Help participants connect the meaning of listening to the development of a strong Unitarian Universalist faith.

Ask the group to listen silently to the recording and try to identify the sounds they hear. After a few moments of silence, invite comments.

Turn the recording off, or down. Indicate where the opening words are posted, and lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Introduce the Tool of the Day as a listening tool, and invite participants to share their experiences. Pass the listening tool around the circle, along with large sea shells if you have brought them. Invite participants to use the tool. For example, if it is a stethoscope, invite them to listen to one another's heartbeats. (Note: Make sure you know the proper use of the Tool of the Day. Making loud noises into a stethoscope can damage the device.)

Ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there truly is no one answer, and then offer the explanation that the listening tool represents the skill of listening, which is part of every Principle that guides Unitarian Universalism. You may say:

We need to know how to listen, because by listening, we show that we understand the dignity and worth of each person. If we don't listen to someone, we are not respecting their worth or dignity. We need to know how to listen

to act with justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. If we do not listen to other's experience of injustice, we will not be able to seek justice. We need to know how to listen to search for truth and meaning, because no one person can find truth or meaning all by themselves. We need to know how to listen to use the democratic process, because in a democracy, everyone should have a voice. We need to know how to listen to seek world community, because different people around the world will not understand each other if they do not listen to each other.

We need to know how to listen to be a part of the interdependent web of all existence, and that means we have to listen not only to people, but to all the plants and animals and air and water in nature. We need to listen to what nature tells us about the health of our planet.

This is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding. Listening is recognized in every faith tradition as a source of wisdom and compassion.

Invite a participant to tape a symbolic stand-in for a listening tool (a small sea shell, disposable audio headphones), or a picture of one, to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write "Listening" on the poster.

Collect the listening tool(s). Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — JAMES LUTHER ADAMS AND THE CHICAGO CHURCH DESEGREGATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[James Luther Adams and the Chicago Church Desegregation](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story. Prepare to tell it or to read it aloud.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle to hear the story. Read or tell the story.

ACTIVITY 2: LISTENING GAMES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Scarves to cover eyes

For Listening Boxes

- Ten, identical small plastic canisters (such as empty pill bottles or 35mm film canisters, with lids) or ten, identical cardboard boxes with lids (such as for jewelry)
- Handfuls of five different noise-making materials such as small rocks, pennies, sand, small pencil erasers, or paper clips

For Wise Master. A variety of items that can be dropped on the floor, such as a wooden spoon, a string of beads, a pillow, a squeak toy, a metal can, and a sponge

Preparation for Activity

- Decide which games to play. Gather the materials you will need. Consider providing several games at different stations if the group is large and the meeting space is a favorable one for simultaneous, small group listening activities. Rotating among several stations keeps the momentum up.
- **Listening Boxes.** To make the shakers, place materials that make different sounds in containers to make five matching pairs. Use tape as needed to secure lids.

Description of Activity

Emphasize that in all of these games, the better participants listen, the better they will succeed.

Listening Boxes

Explain that in this game, participants use listening skills to identify matching pairs. Ask participants to shake the boxes (gently) and guess the contents. Then tell them there are pairs of shakers with the same contents. Ask them to identify matching pairs.

Wise Master

Invite participants to sit in a circle. Designate one child to be the "Wise Master" and stand or sit in the center with eyes closed (or, wearing a scarf tied around the eyes). Other participants chant:

Master, Master, do you hear?

Someone's coming very near!

A participant picks up one item and drops it on the floor. After hearing the sound, the "Wise Master" tries to guess which item was dropped.

To take turns, allow each "Wise Master" to continue guessing until they guess an item correctly — or until they guess one wrong. Or, give each "Wise Master" three items to guess and then choose a new "Wise Master."

Sounds in the Room

Have the participants close their eyes (or tie scarfs around their eyes) and take turns identifying a sound you make using everyday objects in the room. Try:

- Opening/closing a door or window
- Flipping a light switch
- Running a toy truck across the floor or a table
- Dropping a sweater or coat on the floor
- Uncapping a marker
- Writing with a marker on newsprint
- Cutting paper with scissors

Invite participants, one at a time, to make a sound and have the others guess what it is.

Listening Walk

Take participants on a listening walk around your facility, both indoors and (weather permitting) outdoors. Invite them to form pairs. If they are comfortable, have one person cover their eyes with a scarf while the other leads. What sounds are in the congregational office? Do you hear different sounds in the kitchen? What sounds are outside? Have pairs switch roles, and return to the meeting space — perhaps by a different route.

ACTIVITY 4: LISTENING WORKOUT (15 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Decide which activities to do with the group, and where to do them. The activity, *Make a Noise*, is especially fun in an outdoor setting. Because the song in the activity, *Bingo: Sound and Silence*, goes from sound toward silence, it makes a good transition into the Council Circle.
- **Sing or Chant a Silly Name Game.** Make a list of all participants' names and do some advance planning to ensure these games do not transform any child's name into a mean or otherwise inappropriate word.

Description of Activity

Practice and emphasize listening skills through rhythm, songs, and chant.

Make a Noise

Invite participants to lie down on the floor or ground with their eyes closed. Tell them you will move silently to a particular spot and make a small, quiet sound (for example a gentle blow of breath, a soft whistle, rubbing fingers together or a small tapping rhythm). Ask

participants to listen very hard and then point to where they think the sound is coming from. When everyone is pointing somewhere, tell them to open their eyes and see where they are all pointing. As time allows, have participants take turns making the quiet sound.

Making Rhythm

Have participants listen to the differences in sound when they clap their hands and when they slap their thighs. Participants may know a clapping rhythm game for all to try. Or, invite them to make up a rhythm pattern which includes both claps and slaps, for example, two claps and one slap. Encourage everyone to do it together 10 or 20 times. Try making other sounds using only body parts, such as by snapping fingers and clucking tongues. Incorporate these sounds into rhythm patterns.

You may like to make a game of guessing, simply by listening, the sounds that make up a rhythm. Form two groups and invite each group to create a rhythm that uses just two or three "body part-generated" sounds — such as clapping, finger-snapping, and foot-tapping. Then, have each group perform their rhythm while the other group, with eyes closed, tries to identify the sounds. You may like to have the listening group members turn their backs to the performing group, to make the listening even more challenging.

Sing or Chant a Silly Name Game

Encourage participants to listen to the changes in how a name sounds, as you play one of these games. (Be careful to avoid adapting anyone's name to become a mean or otherwise inappropriate word.)

With the children sitting in a circle, have them choose a letter to give a new beginning sound to the names of everyone in the group. Lead this chant:

Betsy, Betsy is her name.

With a "P," it's Petsy!

David, David is his name.

With a "P," it's Pavid!

Joel, Joel is his name.

With a "P," it's Poel!

Or adapt the Name Game presented in the song sung by Shirley Ellis in 1964. Change each name, as the song directs:

The first letter of the name,

I treat it like it wasn't there

But a B or an F or an M will appear.

And then I say Bo, add a B,

Then I say the name.
 Then Banana Fanna and a Fo,
 Then I say the name again with an F very plain,
 Then a Fe Fi and a Mo.
 Then I say the name again with an M this time
 And there isn't any name that I can't rhyme.

Your lyrics will sound something like this:

Shirley!
 Shirley, Shirley, Bo Birley
 Banana Fanna Fo Firley
 Fe Fi Mo Mirley,
 Shirley!

The song, "The Name Game," offers additional rules, such as a particular way to change a name that begins with a B, F, or M (by dropping the name's first letter). Or, you can make up name-changing rules of your own.

BINGO: Song and Silence

The traditional song, "BINGO," focuses participants on the song's silences as well as the sounds as a letter goes unsung at each verse:

There was a farmer had a dog and Bingo was its name, Oh!

B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, and Bingo was its name, Oh!

"There was a farmer had a dog and Bingo was its name, Oh!

B-I-N-G-_, B-I-N-G-_, B-I-N-G-_, and Bingo was its name, Oh!

"There was a farmer had a dog and Bingo was its name, Oh!

B-I-N-___, B-I-N-___, B-I-N-___, and Bingo was its name, Oh!

And so on, until the last verse where none of the letters of "BINGO" are sung aloud. You may instruct the children to make a silent movement, such as nodding their heads, to indicate missing letters. Or, give each letter a different movement. Sing the song until all five letters of "BINGO" are expressed in silence.

Including All Participants

BINGO: Song and Silence. Prepare five cards with the letters, B, I, N, G, and O. During the singing, use the cards to cue a child with hearing loss (or invite one, or five, hearing participants to do it), so the child with limited hearing can participate.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a listening tool
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, clear tape, and a small listening tool or symbolic stand-in to attach to the poster (such as a small sea shell, disposable audio headphones, or a picture of a stethoscope)

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.

- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. As a special focus, for this session, emphasize listening to each other. Ask participants to pay attention, during this reflection time, to how they listen when others speak.

Ask participants to reflect on times they listened well and did not listen well, and what they could do to continue practicing listening skills. You may ask:

- When have you found it hardest to listen well?
- When is it easiest?
- Can you think of any times when you might have gained something important, or changed for the better, if you had listened better?
- What might you do to listen more carefully?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this

candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Read aloud this closing benediction:

Our lives and our relationships could be greatly improved and more rewarding if we experienced more listening. Deep listening, listening with the entire focus of our minds is a central teaching of the Buddha from the Lotus Sutra. The Buddhist monk, Thich Naht Hanh, says that a great deal of unhappiness is caused in the world because people do not feel listened to.

You may tell the group that this quote comes from a sermon, "Deep Listening," given by the Reverend Ann C. Fox of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Fairhaven, Massachusetts.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I Opposite from above — scoop the air at

give chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do to express their inner thoughts and selves. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and listen!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., listening], I will...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape a listening tool or its symbolic stand-in to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write "Listening" on the poster.

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Oral History

Participants can become archivists for the congregation by listening as long-time members tell about their experiences. Engage the children in recording interviews with volunteers using note-taking — an activity that can sharpen listening skills — or an audio or video recorder. After the interviews, have the children write a report for the congregational newsletter. Or, have an adult or older youth with the skills and equipment help the children prepare an audio or video presentation. Donate the resulting documents or recordings to the congregation's library or archives.

The Listening Project

Visit [the Listening Project](#) to see if there are connections that you might make in your area. The Listening Project Training and Resource Center is a service of Rural Southern Voice for Peace (RSVP) a non-profit organization. RSVP supports programs that use deliberate, compassionate listening to help groups discuss issues from immigration to industrial logging to international conflict.

An article in *New Age Journal* said:

Since 1986 RSVP has offered Listening Projects in dozens of tension-torn communities as an alternative to conventional activist approaches — debates, protests, vigils, litigation, civil disobedience. Coming into volatile situations and confronting issues that might send seasoned mediators running for cover, they use compassionate listening as a way to understand underlying problems, introduce new ideas, and to help communities develop their own positive solutions for change.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

Nature has given [people] one tongue but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak.

— *Epictetus, the Greek Stoic philosopher*

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

A listening tool symbolizes listening. The children explored and practiced their listening skills using games and chants. They reflected on the impact of listening carefully to others, especially in situations of conflict, and the potential difficulties of listening. We emphasized that listening skills take practice.

Learning about listening helped the children learn that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that can help us develop and practice listening skills, which have value across religions and communities
- Listening is a way for Unitarian Universalists to affirm that we value acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations (third Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism uses listening to seek wisdom from the world's religions which inspire us in our ethical and spiritual life (third Source).

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

When you are gathered as a family, share your individual experiences of times you listened well and times you didn't listen as well. Give each person a chance to answer these questions:

- When have you found it hardest to listen well?
- When is it easiest?
- Can you think of any times when you might have gained something important, or changed for the better, if you had listened better?
- What might you do to listen more carefully?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

The San Francisco Exploratorium website describes the online exhibit, "[Listen: Making Sense of Sound](#)," as:

... a collection of interactive, ears-on exhibits.... (which) help visitors focus on subtle and profound aspects of hearing, experiment with new ways of listening deeply and carefully, and think about how others hear the world and focus on subtle and profound aspects of hearing.

Of particular relevance to this session is an interview with an auto mechanic, Lisa Miller, who discusses diagnostic listening for cars, and uses a mechanic's stethoscope. There are a variety of [online activities](#), as well.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

An interview provides a structure for speaking and listening. Help your child choose a family member to interview and a topic. An older relative might have

stories to share about family history, or what it was like to experience events that are now history. A sibling might like to talk about an activity they enjoy or a personal accomplishment. Most individuals in a family probably have something they would like to be interviewed about! Assist your child to take notes and write a report on the interview, or to videotape and edit it for your family archives.

Then, interview your child, and listen to him/her!

STORY: JAMES LUTHER ADAMS

Written by Jessica York.

You may like to introduce the story with these words:

This story is about a time when a group of Unitarian Universalists had to make a difficult decision together and needed to listen to each other.

Unitarian Universalism is a living faith. We think that people should be free to believe what they must believe — the truth of their life experiences — instead of professing a belief in what we are told to believe. This is what we mean when we say ours is a "creedless" religion.

Being a living faith means that any one of us can change what we believe, if we experience a deeper truth that contradicts our previous beliefs. But in order to change, you have to be open to new thoughts, new ideas, and new experiences. You have to have your ears open to hear the experiences of the people with whom you are in community.

There is a saying that people were created with two ears and one mouth because we should listen twice as much as we speak. When we come together in community, we have the opportunity to listen to each other and gain a perspective greater than what we would have alone.

Sometimes we listen with our ears. When you are a part of a sacred, beloved community you listen not only with your ears, but also with your heart. A listening heart has the power to help us be better people.

In 1948, most congregations and houses of worship in the United States were segregated (separated) by the color of their members' skin. Some were segregated by law; others by custom or by a lack of actively trying to welcome and include all people. The First Unitarian Society of Chicago was one of these congregations. Although their church was located in a neighborhood with many African Americans, only whites could join, according to the written by-laws (rules) of the church, and according to custom.

The day came that many members began to believe they needed to take action against racism, if they really wanted to live their values and principles. The minister, the Reverend Leslie Pennington, was ready for this day and ready to take action. So was James Luther Adams. James Luther Adams was a famous liberal theologian and social ethicist — a person who studies religion, beliefs, and values. Doctor Adams taught at the Meadville Lombard Theological School, right across the street from the First Unitarian Society of Chicago. And he was a member of the congregation's board of directors — a leader in the congregation.

Along with some others, Reverend Pennington and James Luther Adams proposed a change in the church's by-laws to desegregate the church and welcome people whatever the color of their skin. They wanted to include, not exclude. They saw this as a way to put their love into action.

When the congregation's Board of Directors considered the desegregation proposal, most of them supported it. However, one member of the board objected. "Your new program is making desegregation into a creed," he said. "You are asking everyone in our church to say they believe desegregating, or inviting, even recruiting people of color to attend church here is a good way to tackle racism. What if some members don't believe this?"

Desegregation was a very controversial topic. In 1948, anything about skin color and racism was controversial. Some people, even some who supported African Americans in demanding their civil liberties, believed in a separate, but equal policy which kept people apart based on their skin color.

Respectful debate ensued at the First Unitarian Society of Chicago. Both sides felt, in their hearts, that their belief was right. Perhaps they were so busy trying to be heard they forgot to listen. And so, they kept on talking.

The debate went on in the Board of Directors' meeting until the early hours of the morning. Everyone was exhausted and frustrated. Finally, James Luther Adams remembered that we should be listening twice as much as talking. He asked the person who had voiced the strongest objection, "What do you say is the purpose of this church?"

Suddenly, everyone was listening. Everyone wanted to hear the answer to this crucial question. Probably, the person who objected was listening especially hard to his own heart, as well as to the words he had heard from other Board members through the long discussion.

The Board member who opposed opening the church to people of color finally replied. "Okay, Jim. The purpose of this church is to get hold of people like me and change them."

The First Unitarian Society of Chicago successfully desegregated.

There are things that you know, and there are things that I know. When we are together and listening to each other, with ears and hearts, we know more.

FIND OUT MORE

Where to Find the Tool of the Day

You can purchase an auto mechanic's listening tool, which resembles a medical stethoscope, online from [Tool Source](#) or [O'Reilly Auto Parts](#), [Harbor Freight Tools](#), or another online vendor.

If your congregation's membership includes medical professionals, you may be able to borrow a medical stethoscope. Online, you can purchase a spy toy listening device such as the [keychain spy listener](#) (\$5) or the [supersonic ear](#) (\$20).

Listening tubes made of rolled paper, large sea shells, or cupped hands work in a pinch as listening tools. Audio headphones will do, symbolically, as the Tool of the Day.

Unitarian Universalist Sermons on Listening

Reverend Ellen Cooper-Davis presented a sermon, "Listening to Center," on October 15, 2006, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. The sermon reads, in part:

Hearing a story in its own context means that we are attending to what the listener is saying right then, in that moment. We are not filling in information, imagining the ways they will end the sentence, jumping to conclusions or interrupting. It means we are radically present to that person in that moment. It also means that we are listening for the heart of the person's experience, beneath the veneer that their words may be putting on it. This is sacred work.

You can request a copy from the [office @ uubn.org](mailto:office@uubn.org).

Reverend Ann C. Fox presented "[Deep Listening](#)" on October 13, 2002, to the Unitarian Universalist Society of Fairhaven, Massachusetts. The sermon describes the spiritual power of deep listening and offers concrete guidance for becoming a better listener. It reads, in part:

Our lives and our relationships could be greatly improved and more rewarding if we experienced more listening. Deep listening, listening with the entire focus of our minds is a central teaching of the Buddha from the Lotus Sutra. The Buddhist monk, Thich Naht Hanh, says that a great deal of unhappiness is caused in the world because people do not feel listened to.

Online "Listen" Exhibit

The San Francisco Exploratorium website describes the online exhibit, "[Listen: Making Sense of Sound.](#)" as:

... a collection of interactive, ears-on exhibits... (which) help visitors focus on subtle and profound aspects of hearing, experiment with new ways of listening deeply and carefully, and think about how others hear the world and focus on subtle and profound aspects of hearing.

Of particular relevance to this session is an interview with an auto mechanic, Lisa Miller, who discusses diagnostic listening for cars, and uses a mechanic's stethoscope. There are a variety of [online activities](#), as well.

"The Name Game" and Shirley Ellis

Find out more about the recordings and career of [Shirley Ellis](#), the creator and original singer of "The Name Game," released in 1964. See a clip of [Shirley Ellis performing her song](#), "The Name Game," on YouTube, or type your name into an interactive box on Randy and Jen Cox's personal website to [play "The Name Game" online](#).

SESSION 12: HUMOR (SANDPAPER)

INTRODUCTION

It is the test of a good religion if you can joke about it.

— G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), English writer and journalist

Laughter is perhaps one of the most mystical expressions of a human being.

— Laibl Wolf, rabbi and educational psychologist

People open themselves up to laughter so they become open-hearted. And in becoming open-hearted sometimes the tears come too.

— Jenny Thompson Richards, clown doctor

A merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.

— Hebrew scripture, Proverbs 17:22

Sandpaper symbolizes humor, a tool which smooths the rough edges of life. This session provides opportunities to reflect on how humor and laughter in a life of Unitarian Universalist faith can help us survive and enjoy the life we are given.

Discussion in this session may touch on humor that is cruel, or humor that opens us up to healing laughter. Allow time for participants to engage with the issue of jokes that are based on stereotypes. Emphasize that humor can heal when we laugh with others, and can harm when we laugh at others. In addition, emphasize that humor can be an affirmation of life in the face of life's sadness. Humor can be a source of inner spiritual strength that helps us survive.

Although it is not a tool for this session you may like to use a Slinky to introduce some light humor within the group.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Teach that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you be affirmed in life and connected to all beings through laughter

- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion
- Unitarian Universalism values respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part (seventh Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism affirms the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life (first Source).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Experience the qualities of sandpaper as it smooths the rough edges of wood
- Connect sandpaper, a tool for smoothing the rough edges of wood, with humor, a quality of our Unitarian Universalist faith which can smooth the rough edges of life
- Hear a story that uses humor to teach
- Enjoy their own humor and experience the joy of sharing humor together through play, parody songs, and making their own clownish designs with face paint
- Reflect on humor as a religious tool of our faith

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Mullah Nasruddin and His Donkey	5
Activity 2: Laughing Exercises and Captain Underpants' Name Game	15
Activity 3: Parody Songs	15
Activity 4: Clown Painting	10
Activity 5: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation.

In preparation for this session on humor, you may wish to answer, for yourself, the council questions you will pose to the group:

- When are some times that you have used (or might use) humor to "bounce" on the interdependent web?
- When have you experienced humor that is cruel? What happened?
- What do you think about humor as a religious tool?

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has differing opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Small pieces of scrap wood, enough for all participants
- Pieces of sandpaper for all participants
- Optional: A Slinky
- Optional: A sheet of paper, a permanent marker, scissors, and clear tape
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain pocket-size scraps of wood, such as thin-cut disks sliced from tree branches. You will need one for each participant and an extra for the poster.
- Set the materials on a worktable.

Description of Activity

This section is intended for the time before the beginning of a session when participants arrive individually over a period of time (that is, "straggle in").

Welcome participants. If you are using sandpaper as the tool of the day, invite participants to choose a small scrap of wood and smooth its edges with a piece of sandpaper to create a small "worry rub." Tell them they can keep the "rub" in a pocket to massage, as a stress releaser. Invite a participant to make one for the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. With a permanent marker, write "Humor" on the piece of wood and tape it to the poster, along with a scrap of sandpaper.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — a piece of sandpaper

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint and post it in the Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Participants will connect the sandpaper, a tool for smoothing the rough edges of wood, with humor, a quality of our Unitarian Universalist faith which can smooth the rough edges of life.

Invite the children to gather in a circle in the Council Circle space. Light the chalice. Lead the group in the opening words:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up the sandpaper and tell the group it is the Tool of the Day. As children pass it around the circle, invite them to share their experiences seeing or using sandpaper. Ask the group, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there truly is no one answer.

You might say:

Sandpaper represents humor, a tool of our Unitarian Universalist faith which helps us smooth out the rough edges of life, something like the way sandpaper smooths out the rough edges of wood.

Introduce the quality of humor in our faith, with these words or your own:

Humor is about being open and honest. It can help us look at our fears and prejudices. It will underline truths about us. Using humor can help us find healing laughter in the face of life's problems or sadness.

Unitarian Universalism is a faith that respects the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. Using humor helps us stay flexible and "bounce" on the web, with a smile and a laugh. This is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding.

One of the sources of our faith affirms the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life. Wonder can be expressed in laughter and openness.

You may invite a participant to add a piece of sandpaper to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Or, do this later in the session.

Collect the tool. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — MULLAH NASRUDDIN AND HIS DONKEY (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Mullah Nasruddin and His Donkey](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read and prepare to tell the story, "Mullah Nasruddin and His Donkey."
- This story is quite short. You may like to expand this activity by adding more humorous stories. The Resources section provides sources for more Mullah Nasruddin stories — there are dozens.

Description of Activity

Participants will hear a story that uses humor to teach.

Gather participants in a comfortable configuration for listening to a story. You may say:

Nasruddin was a Muslim mullah, or priest, hundreds of years ago. In Afghanistan, Turkey, and countries in the Middle East, people often tell funny stories about him, and they usually have something to teach us about life.

If you wish, assign three children to pantomime the actions of Mullah Nasruddin, his neighbor, and the donkey as you tell the story.

ACTIVITY 2: LAUGHING EXERCISES AND CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS' NAME GAME (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Captain Underpants' Name Game. Newsprint, markers, and tape; large blank name tags and markers

Preparation for Activity

- **Laughing Exercises.** Review the laughing exercises under "Description of Activity" to get comfortable leading them. To add [more laughing exercises](#) and to learn about the laughter yoga movement, visit the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga website.
- **Captain Underpants' Name Game.** Post three sheets of newsprint where you can write on them. On each sheet, write the entire alphabet in a column, down the left-hand side. Or, if you have a whiteboard, write the alphabet three

times (in three separate columns). Leave room between the columns to add a word after each letter.

Description of Activity

Experience the joy of laughter and humor through play. Both games provide ways for children to enjoy humor that is silly and not cruel.

Laughing Exercises

The combination of pretending to cry and bending over triggers spontaneous laughter, the laughter yogis say. Invite the children to stand straight up, as they are able, then bend all the way down to the floor, pretending to cry loudly the whole way. Now ask them to slowly come back up. Most people will naturally begin laughing as they rise. Show the group how to finish the movement by stretching their arms to the ceiling. Invite the children to try more laughter exercises:

- Making a "pop" noise by putting a thumb in your mouth, filling your cheeks with air, then pulling out your thumb.
- Fluttering your lips with a finger
- Lion laughter — letting out a big laugh, in combination with a roar

These and quite a few others will come naturally to participants.

Captain Underpants' Name Game

Gather the children in a circle near the newsprint you have posted. Ask if they are familiar with the *Captain Underpants* series of books. Allow some responses. Then, tell them:

You might not realize that although the books are silly, the author of *Captain Underpants*, Dav Pilkey, takes some things very seriously. One of those things is name-calling. On his website, he says this about it:

"The thing about name-calling is that it's totally based on your given name. Obviously, somebody named Johnny Butts is going to be teased a lot more than somebody named Larry Drake. But what if there was a chart which would level the playing field? What if you could take anybody's name, regardless of whether it was funny or not, and insert it into an equation which made everybody's name equally ridiculous? That way, nobody would be singled out. Larry Drake could no longer make fun of Johnny Butts (because Booger Bubbletush is just as stupid as Poopsie Toiletfanny).

Dav Pilkey sat down and compiled the most silly, disgusting, embarrassing, and idiotic names he could think of. He created the Name-Change-O-Chart over the course of about a week, then tested it for another week, making changes and adjustments here and there.

Explain that the group will now use Dav Pilkey's method to give everyone a silly name. Point out that this is meant to be an example of shared humor — laughing with each other about everyone's silly names — as opposed to the cruel humor of teasing about a name.

Going column by column, engage the group to generate a silly word to go with each letter of the alphabet. For the first column, ask for adjectives or "describing words:" For example: a = drippy, b = doombah, c = slimy, d = goofy, e = crusty.

The words do not need to correspond with the letters in any way. Take responses any way you like (calling out, raising hands); just make sure every child who wants to contribute has a chance. NOTE: To shorten the process of assigning a silly word to each letter of the alphabet, assign a group of letters of the alphabet to some words; for example: a, f, l, q, v, and z = drippy.

For the second column, ask for nouns. For example: a = pickle, b = feather, c = sewer, d = sweater, e = chicken.

For the third column, ask for nouns in a particular category, such as a body part, a type of transportation or a food. For example: a = butt, b = feet, c = face, d = nose, e = hump. Once you have completed all the columns, tell the children they now have a chart like Dav Pilkey's Name Change-O-Chart. Invite the children to calculate their own silly names. Make up your own rules, or use these:

- Based on the first sheet of newsprint (the adjectives), use the last to determine your new first name.
- Based on the second sheet of newsprint (the nouns), use the second letter of your last name to determine the first half of your new last name.
- Based on the last sheet of newsprint (the category-specific nouns), use the second letter of your last name to determine the second half of your new last name.

Tell them: Voila! You have a brand new identity (such as Drippy Picklenose)!

Pass out blank name tags and markers and invite children to make name tags, using their new names. Have them introduce themselves to one another. You may like to keep using the silly names instead of real ones for the rest of this session.

ACTIVITY 3: PARODY SONGS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Mural paper, masking tape, and markers

Preparation for Activity

- Find a place to spread out mural paper for children to write song lyrics.

Description of Activity

Participants use humor in creating parody songs. Divide participants into groups of three to five. Invite them to come up with parody songs that they can share with each other. One of the most common, "On Top of Spaghetti," follows. Can they share different versions with each other?

On top of spaghetti all covered with cheese.

I lost my poor meatball when somebody sneezed.

It rolled off the table, it rolled on the floor,

And then my poor meatball rolled out of the door.

It rolled in the garden and under a bush,

And then my poor meatball was nothing but mush.

The mush was as tasty as tasty could be,

And early next summer it grew to a tree.

The tree was all covered with beautiful moss.

It grew great big meatballs and tomato sauce.

So if you eat spaghetti all covered with cheese,

Hold on to your meatball and don't ever sneeze.

ACTIVITY 4: CLOWN PAINTING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- For each group of three participants: a set of face paints or make-up; cotton swabs for brushes, one per color; a cup of water; cosmetic sponges; an old towel or sheet to drape around the neck of the person being painted
- Optional: Paper and markers to sketch out designs
- Optional: Examples of face painting designs

Preparation for Activity

- Look at the [face-painting tips](#) at the Community Playthings website and print out a few examples to show the group. You may want to gather some face-painting how-to books. A good one which includes a set of face paints is *Face Painting* (Palo Alto, CA: Klutz Press, 2007). There may be someone in the congregation who is skilled in this activity.

Description of Activity

Divide participants into groups of three to make their own clownish designs with face paints. Have a set of paints and supplies for each group. Invite them to look through examples, if you have brought some, and to sketch ideas on paper. Or they may wish to create as they go.

Participants may want to try hand painting. Instruct them to hold a thumb alongside their hand and draw lips where the thumb and forefinger meet. Add more facial features and then see if the hand face can manage a tongue twister or two. Try the classic "unique New York," or the absurd "girl gargoyle, guy gargoyle."

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — sandpaper
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other nonflammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to pass around the Tool of the Day as a talking stick and reflect on humor as a religious tool of our faith. You may use these questions:

- When do you use humor to "bounce" on the interdependent web? Can you think of times when you have encountered humor as an

affirmation of life, or to teach or learn a lesson?
Can you share some examples?

- Have you experienced humor that is cruel? What happened?
- What do you think about humor as a religious tool?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion. Invite them to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice. Share these UU jokes:

- Can a Unitarian Universalist jump higher than a church? / Of course, churches can't jump.
- What do you call a Unitarian Universalist who is feeling sick? / A puny Uni.
- How many Unitarian Universalists can fit into an empty church? / Only one. After that it's not empty.
- Where can you find Unitarian Universalists? / It depends on where they were lost.
- Knock, knock. / Who's there? / U. / U who? / I didn't know you could yodel!

Add elements from the *Toolbox of Faith* group's usual closing, an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

Extinguish the chalice now, or at the conclusion of your closing ritual.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook*

Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like — and invite each participant to say one thing they will do this week that relates to using humor in faith. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and use humor faithfully!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to

use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., humor], I will...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: "Go, UU, go!"

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to add a piece of sandpaper to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

If the chalice is still lit, extinguish it now. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Visit the [Faithful Fools Street Ministry](#) website. Sister Carmen Barsody and the Reverend Kay Jorgensen bring, respectively, Catholic and Unitarian Universalist training and traditions to their street ministry of "spiritual foolery" in San Francisco, California. The website articulates their mission:

"Faithful" in our accompaniment of people with a presence that acknowledges each human's incredible worth. "Fools" are one[s] who see the world in all its glorious absurdity and act on what they see. "Streets" being a place where we discover our common humanity making way for celebration, community and healing to occur. "Ministry" is a way of living and being in the world that mirrors the presence of God.

There is a movement called "[Laughter Yoga](#)" which really isn't about yoga poses but is about the value of laughter. On the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga website, learn about this group which encourages the formation of "Laughter Clubs" in which the sole purpose is to enjoy a good hearty laugh. Maybe there is a Laughter Club near you. On the gallery page of the website, watch a video of [laughter exercises](#).

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today's Toolbox of Faith topic is humor and the Tool of the Day is sandpaper. The sandpaper symbolizes humor, a tool which smooths the rough edges of life. In this session, participants engaged in and reflected on humor and laughter, and examined their place in helping us survive and enjoy the life we are given. We emphasized that humor can be an affirmation of life and a source of inner spiritual strength that helps us connect to others and look honestly at ourselves.

We explored humor to illustrate that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you be affirmed in life and connected to all beings through laughter
- Unitarian Universalism values respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part (seventh Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism affirms the direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life. (first Source).

The children examined the difference between humor that is cruel — such as jokes based on stereotypes — and humor that opens us up to healing laughter. We emphasized that humor can heal when we laugh with others, and can harm when we laugh at others.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Can you think of times when you have encountered humor as an affirmation of life, or to teach or learn a lesson? Can you share an example? Have you experienced humor that is cruel? What happened?

What do you think about humor as a religious tool? Have you ever experienced humor in this way?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

Share laughter and humor in as many ways as you can together, by playing silly games, making faces, reading humorous stories out loud, and enjoying humorous family anecdotes. If you notice a moment when you are using humor to soften some pain in life — even a small hurt or disappointment — point this out to your child.

FAMILY ADVENTURE

Find out if there is a Laughter Club in your area and join in for a session. For information and a directory of local Laughter Clubs, visit the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter

Yoga website. On the website, find some [laughter exercises](#).

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Go together to the Scholastic Books website and use [Dav Pilkey's Name Change-O-Chart](#) to make silly names for each person in your family. Your family might enjoy reading together *Captain Underpants and the Perilous Plot of Professor Poopyants* by Dav Pilkey (Scholastic/Blue Sky Press, 2000) or others in the *Captain Underpants* series.

A FAMILY RITUAL

For a week, invite each family member to share a "joke of the day" at breakfast or at dinner.

STORY: MULLAH NASRUDDIN AND HIS DONKEY

An Islamic folk tale.

To engage participants in the storytelling, ask for three volunteers to pantomime the actions of Mullah Nasruddin, his neighbor, and the donkey.

One day, a neighbor whom Mullah Nasruddin didn't like came to see him. The neighbor asked Nasruddin, "May I borrow your donkey?"

Nasruddin did not want to lend his donkey to the neighbor he didn't like. So, he told him, "I would be very glad to loan you my donkey. Unfortunately, my brother came yesterday and asked me the same favor. He has taken my donkey to the next town, to carry his wheat harvest to the mill for grinding into flour. Sadly, the donkey is not here."

"Oh, too bad. Thanks, anyway," said the neighbor. And he turned around to go home.

The neighbor had taken only a few steps when Mullah Nasruddin's donkey, which was in the back of his compound all the time, let out a big, loud bray.

The neighbor turned back around. "Mullah Nasruddin," he said, "I thought you said your donkey was not here."

"He is not," said Mullah Nasruddin.

"But I just heard him bray!" said the neighbor.

Mullah Nasruddin turned to the neighbor and said, "My friend, who are you going to believe? Me, or a donkey?"

FIND OUT MORE

For a perspective about humor in Unitarian Universalism, read Rev. Judith E. Meyer's sermon, "[Irreverent or Irrelevant?](#)" given in October 2006 at the Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Santa Monica, California.

Read the cult classic, *The Essential Crazy Wisdom* by Wes "Scoop" Nisker (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2001). Explore the world of clowns, jesters, and fools while unearthing paradox in our daily lives. This irreverent look at the world draws from both Eastern and Western philosophies and traditions, quoting sources from Socrates to Mark Twain to Albert Einstein, and from Coyote legends to Taoism to Dada:

He who knows he is a fool is not the biggest fool; he who knows he is confused is not in the worst confusion.

— Chang Tzu

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"Fools" are one[s] who see the world in all its glorious absurdity and act on what they see. "Streets" being a place where we discover our common humanity making way for celebration, community and healing to occur. "Ministry" is a way of living and being in the world that mirrors the presence of God.

There is a movement, "Laughter Yoga," which really isn't about yoga poses but is about the value of laughter. This group encourages the formation of "Laughter Clubs" in which the sole purpose is to enjoy a good hearty laugh. Visit the Dr. Kataria School of Laughter Yoga website to find out if there is a Laughter Club in your area and join in for a session. On the website, find some [laughter exercises](#).

Find out more about [Dav Pilkey](#), the author of the *Captain Underpants* series, on his website.

For a lively exploration of humor in a variety of religious and spiritual traditions, read the transcript of "[Between Laughter and Tears](#)," a television program in the Australian Broadcasting System Compass Series, broadcast on July 13, 2003. This transcript provided the opening quotes for this session.

SESSION 13: LOVE (GLOVES)

INTRODUCTION

But now faith, hope, and love remain, these three. The greatest of these is love. — Christian scripture (1 Corinthians 13:13)

My religion is simple, my religion is kindness. — Dalai Lama

The gloves symbolize love. In this session, engage in reflection about the strength and universality of love.

Allow time for participants to explore why it may sound simple and desirable to love, or to act from love; it can actually be very hard. Emphasize compassion as the goal of every major religion. In addition, you will want to articulate ways the concept of universal love is connected to the love we feel for and show to our families and friends.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion about these qualities of our faith
- Teach participants that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you exercise compassion in the world
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism values justice, compassion, and equity in human relations (second Principle)
- Teach that Unitarian Universalism affirms that we learn from Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves (fourth Source)
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn about the universality of human compassion
- Explore the strength of love
- Bodily practice and experience the strength of compassionate dialogue with one another

- Articulate ways that they have experienced compassion, both as a giver and as a receiver.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story -- Two Brothers	10
Activity 2: Games -- The Strength of Cooperation	10
Activity 3: Singing Love	10
Activity 4: Cinnamon Heart Ornaments	15
Activity 5: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	
Alternate Activity 1: ASL "I Love You" Badge	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation.

Founders of major religions taught that living compassionately could help one experience an enhancement of being. Before you lead the group in an exploration of love and compassion, consider something Buddha said: Test my teaching against your experience." Take a few moments to reflect on times when you have received and given compassion and love. This may help you guide the session authentically and with the power of living compassionately in mind.

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has different opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Paper, scissors (including left-handed scissors), pencils, and markers in multicultural skin tones and/or bright colors
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster and a glue stick or tape

Preparation for Activity

- Set out materials on a worktable.

Description of Activity

This section is intended for the time before the beginning of a session when participants arrive individually over a period of time (that is, "straggle in").

Welcome participants. Invite them to trace their hands on a piece of paper and create a glove form. Suggest they draw with pencil first, then decorate with markers, and finally cut out the outline of the glove. Encourage creative additions such as glove decorations, tattoos, beaded gloves, lace gloves, armored gloves, etc.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day - a glove, or pair of gloves

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in your Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

As participants explore the purposes gloves can serve, they will become familiar with a glove as a metaphor for love and compassion in our faith. They will learn about the universality of compassion.

Invite the children to gather in a circle, in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists

with minds that think,

hearts that love,

and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up a glove, or a pair of gloves. Tell the children gloves are the Tool of the Day. Pass the glove(s) around the circle. Invite participants to share their prior experiences with gloves, including different kinds of gloves they have different purposes.

You might ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer. Say, in your own words:

Gloves can represent the tool of love in our Toolbox of Faith. Even the word, "glove" has the word "love" embedded in it! Unitarian Universalism is a faith that values justice, compassion, and equity in human relations. We recognize many different ways to express love, just like there are many different types of gloves. There are warm woolen gloves, rubber gardening gloves, canvas work gloves and softball gloves.

The sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith include Jewish and Christian teachings, as well as teachings of other religions. Does it surprise you to know that all major religions call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves? The Golden Rule of Christian teaching, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," is found in some form in all major religions.

You may also share with the group this excerpt from a *Parabola* magazine (Fall, 2006) interview with Karen Armstrong about her book, *The Great Transformation*. Tell them that Karen Armstrong is an author who writes about world religions:

When the major religions were being founded, each spiritual genius (Jesus, Confucius, Mohammed, and Buddha, among others) discovered on their own a beautiful base note of compassion... the last word, the ultimate religious act... [They] worked as hard at finding a cure for the spiritual ills of society as we are working to find a cure for cancer. This is the conclusion they came to. Not because it sounded nice but because they found it worked. Buddha always said, "Test my teaching against your experience." They found that if you did live in this way [compassionately] you experience an enhancement of being. The Chinese Confucians

spoke of human heartedness, of becoming more humane."

Collect the gloves. Extinguish the chalice.

Invite children to return to the worktable where, before the session began, some will have begun making cut-out paper "gloves." Allow time for each child to make and decorate a glove.

Now or later in the session, glue or tape one or more of the gloves decorated by the children to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster to represent today's quality of faith. Write the word, "Love," on the poster.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY - THE TWO BROTHERS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[The Two Brothers](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Two shoeboxes, markers, and mural paper (a large roll of paper) or a small bath mat

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story, "Two Brothers."
- Optional: Gather the materials you will need to tell the story dramatically, and plan where to "stage" the story in your meeting space.

Description of Activity

Participants will reflect on the strength and the goodness of love in the story.

Gather participants to hear a story. You may want to set out two shoeboxes, representing each brother's barn, at opposite ends of a small bath mat (preferably of a color that suggests a farm field, such as yellow or green). Or, roll out a length of mural paper and create a map.

To introduce the story, you may say:

This is a story from the Jewish tradition about love and sacrifice.

Read the story, or, if you prefer, tell the story dramatically. Develop a sense of place so you can clearly describe which brother is in which scene and which way they are sneaking across the fields between their two houses.

After the story, invite participants to share their reflections and initial thoughts about the brothers, their actions, and the founding of the temple. You can tell the group they may continue the discussion in Council Circle.

ACTIVITY 2: GAMES - THE STRENGTH OF COOPERATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- For Tug of Friendship. Optional: A thick rope of appropriate length for the group (or, children use hands for Yurt Circle variation)
- For Crossing the Line. A roll of masking tape or string, or toilet paper —anything to mark a two-foot long line — and scissors to cut sections, if needed

Preparation for Activity

- Read the Description of Activity section and choose games. Gather the materials you will need and identify the spaces you will use. If the group is large and/or two or more leaders are present, you may want to form small groups and conduct several games simultaneously.

Description of Activity

Each game demonstrates how the strength of love, cooperation, and dialogue is greater than the strength of force. Keep each game short and lively. End this activity well before the children lose interest in the games.

Arm Wrestling

Try this old wrestling game in pairs. Participants will feel in their bodies the strength in giving way and the difficulty in forcing.

Two opponents stand facing each other with right hands interlocked and the outsides of their corresponding feet set together and attempt to unbalance each other. Let willing participants try it. Ask participants to notice that it is very hard to force a person out of their stance. Then model or suggest a "giving way" move, where instead of pulling or pushing, one wrestler relaxes their arm into their opponent. A sudden relaxation of force is often the best way to throw an opponent off balance.

Tug of Friendship

We know about Tug of War. How about a Tug of Friendship? Participants will feel how strong we can be when we support each other as they try, together, to stand up from a sitting position.

Have the group sit in a circle. Tie the rope together to make a loop, slightly smaller than the circle of people. Place the rope inside the circle in front of everyone's feet, and have them hold on with their hands. Challenge the group to get everybody to a standing position by

pulling on the rope, and without touching the floor with their hands.

Variation: The Yurt Circle

Have participants stand in a tight circle. Each person holds on to a looped rope or all clasp hands. Invite everyone to keep their feet planted and lean their bodies out from the circle. Notice how each individual's movement affects the whole group's effort.

Crossing the Line

The surprise participants get with this game is seeing how cooperation can accomplish more than force. See if pairs can figure out that a quick dialogue accomplishes the win for both of them. If no pair seems to be figuring it out, stop and give the group some strategic hints.

Form Pairs.

Use the masking tape to mark a two-foot long boundary line between the members of each pair. Leave enough room around each pair for wrestling and wiggling. Tell the pairs that the person who gets their opponent across the line the fastest wins, and that they will play two rounds.

Although the fastest way to a win/win situation is for a pair to divvy up the wins — one apiece — and simply take turns, each stepping across (earning the other a point) after negotiation by discussion. However, pairs will often start wrestling immediately. Give them a moment to figure out the strategy, but do not let the wrestling drag on. Stop the play and give a tip, such as "Did I say you had to force your partner across the line?" or "What other ways can you think of to get him/her to cross the line?"

Debrief the exercise with a discussion of how it felt trying to force someone vs. making an agreement. Compare with the use of diplomacy between nations.

Variation

Have pairs clasp their hands together and challenge one partner to get them apart. Give a very short time frame, perhaps five seconds, with a loud countdown to increase the sense of pressure. After the exercise — in which many will experience the unpleasantness of pressure or the failure of using force — lead a brief discussion. Then discuss how participants have felt the sense of pressure, physical or otherwise, in other tasks and whether that pressure was real or arbitrary.

ACTIVITY 3: SINGING LOVE (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Choose the songs to teach — "Make New Friends," as suggested, or another of your choice — and become familiar with the tune.
- If you are not comfortable teaching or leading a song, invite a musical volunteer to teach it and/or accompany the group on piano, guitar, or another instrument.

Description of Activity

Further explore the metaphor of love, an aspect of Unitarian Universalist faith, through a familiar song that reinforces the value of friendship and the circle of cooperation and love.

If you are pressed for time, teach the group one or two songs, and then engage them in singing as they make Cinnamon Heart Ornaments in Activity 4.

Gather the group in a circle after the games. Introduce a song, if you are comfortable leading a song. Or try saying the song, "Make New Friends," as a spoken chant:

Make new friends but keep the old
One is silver and the other, gold.
A circle is round, it has no end,
That's how long you're going to be my friend.

ACTIVITY 4: CINNAMON HEART ORNAMENTS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- (included in this document) A copy of Handout 1: [Cinnamon Heart Ornaments](#) (Non-edible)
- Ingredients for the ornament mixture
 - Applesauce
 - Powdered cinnamon
 - White school glue
- For making the ornaments
 - A roll of waxed paper
 - A roll of plastic wrap
 - A rolling pin
 - Heart-shaped cookie cutters, or table knives for free-form cutting
 - Straws

- Paper plates, or a wire rack and paper towels
- Fine-grain sandpaper
- Ribbons for hanging ornaments

Preparation for Activity

- Tear off a sheet of waxed paper for each child.
- At least 30 minutes ahead of time, make ornament mixture as directed by Handout 1: Cinnamon Heart Ornaments (Non-edible). Wrap the mixture in plastic wrap, and chill it for at least 30 minutes.
- Set the chilled mixture and the rolling, cutting, drying, and sanding materials on worktables. Chairs are optional; many children would rather stand at the table.

Description of Activity

The smell of cinnamon can evoke a sense of home, of comfort, and of love. Smell the cinnamon and keep compassion in your heart! To form the ornaments, roll out the mixture on a flat surface with a rolling pin, until it is 1/8- to 1/4-inch thick. Or, give each child a ball of chilled mixture to roll out on their own piece of waxed paper.

Then, cut out heart shapes using the cookie-cutter, or free-form with a table knife. Use a straw to poke a hole in each heart (for hanging, when dry). Instruct participants not to punch holes too close to the edge, or the heart may break.

Place each heart shape on a paper plate to dry, or place them on a wire rack with a paper towel under the ornament. While the drying process can take up to 48 hours, encourage participants to flip it their hearts occasionally to help them to dry flat.

When ornaments are fully dry, sand the rough edges with a small piece of sandpaper to make edges even. Wipe with a damp cloth to get rid of any discoloration. Cut a piece of ribbon to thread through hole. Knot it to make a loop and hang the ornament.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a glove
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches

- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other non-flammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, clear tape or a glue stick, and one or more paper gloves decorated by children during the Opening

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each

other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice.

Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. Ask participants to reflect on times when they have received and have given compassion and love. You may ask:

- When have you put another's needs first?
- What kind of sacrifices have you made, or have been made for you?
- How have you been healed by love?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Read aloud this story from *The Heart of the Enlightened* by Anthony de Mello, S.J. (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1997:

Buddha was once threatened with death by a bandit called Angulimal.

"Then be good enough to fulfill my dying wish," said Buddha. "Cut off the branch of that tree."

One slash of the sword, and it was done! "What now?" asked the bandit.

'Put it back again,' said Buddha.

The bandit laughed. "You must be crazy to think that anyone can do that."

"On the contrary, it is you who are crazy to think that you are mighty because you can wound and destroy. That is the task of children. The mighty know how to create and heal."

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like —and invite each participant to say one thing they will do to express their inner thoughts and selves. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back,

chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and love!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., love], I will...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to attach one of the gloves the children have decorated to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write "Love" on the poster.

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Engage in an activity which expresses love as a quality of our faith, through action. The group might:

- Create cards for shut-ins and get well cards that can be given directly to members who are ill, or can be given to your congregation's caring committee or lay ministry program for distribution.
- Make extra Cinnamon Heart Ornaments to decorate a room in your facility or make a winter holiday or Valentine's centerpiece or other display. Let the smell of cinnamon remind us of the warmth of compassion!
- Make extra "I Love You" badges to give to others in the congregation.

Bring the Golden Rule into Your Congregation

Provide as decor the colorful, 22x28 inch poster, "[The Golden Rule](#)." The group may wish to hold a bake sale or other fundraiser to purchase a copy of the poster, which provides sacred writings from many of the world's religious and spiritual traditions equivalent to what is known in the Jewish and Christian traditions as the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." The poster was published by religious educator Paul McKenna and the interfaith office of Scarboro Mission, a Canadian society of Catholic priests and laity. The Unitarian Universalist seventh Principle appears on the poster: "We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

But now faith, hope, and love remain, these three. The greatest of these is love. — Christian scripture (1 Corinthians 13:13)

My religion is simple, my religion is kindness. — Dalai Lama

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The gloves symbolize love. In this session, children explored the strength and universality of love and the difficulty of choosing love instead of force. We talked about how loving, or acting with love, may seem simple but is actually very hard to do. We emphasized that every major religion values compassionate love. It is a universal concept.

We explored love to illustrate that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that helps us exercise compassion in the world
- Unitarian Universalism values justice, compassion, and equity in human relations (second Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism affirms that we learn from Jewish and Christian teachings, and

teachings from other religious traditions, which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves (fourth Source).

The children heard a story from Hebrew scripture, "Two Brothers," which demonstrates sacrifice in compassionate love.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Talking together about "love" can help each member of the family realize ways they use and understand compassionate love as a quality of faith. You may like to each explore these questions:

- When have you put another's needs first?
- What kind of sacrifices have you made, or have been made for you?
- How have you been healed by love?
- When is it hard to love, or to act with love, even though you know it might be especially right and rewarding to do?

EXTEND THE TOPIC. Try...

The children made (non-edible) Cinnamon Heart Ornaments, a fragrant item to represent the warmth and beauty of compassion. Use our recipe to make extra heart ornaments to give to neighbors and friends or to decorate and scent your home with a display that reminds us of love.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Visit the animated sign language dictionary "[ASL browser](#)," which includes the "I Love You" sign. The sign blends the hand shapes for the letters I, L, and Y into one hand shape.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: ASL "I LOVE YOU" BADGE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Sheets of construction paper or craft foam in multi-cultural skin tones or various colors (including red) — enough for each class member to outline a hand
- Optional: Red heart stickers for all participants
- Pencils, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and glue sticks
- Tape or safety pins for attaching paper hands to shirts, name tags, or other display spots

Preparation for Activity

- Set out paper or craft foam (and stickers, if you are using them) on worktables, with pencils, scissors, and glue sticks.

Description of Activity

Create a badge to wear or display.

The sign for "I love you" is made by extending all five fingers, palm facing out and folding the third and fourth fingers to the palm. The sign language dictionary, "[ASL Browser](#)," includes the "I Love You" sign. The sign blends the hand shapes for the letters I, L, and Y into one hand shape.

Once you teach the ASL sign, as shown in the illustration from "[A Better Model for Animating ASL](#)," invite participants to outline their own hand on a piece of construction paper (or craft foam), cut out the hand shape, and bend the two fingers to create the sign. Glue the bent fingers to the palm.

Have the children cut out paper heart shapes to decorate the palms and glue a heart onto their paper hand (or place a heart sticker on it).

Pin or tape paper hands to children's name tags or shirts, or invite children to display their hands wherever they wish.

STORY: TWO BROTHERS

The story, "Two Brothers," in this session is based on a story from the Jewish Talmud. Other contemporary versions of the story include "Brotherly Love," in *Angels, Prophets, Rabbis and Kings, from the Stories of the Jewish People*, by Jose Patterson (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1991); *The Two Brothers: A Legend of Jerusalem*, retold and illustrated by Neil Waldman (New York: Athenaeum Books for Young Readers, 1997); and "Two Brothers," retold by Elisa Davy Pearmain in *Once Upon a Time: Storytelling to Teach Character and Prevent Bullying* (Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group, 2006).

Read or tell the story.

Once upon a time in the land of Israel, there lived an old farmer. When he died the farmer left his land to his two sons. They divided the land evenly and built their own houses on opposite sides. The younger brother soon married and had a family. The older brother did not marry but lived alone. Both brothers remained the best of friends and often helped each other on their farms.

One year at harvest time, both brothers undertook the process of harvesting their crop of (barley). They bundled the stalks of grain into sheaves, counted them, and took them into their barns to store. (Later, they would take some of it to the market to sell.) After a long day of work, the brothers usually slept well. But on this night, the elder brother lay awake.

"It is not right," he thought, "that I should reap as much grain as my brother. He has a family to feed and I have only myself. He needs more barley to sell so that he can buy all that he needs for his family." Making up his mind to set things right, he dressed and slipped out to his barn. There he took as many sheaves as he could carry across the field to his brother's barn. Feeling better, he returned to his bed and slept well.

The younger brother also had slept badly that night. He awoke and lay worrying. He too thought of his brother. "It is not right," he thought, "that I should reap as much grain as my brother. I have a family to help me, and to care for me in old age, while he works alone." So saying, he too rose, dressed, and went to his barn, not long after his brother had left. There he took as many sheaves as he could carry and walked across the fields to his brother's barn. Feeling better, he returned to his bed.

The next day the two brothers each went to their barns. They looked and looked again at their grain. There was as much there as there had been the day before. The two brothers worked again in their fields all day and did not speak of what had happened.

The next night they did the same thing. First, the older brother, taking as many sheaves of grain as he could carry to his brother's barn, and then the younger brother, narrowly missing him, did the same. Again, the next day both brothers stood in awe and counted their grain, which was as much as before they had given it away. Again, both kept their thoughts to themselves.

Then on the third night, both brothers rose late. The moon had gone down and they went to their barns. Again, they gathered as much grain as they could carry and headed out across the field to their brother's barns.

It was so dark, that they almost collided in the middle of the fields. They both stopped and peered at one another. What they saw made them smile, and then laugh. They dropped their bundles, and hugged one another for a long, long time. They promised one another that there would always be help for each other, no matter what. Then they each knelt down right there in the field, and thanked God for giving them such a thoughtful and generous brother.

It is said that King Solomon, who was the ruler of that place, could understand the speech of the animals. They told him of the two brothers and their tale of generosity. The king was much moved and decided to build a great temple on that spot where the two brothers had met. The temple became the center of Jerusalem. It still stands there today.

HANDOUT: CINNAMON HEART ORNAMENTS

This recipe makes about ten non-edible Ornaments

To make Cinnamon Heart Ornaments, you will need:

- 1 cup of applesauce
- 1 1/2 cups of cinnamon
- 1/4 to 1/3 cup white school glue
- A roll of waxed paper
- A roll of plastic wrap
- A rolling pin
- Heart-shaped cookie cutters, or table knives for free-form cutting
- Straws
- Paper plates, or a wire rack and paper towels
- Marker for writing children's names on paper plates or paper towels

Once ornaments are dry, you will need:

- Fine-grain sandpaper
- Dampened cloth
- Ribbon and scissors

Tear off sheets of waxed paper into squares, one for each ornament maker.

Mix ingredients in a large bowl. Remove the mixture and form a ball, then knead for five to ten minutes, until it is easy to work with and holds together well. If the mixture seems too dry, add more glue.

Wrap the ball of mixture in plastic wrap, and chill it for at least 30 minutes.

When you are ready to form the ornaments, roll out the mixture on a flat surface with a rolling pin, until it is 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick. Then, cut out heart shapes using the cookie cutter, or free-form with a table knife. Use a straw to poke a hole in each heart (for hanging, when dry.) Don't punch too close to the edge, or the heart may break.

Place each heart shape on a paper plate to dry, or place them on a wire rack with a paper towel under the ornament.

The drying process may take up to 48 hours. Flip the ornaments occasionally to help them dry flat. When they are dry, sand their rough edges with fine-grain sandpaper. Wipe with a damp cloth to get rid of discoloration.

For each ornament, cut a piece of ribbon to thread through hole. Knot the ribbon to make a loop, and hang the ornament. Smell the cinnamon and keep compassion in your heart!

FIND OUT MORE

The Universality of Love in the World's Religions

Though their teachings differ in many significant ways, Jesus, Confucius, Mohammed, Buddha, and other spiritual teachers each discovered on their own what theologian and author Karen Armstrong calls "a beautiful base note of compassion... the last word, the ultimate religious act" In an interview in *Parabola* magazine (fall, 2006) about her book, *The Great Transformation*, she continued:

[They] worked as hard at finding a cure for the spiritual ills of society as we are working to find a cure for cancer. This is the conclusion they came to. Not because it sounded nice but because they found it worked. The Buddha always said, "Test my teaching against your experience." They found that if you did live in this way [compassionately] you experience an enhancement of being. The Chinese Confucians spoke of human heartedness, of becoming more humane.

On the Buddhist Channel website, read an [article about the Dalai Lama's visit](#) and message to 10,000 children in Idaho, in September 2005.

Multi-Faith "Golden Rule" Poster

The colorful, 22x28 inch poster, "[The Golden Rule.](#)" provides sacred writings from many of the world's religious and spiritual traditions equivalent to what is known in the Jewish and Christian traditions as the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." The poster was published by religious educator Paul McKenna and the interfaith office of Scarboro Mission, a Canadian society of Catholic priests and laity. The Unitarian Universalist seventh Principle appears on the poster: "We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

Games for Unitarian Universalist Groups

The Yurt Circle variation on the game, Tug of Friendship, in Activity 2 comes from the online publication, "[Deep Fun](#)" from the Unitarian Universalist Association website. "Deep Fun" presents many cooperative games popular with Unitarian Universalist youth groups.

SESSION 14: JUSTICE (FLASHLIGHT)

INTRODUCTION

What are you going to do that is important in your life? — Martha Sharp, Unitarian Universalist hero

The flashlight symbolizes the light of truth and the light in each of us. The group will consider the nobility as well as the difficulties of seeking justice. Reflections may include the overwhelming nature of the sacrifice when one seeks to work for justice and the difficulty of balancing local and global concerns

Allow time for participants to engage the issues of sacrifice and feeling overwhelmed. Emphasize the small steps that each of us can take and the importance of shining our own light, no matter how small. In addition, use the games as a way to let off tension through play.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Demonstrate that Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you find and carry the light of truth, even when it is hard to do so
- Teach that Unitarian Universalism values justice, compassion, and equity in human relations (second Principle)
- Show how Unitarian Universalism affirms that we are part of an interdependent web (seventh Principle), and how when one part of that web suffers injustice, the entire web suffers injustice
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Reflect on the variety of ways to work for justice as Unitarian Universalists
- Confront the challenge presented by a call to shine one's light on global issues at the expense of helping with family and local issues

- Explore and release tension about difficult justice issues, through play
- Express hope for justice using the symbolism of shining their own light
- Create a personal "light" to symbolize the light in each person.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Martha and Waitstill Sharp	10
Activity 2: Cloak and Dagger Game and Relay Race	10
Activity 3: This Little Light of Mine	10
Activity 4: Light Crafts	15
Activity 5: Council Circle	10

Faith in Action: Ideas

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on justice, you may wish to reflect on how you personally have taken on justice issues.

Think of a time when you felt sure that what you were doing was important. It might be something very simple, like tending the scraped knee of a child. It might be something grand and aimed toward justice-making. How did you know that what you were doing was important? Did you know it at the time or were you better able to understand the importance later?

It can be difficult to know what matters or what is important. Adults and children may share more common ground than differences when reflecting on Martha Sharp's question, "What are you going to do that is important in your life?"

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children,

has differing opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Flashlights or a single lamp
- Optional: Window covering to help darken the room
- Optional: Large blanket or tarp and a table to drape it over, to create a darkened space for flashlight play

Preparation for Activity

- Darken the room to create a mood of intrigue when participants enter. Set out flashlights or light a single reading lamp for children to use to cast hand shadows on the wall.
- Optional: Drape a blanket or tarp over a table to create a darkened space for flashlight exploration.

Description of Activity

Welcome participants. Invite the children to try out making shadows with the flashlights or lamplight. Allow participants a few minutes to play around before gathering them together.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — a flashlight
- Flashlights or a single lamp
- Optional: Window covering to help darken the room
- Optional: Large blanket or tarp and a table to drape it over, to create a darkened space for flashlight play
- Toolbox of Our Faith poster, a cut-out or sketched image of a lit candle, and clear tape

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in your Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle, in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted, for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Introduce the Tool of the Day — a flashlight. Pass it around, and invite the children to share about their prior experiences. Ask the group, "Why do you think this represents a Unitarian Universalist Association tool?" Affirm all answers, and acknowledge that there is no one, correct answer.

Then, tell the group:

The flashlight represents the light of truth. Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you find and carry the light of truth, even when it is hard to do so. One of our Principles is that Unitarian Universalism values justice, compassion, and equity in human relations. Another Unitarian Universalism Principle affirms that we are part of an interdependent web. When one part of that web suffers injustice, the entire web suffers injustice.

Invite a participant to tape the cut-out or picture of a lit candle to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write the word, "Justice," on the poster.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — MARTHA AND WAITSTILL SHARP (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Martha and Waitstill Sharp](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: Materials for darkening the room and flashlight to read by

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to read it aloud or tell it dramatically.
- Optional: Darken the room and read the story by flashlight, for heightened tension to illustrate the Sharps' treacherous, cloak-and-dagger mission.

Description of Activity

Gather the group to hear a story. Read aloud or tell the story.

After the story, invite participants to share their reflections and initial thoughts. Allow some discussion, and tell the group they may continue in more depth later, in Council Circle.

ACTIVITY 2: CLOAK AND DAGGER GAME AND RELAY RACE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Index cards for all participants

For Relay Race

- A suitcase or bag of disguise items for each team
- Rubber cones, masking tape, or chairs to place at the start/finish and mid-point lines
- Optional: A whistle for official start

Preparation for Activity

- The game, Cloak and Dagger, works best with eight to 15 players. Decide whether the group will play together or play in smaller groups.
- **For Relay Race.** Gather a set of disguise items such as a trench coat, a wig, glasses, and a hat. You will need a full set of comparable items for each team's suitcase or bag.

Description of Activity

Play Cloak and Dagger or a relay race version of the game, to help release tension about difficult justice issues.

Cloak and Dagger is a popular game played in many Unitarian Universalist youth groups. If the group has played Cloak and Dagger in Session 7 of this program ("Democratic Process"), participants will enjoy revisiting it here.

The leader of the game orchestrates and does not participate. The leader writes an identity on an index card for each member of the group. Two of the cards should say "Spy," one should say "Informant," and the rest should say "Civilian."

Invite the group to sit in a circle. The leader distributes cards, instructing everyone to read in secret.

Then the leader says, "It is nighttime, everyone go to sleep." Everyone closes their eyes. The leader says, "Spies, wake up." Those with "Spy" written on their

cards open their eyes. They must agree, without speaking, to kill one of the civilians. They point to this person, and the leader makes a mental note. Then the leader says, "Spies go to sleep. Informant, wake up." The two Spies close their eyes and the one who has "Informant" written on their card opens their eyes. The Informant selects one person to know more about, by pointing. If that person is a Spy, the leader nods, if a Civilian, the leader shakes their head "no."

Then the leader says, "It is daytime, everybody wake up." Everyone opens their eyes and the leader tells them who was killed by the Spies while they were asleep. Then the entire group comes to consensus on who they think is a Spy — who *they* should kill — by pointing to that person. The true Spies should try to hide their identities by engaging in the debate. The Informant should try to use their information to protect Civilians and kill Spies, but without revealing their identity as the Informant (or risking their own life for the next night of Spy prowling).

Every person who comes under suspicion has a chance to defend their civilian status. When the group decides and kills, the leader informs them whether the person they killed was, Spy or, Civilian. Round two begins by the leader saying, "It's nighttime..." Continue until all Civilians are dead or Spy members are found out and killed.

Cloak and Dagger Relay Race

In this relay race, participants work in teams to ensure that each person on the team gets dressed in a cloak and dagger costume, runs up to the midpoint line and back, and takes off the costume. The team that completes the relay first, wins.

Form teams. Provide each team with a suitcase or bag filled with disguise items. Each team should have similar items. When you say "GO" the first player on the team will quickly put on the disguise, run to the midpoint line and back, then remove the items. The next player takes a turn and so on until all team members have had a turn. The first team to have all members complete the relay wins.

Variation

For four or fewer participants, use a stopwatch or second hand to time volunteers as they put on items to make a disguise. Or, let participants impersonate a secret agent and make up a skit about a familiar or invented character.

Including All Participants

Relay Race. Movement-challenged participants could act as officials. They could start the race by blowing a

whistle or saying, "GO!" and/or officiate at the mid-point line to make sure each contestant crosses the line in full disguise. Or adapt the game so it is not a "race" and the speed of movement is not a factor.

ACTIVITY 3: THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*, or another songbook you plan to use

Preparation for Activity

- Review "This Little Light of Mine," Hymn 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Decide whether you will teach it to the group. If you wish, invite an adult volunteer to assist you by musically accompanying and/or leading the song.
- Optional: You may also wish to teach and lead the song, "May This Light Shine," Song 13 in [May This Light Shine: A Songbook for Children and Youth](#) edited by Wendy Bartel (Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network, 2006).

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle after the games. Introduce the song, "This Little Light of Mine," and/or another of your choosing. If you are not comfortable leading a song, try teaching its lyrics as a spoken chant.

ACTIVITY 4: LIGHT CRAFTS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- For Luminaria
 - Paper lunch bags, tea lights, pencils, and scissors (including left-handed scissors) for all participants
 - A large bag of sand, enough to fill each bag one third full, and cups to use as scoops
 - Optional: Colored tissue paper and clear tape
- For Personal Decorated Candle
 - Pillar or votive candles for all participants
 - Non-flammable decorations for the outside of the candle, trays to hold decorations on worktables, and tacky glue

Preparation for Activity

- Choose one or both of the "light" crafts below, and obtain the materials you will need. You may also like to consider making [Tin Can Luminaria](#) — see how on DLTK's Growing Together website.
- Optional: For a Faith in Action project, arrange for a luminaria made by the children to line a walkway at your congregation when adults will arrive for a nighttime event — ideally, a social justice-focused event.
- Provide worktables. Chairs are optional, as some children prefer standing to make crafts. Set out materials on worktables.

Description of Activity

Participants will have opportunities to create a personal "light" to symbolize the light in each person.

Luminaria

Make a paper bag luminaria to emphasize the light of justice that can illuminate a path. In Latin America and the U.S. Southwest, people traditionally place these paper bag lights along walkways and roads, often during winter holidays.

Invite each child to draw and cut out a simple design in the side of a paper lunch bag. A stained glass effect can be created by taping colored tissue paper on the inside of the bag to cover the cut-out design. Fill each bag one third full with sand. Place a tea light in the sand, making sure it will not touch the sides of the bag. Place at an entry or patio. Luminarias are traditionally used to light the way for guests at Christmas time.

Personal Decorated Candle

Each participant can design their own decorated candle, to remind them of the light that shines in them. Distribute a candle to each child and invite them to use the gemstones, glitter and other non-flammable items you have provided to decorate their candle.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a flashlight
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer

- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other non-flammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, a cut-out or sketched image of a lit candle, and clear tape

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint, and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three

rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick, invite participants to reflect on the story they heard today. Then invite their reflections on the lives and actions of Martha and Waitstill Sharp. You may use these questions:

- Martha and Waitstill Sharp left their children to save lives in Europe. Do you think they did the right thing?
- What would you have done, as an adult in that time period?
- How would you answer your grandmother if she asked, as Martha Sharp asked, "What are you going to do that is important in your life?"

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Share with the group the starfish story, adapted from *The Star Thrower*, by Loren Eiseley (1907-1977):

Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had

a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young man paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the somewhat startled wise man.

To this, the young man replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, "It made a difference for that one."

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

We gather in community to celebrate

the glories

and mysteries

of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like —and invite each participant to say one thing they will do to seek and act for justice. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and work for justice!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., justice], I will...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape a picture of a candle to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write "Justice" on the poster.

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Engage the group in a congregational justice project, such as collecting food for a food distribution center or joining in an outdoor clean-up day.

If the children will make luminaria in the session, arrange for their lights to decorate a walkway at your congregation when adults will arrive for a nighttime event — ideally, a social justice-focused event.

Guide the group to come to consensus about a justice issue they all believe is important. Work on a way to actively engage the issue. For example, if the fate of homeless animals is important to the group, can some of the children become play partners at an animal shelter?

If there is one near you, arrange to take the group to a local Holocaust memorial. Invite them to consider again the actions of Martha and Waitstill Sharp, once they know more about the historical events. Point the children toward information about others who have acted for justice by helping victims of genocide — in ways large and small.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

What are you going to do that is important in your life? — Martha Sharp, Unitarian Universalist heroine

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The flashlight symbolizes the light of truth and the light in each of us. The group considered the nobility, as well as the difficulties, of seeking justice, and the overwhelming nature of the sacrifice when one seeks to work for justice and the difficulty of balancing local and global concerns. We emphasized the small steps that each of us can take and the importance of shining our own light, no matter how small.

We explored justice to illustrate that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that will help you find and carry the light of truth, even when it is hard to do so.
- Unitarian Universalism values justice, compassion, and equity in human relations (second Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism affirms that we are part of an interdependent web (seventh Principle); when one part of that web suffers injustice, the entire web suffers injustice.

The children heard a story about Martha and Waitstill Sharp, from the viewpoint of their grandchild who learned about their work for justice during the Nazi Holocaust when he was in eighth grade. The story was based on an article in [UU World, Summer 2006](#), by Michelle Bates Deakin ("Righteous among the nations-Israel honors two Unitarians for heroism in World War II; their story provokes soul-searching today").

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Talk about these questions together:

- Martha and Waitstill Sharp left their children to save lives in Europe. Do you think they did the right thing?
- What would you have done, as an adult in that time period?
- How would you answer your grandmother if she asked, as Martha Sharp asked, "What are you going to do that is important in your life?"

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Read Lois Lowry's Newberry Award-winning book, *Number the Stars* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1989), in which a fictional 10-year-old girl undertakes a dangerous mission to save her best friend in Nazi-occupied Denmark in 1943.

Another story for children about being a light in the world is "A Lamp in Every Corner," in the book *A Lamp in Every Corner* by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004).

STORY: MARTHA AND WAITSTILL SHARP

Adapted with permission from UU World, Summer 2006, "Righteous among the nations: Israel honors two Unitarians for heroism in World War II" by Michelle Bates Deakin, UU World contributing editor and author of *Gay Marriage, Real Life: 10 Stories of Love and Family* (Skinner House, 2006).

Read or tell the story.

This is the story of how a boy found out that his Unitarian Universalist grandmother and grandfather were heroes. As an eighth grader in New York City, a boy named Artemis Joukowsky III chose his grandmother to interview for a school assignment. His grandmother was named Martha Sharp.

Telling his grandparents' story is a way to pass along the question that Martha Sharp posed to Artemis throughout his life: What are you going to do that is important in your life?

On a snowy night in Prague in 1939, Martha Sharp jumped from a taxi, darted around a corner, and flattened herself into a doorway. The heels of a pursuing Gestapo agent clicked past her. She entered an unlit apartment building, dashed up five flights of stairs, and rang the bell of a known anti-Nazi leader.

Six weeks earlier Martha and her husband, the Rev. Waitstill Sharp had left their young children behind in the United States. They had volunteered for a relief effort in Czechoslovakia, sponsored by the American Unitarian Association. Then one night in 1939, the Nazi army marched into Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, and occupied the city. The helping mission of the Sharps instantly changed into a treacherous, cloak-and-dagger mission.

That March night a woman opened the apartment door to Martha, denying she had even heard of the man Martha was asking for. "I begged," Martha recounted the story later to a biographer. "I told her there was little time. I produced my American passport. When she saw it, she said in Czech, 'A moment,' and then snatched my passport from me and shut the door in my face." For the next few minutes Martha frantically worried whether she'd see her passport again. Her passport was her only ticket to safety.

But the door did open, and this time a man stood before her. Martha asked if he was "Mr. X," as Martha later referred to him when she told the story. He said he could give Mr. X a message. She explained she had been charged by a group of British and American refugee workers with transporting him to the British Embassy so

he could be smuggled from the country. The man asked her to wait a moment, then disappeared into the apartment. He opened the door again, wearing an overcoat. He handed Martha her passport and said, "I am Mr. X."

Together, they walked through wind and snow across the city. A Nazi soldier stopped them when they reached a bridge over the Vltava River. Martha produced her passport and confidently announced, "Americans!" They were waved across the bridge, then stopped by another soldier on the other side. The passport trick worked again.

Just steps outside the British embassy, a third Gestapo officer stopped them. Martha began to loudly complain about the lack of taxis and her frustration at being late for a meeting with the embassy secretary. She flashed her passport and demanded the guard tell the secretary, "Mr. and Mrs. Sharp are here." He waved them ahead to speak with a British guard, and Martha and Mr. X walked into the embassy to safety. Martha then returned to her apartment, where Waitstill was returning from a similar mission. They watched out their window as Nazi soldiers looted Prague stores and warehouses.

The rescue of Mr. X is one of hundreds that the couple orchestrated, helping Jews and non-Jews, intellectuals, political leaders, writers, artists, and children flee to safety from the Nazis. Yet the heroism of Martha and Waitstill Sharp is just beginning to be recognized.

The story of the Sharps' courage illuminates some of the dilemmas that perplex people who care about social justice. How many of us want to help but are afraid or don't know how?

Taking a courageous stand does not require sacrifices and heroics on the scale of the Sharps. "It is easy to feel small in comparison to Waitstill and Martha Sharp," says the Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz. "Not every one of us can set out for war-torn Europe. But every one of us can [help] those who do."

Artemis Joukowsky has two hopes for what can be accomplished by telling his grandparents' story now—one public and one personal. First, he wants their story to inspire others, not overwhelm them. "Life is made of righteous moments, not grandiose moments," he says, "making choices where you reflect on how you treat everyone in your life. The key part about my grandparents wasn't just one big moment. They made thousands of little choices that led up to the story that we now tell."

Artemis Joukowsky also had a very personal reason for sharing his family's story with others. When his grandparents left to save the world, their own family

began to come apart. Artemis's mother and uncle were small children, just three and eight years old when Martha and Waitstill Sharp left for Czechoslovakia. Soon after they returned to the United States, Martha and Waitstill divorced.

Some may view leaving home, church, and children as a necessary sacrifice, while others may see it as abandonment. "My parents were extremely gifted, courageous people, and they really designed their lives around helping people," recalls Artemis's sister, Martha, who is now grown up. But, when Martha was a teenager and her parents were divorcing, a judge asked her: "Which one of them do you want to live with?" Martha replied, "Neither one of them."

Artemis Joukowsky tries to imagine the way his grandmother, Martha Sharp, would have framed the choice to leave her children behind. "She asked herself, 'What is a life worth? And what would I be willing to do to save it?' She decided that saving other people's lives and helping [in] this terrible crisis was worth the tradeoff. She knew her children were being loved and cared for and would ultimately understand... [why their parents had left them and gone away] "

"But it was not easy," Artemis says. "My grandparents made the decision they made, and they suffered about it all their lives. It's evident in their journals and their letters."

Artemis remembers his grandmother — Martha Sharp — asking him: "What are you going to do that is important in your life?" Even now that he is grown up, married, and a father of three children, he still hears her words.

As a child, Artemis Joukowsky always answered the same way: "I'm going to overcome my disease," referring to his lifelong battle with spinal muscular atrophy, a progressive illness. Today he has become an advocate for disability rights and is the author of *Raising the Bar: New Horizons in Disability Sports*.

Telling his grandparents' story is a way to pass along to you, a new generation, the question that Martha Sharp asked him: What are you going to do that is important in your life?

FIND OUT MORE

The story, "Martha and Waitstill Sharp," was adapted from a 2006 article about the Sharps in *UU World*, "Righteous among the nations — [Israel honors two Unitarians for heroism](#) in World War II; their story provokes soul-searching today," by Michelle Bates Deakin.

Learn more about Martha and Waitstill Sharp on the website of the [National Holocaust Memorial Museum](#). Also, the [Holocaust Survivors Network](#) provides an article about the Sharps.

An online article tells the history of the [farilitos and luminarias](#) which light the Southwest at Christmas time.

SESSION 15: ATONEMENT (LEVEL)

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of atonement is the sense of its necessity. — Lord Byron

The level, a carpenter's tool, symbolizes the balance we need to restore when we make a mistake. The session focuses on the meaning of "at-one-ment." Participants will explore the difficulty in acknowledging mistakes and the sense of relief in acknowledging a mistake.

Allow time for participants to engage the issues of personal and community acknowledgments. Emphasize the feeling of being "at one" when there is reconciliation.

In Activity 3, the children make pretzel shapes out of frozen bread dough. Make sure the congregational facility has an oven you can use to bake the pretzels in.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment, and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion about these qualities of our faith
- Show participants that Unitarian Universalism is a faith which believes in learning from our mistakes and working to make things right
- Teach that Unitarian Universalism seeks acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations (third Principle)
- Demonstrate how Unitarian Universalism heeds the words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love (second Source)
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn the vocabulary words, "atonement" and "reconciliation"

- Understand how the tool, a level, symbolizes the restoration of balance that comes with "at-one-ment" or atonement
- Hear a true story illustrating how some Unitarian Universalists made a mistake and, later, a new generation of Unitarian Universalists tried to restore balance, to atone
- Play games that illustrate concepts related to atonement, including disarray and unity and the difficulties of assigning blame
- Express a form of reconciling prayer in the process of handling and baking bread
- Discuss their feelings on the value of restoring balance, at-one-ment, by making an apology.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — W.H.G. Carter and a Step Toward Racial Reconciliation	10
Activity 2: Games	10
Activity 3: Pretzel Prayer Bread	10
Activity 4: "I'm Sorry" Cards	10
Activity 5: Council Circle	10
Faith in Action: Ideas	

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session on atonement, reflect on times when you have made mistakes and sought atonement, when you were the victim of a mistake, or when someone else asked you for forgiveness. The Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*, includes readings for Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. One of these may help focus your reflections.

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the class discussion unless the participants ask you directly. In this case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the

context that each of us, adults and children, has differing opinions, and yours is one among many. It is recommended to guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a level, or several levels
- Two sheets of paper, and pencils for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- On one sheet of paper, write "atonement" and a definition ("something that makes up for an offense or injury"). On the other sheet, write "reconciliation" and a definition ("restoration to friendship or harmony"). Leave plenty of room under or around the words.
- Place the level(s), the sheets of paper, and pencils on a worktable.

Description of Activity

This section is intended for the time before the beginning of a session when participants arrive individually over a period of time (that is, "straggle in").

Welcome participants. Tell them the two words on the sheets of paper, "atonement" and "reconciliation," will be part of today's session. Invite them to try to make as many smaller words as they can, on each sheet, from the letters of the longer word, and write the smaller words on the sheets.

You may also invite them to use the level(s) to inspect surfaces in the room. Show them how to use a level, if necessary.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Tool of the Day — a level, or several levels
- Two sheets of paper and pencils (see Welcoming and Entering)
- Toolbox of Our Faith poster and tape or a glue stick

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in the Council Circle space.

- Bring the sheets of paper with "atonement," "reconciliation," and participants' penciled words into the Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Participants will begin to explore the words, "atonement" and "reconciliation," and consider the metaphor of a level to symbolize the restoration of balance that comes with "at-one-ment," or atonement.

Gather the children in a circle, in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice.

Indicate where the opening words are posted, for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Hold up a level. Tell the children what it is called and that it is the Tool of the Day. Pass the level around. Invite the children to share their prior experiences seeing or using levels. See if they have observations about using the level in the meeting space — for example, what surfaces seem to be level, but are not?

Ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there is no one answer. Then explain, in your own words or these:

The level represents restoring balance when we have made a mistake. This is called "atonement." Another word that is used is reconciliation. This means that two parties who were apart and in conflict have come back together.

Hold up the sheet of paper with the word "atonement." Point out the three parts of the word: "at-one-ment." Then say:

When we are out of balance, when we have made mistakes, it can feel like we are separate from everything around us. So the restoration of balance is the restoration of oneness.

One of our Unitarian Universalism Principles affirms acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations. We all need to accept that we make mistakes and cause bad things to happen, sometimes by mistake and sometimes on purpose. One tool we can use to restore balance is atonement.

It takes courage to admit mistakes. As Unitarian Universalists, one of our sources is the words and deeds of prophetic women and men who challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love. In our own Unitarian Universalist history, there have been people whose words and deeds we can look to. Their examples can inspire us to take on the challenge of admitting our mistakes, both individually and as a community.

Invite a participant to attach the sheet of paper that says "atonement" to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — W.H.G. CARTER AND A STEP TOWARD RACIAL RECONCILIATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[W.H.G. Carter and a Step Toward Racial Reconciliation](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story and prepare to tell or read it to the group.

Description of Activity

Participants will hear a true story illustrating how some Unitarians made a mistake and how, decades later, members of a Unitarian Universalist congregation tried to restore balance, to atone.

Gather participants to hear a story. You may say:

This is a true story about Unitarian Universalists who sought to atone for a wrong that had been committed against an African American Unitarian minister.

Read the story, or, if you prefer, tell the story dramatically.

After the story, invite participants to share their reflections and initial thoughts. Have they heard about Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement) or the Catholic Sacrament of Penance (Confession) or Sacrament of Reconciliation? The Jewish and Catholic faiths each have rituals for atonement, of restoring balance, at-one-ness. Tell the group they may continue the discussion in further depth in Council Circle.

ACTIVITY 2: GAMES (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the games, Human Knot and "Who Started It?" Decide how to allocate your time and, if needed, how you will form small groups.

Description of Activity

Try these games to illustrate concepts related to atonement. In Human Knot, participants move together from disarray to unity. "Who Started It?" demonstrates the difficulties of assigning blame.

Human Knot

Experience being tangled and scrambled, then achieving unity by untangling and finding one or two circle(s) (at-one-ment!).

This game is for five to ten people. Form smaller groups if necessary. The game will put people very close to each other. Ask participants if they are comfortable trying this sort of game, and allow children to watch if they are not comfortable.

Stand in a circle. Everyone puts their hands in the center and grabs hold of two different people's hands. Try to untangle the knot into one or two circles without letting go of one another's hands.

"Who Started It?"

Assigning blame can be an impediment to restoring balance, when what is needed is grace and forgiveness. Play this silly game to illustrate how hard it is to determine "who started it." In this game, no one knows who is copying who, or who started it.

Have participants stand in a circle. Every person secretly picks a person to imitate. The imitator copies the movements of the person being watched, exaggerating them very slightly. (Hint: If no one is moving very much, suggest that each participant spin around once and start imitating while the group is still moving a bit on their return.) Everyone's movements will become larger and larger. Usually everyone will end up doing the same thing without ever knowing who started it.

ACTIVITY 3: PRETZEL PRAYER BREAD (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Frozen bread dough or frozen dinner rolls for all participants
- Cloths to cover dough

- Flour (for hands), coarse salt, and butter or shortening
- Cookie sheets

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure the congregational facility has an oven you can use.
- Arrange for one co-leader to complete the baking part of this activity so the other co-leader can move the group on to the next activity.
- Purchase frozen bread dough (loaves, or dinner rolls). Thaw overnight in a refrigerator, keeping dough covered to prevent its surface from drying out.
- Preheat the oven.
- Clean worktable surfaces.
- Place flour (for hands) and coarse salt on each worktable, along with a cookie sheet.
- Lightly grease cookie sheets with butter or shortening.

Description of Activity

Participants experience a form of reconciling prayer in the process of handling and baking bread.

Tell the children:

In medieval times, Christian monks taught the people to pray by crossing their hands across their chest. The pretzel shape reflects this prayerful attitude. One Unitarian Universalist minister described a bedtime prayer as containing three parts: something you are thankful for, something you are sorry about, and something you are glad about.

Tell the group they each will make an individual pretzel prayer bread, to symbolize this type of prayer.

If you have purchased frozen bread loaves, divide each loaf of dough into eight pieces by cutting once lengthwise and four times across. If you have frozen dinner rolls, give one to each child.

Invite the children to flour their hands and the table surface (so dough will not stick). Show them how to roll their dough into a snake, lay the dough snake on a cookie sheet, and form the pretzel shapes. Do this by bringing the ends of the dough down and crossing one over the other once. Lift the ends up and push them lightly into the curved top of the dough to form a pretzel shape.

Invite children to sprinkle their pretzels with salt. Cover cookie sheets, and let dough rise for five minutes. Then,

bake the pretzels for eight to ten minutes at the temperature suggested on the frozen dough package, or until golden brown.

Engage participants to help clean up worktables.

ACTIVITY 4: "I'M SORRY" CARDS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- 8.5 x 11-inch paper and 6 x 8-inch envelopes for all participants
- Markers, decorations (such as toothpicks, ribbon, colored paper, rubber stamps, stickers, glitter, or yarn), and glue sticks
- Optional: A sample card that says, "I'm sorry"

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Fold a sheet of paper into a sample card including the words, "I'm sorry."
- Set materials at worktables.

Description of Activity

Gather participants at worktables. Invite them to make a card which expresses an apology and a hope for something with which they would like to be back in balance. Ask them to think for a moment about whom they might give or send such a card.

Demonstrate how to fold the sheets of paper into cards that will fit in the envelopes. If you have made a sample card, show it to the group. Encourage participants to create a unique card to say whatever apology and hope they might like to express.

Because of the sensitive nature of apologies, do not force the topic with a child who is uncomfortable. Suggest he/she make another type of card. Tell the children they may use the envelopes to keep their cards private.

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a level
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer

- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other non-flammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, a sheet of paper with the word, "atonement" and its definition (see Welcoming and Entering, or Opening), and clear tape or glue

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under "Description of Activity" or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.
- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each

other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick, invite participants to reflect on the story they heard today. Guide them to discuss their feelings on the value of restoring balance, at-one-ment, by making an apology. You may use these questions:

- The congregations in Cincinnati apologized for a wrong that was 60 years old. Do you think that they did the right thing?
- What would you do?
- What things might you do when you need to restore balance, at-one-ness, in your life?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one, last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Share with the group this excerpt from a sermon, "AT-ONE-MENT," by Rev. Nathan C. Walker:

To be at-one is to witness how we fall down so that we may help others get up;

To be at-one is to ensure that no other human being will ever suffer like Ho Sy Hai and his family;

To be at-one is to ask the person whose life has been changed by AIDS or cancer: "How could anyone ever tell you, you were anything less than beautiful?"

To be at-one is to teach the world's scientists, inventors, and business leaders to never profit from the death of a human being;

To be at-one is to reform this nation from a once unilateral global power into a country whose commitment to freedom is not simply a political slogan but a way of life;

To be at-one is to acknowledge that redemption comes when we use our beliefs to affirm life and to protect life;

To be at-one is to rise and sing and imagine how we are responsible for creating a wonderful world.

You may like to mention that the line, "How could anyone ever tell you, you were anything less than beautiful?" comes from Hymn 1053 in *Singing the Journey*.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.
We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like —and invite each participant to say one thing they will do to seek and act for justice. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and use atonement to bring reconciliation!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 396 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my UU [quality of faith, e.g., atonement], I will...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape the sheet of paper with "atonement" written on it to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster.

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Look for a project involving individual and/or community reconciliation.

A prayer can provide a context and structure to help people confront situations in their lives that call for atonement. Work with participants to help them — individually, or together — create and use a personal daily prayer including the following three parts: something you are thankful for, something you are sorry for, and something you are glad about. You may suggest the prayer might end with the words, "I am a Unitarian Universalist with a mind that thinks, a heart that loves, and hands that are ready to serve."

Participants may wish to investigate stories in their own communities about prejudice and oppression. Guide them to identify and interview a person involved in righting a wrong, and then write an article for the congregational newsletter.

TAKING IT HOME

The beginning of atonement is the sense of its necessity. — Lord Byron

IN TODAY'S SESSION. . .

The level symbolizes the balance we need to restore when we make a mistake. In this session, there are opportunities to engage in reflection about the meaning of "at-one-ment." Possible reflections may include the difficulty of acknowledging mistakes and the sense of relief in acknowledging a mistake. There is time for participants to engage in acknowledgement of both personal and community mistakes. The story children heard the story, "W.H.G. Carter and A Step Toward Racial Reconciliation," which told about a contemporary Unitarian Universalist congregation's effort to atone for a wrong done to an African American Unitarian minister by an earlier generation of Unitarians.

We emphasized the feeling of being "at one" when there is reconciliation.

We focused on atonement to illustrate that:

- Unitarian Universalism is a faith that believes in learning from our mistakes and working to make things right
- Unitarian Universalism seeks acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations (third Principle)
- Unitarian Universalism heeds the words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures

of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love (second Source).

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about. . .

The congregations in Cincinnati apologized for a wrong that was 60 years old. They apologized to the descendants of the person who was wronged. Discuss the story together.

- Do you think that the congregations did the right thing?
- What would you have done, if you belonged to that congregation, when a wrong from the past was discovered?
- What things might you do when you need to restore balance, at-one-ness, in your life?

You may wish to talk about the difficulties of apologies and the feeling of "oneness" when there is heartfelt reconciliation. Are there any lingering family disputes that might be reviewed with an eye toward reconciliation?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A FAMILY RITUAL

Prayers can provide a helpful context and structure for confronting situation that call for atonement. You may decide to create and use a personal daily prayer including the following three parts: something you are thankful for, something you are sorry for, and something you are glad about. A prayer might end with words such as "I am a Unitarian Universalist with a mind that thinks, a heart that loves, and hands that are ready to serve."

STORY: W.H.G. CARTER AND A STEP TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

Adapted from "A Step Toward Racial Reconciliation" by David Whitford, *UU World*, May/June 2002, permission pending.

You may wish to enliven the telling of the story by designating a few participants to read the words spoken by Andrew Carter, Leslie Edwards, Starita Smith, and Rev. Mark Morrison-Reed. Show the children which parts to read before you begin reading or telling the story.

Walter Herz was a church historian at Northern Hills Fellowship in Cincinnati, Ohio. He never knew how prejudice had shut down an African American Unitarian congregation, right in his own city, until the story was told in a sermon in 1998. When the Reverend Sharon Dittmar gave her talk that day, Mr. Herz learned about something that amazed him and made him sad.

Reverend W.H.G. Carter was a minister who founded a Unitarian Church in Cincinnati in 1918. It was probably the only Unitarian church in America at the time that was an African American Unitarian church. It was called the Church of the Unitarian Brotherhood. At the time, other Unitarians knew about the church and its founder, but turned their backs because the church was African American and poor.

Twenty years later, someone came to investigate, but the conclusion of the official report was, "I do not recommend Unitarian fellowship for Mr. Carter or subsidy for his movement." In other words, there was no ministerial degree for Reverend Carter, and no money for his church. Shortly afterwards, the Church of the Unitarian Brotherhood closed down.

Like Mr. Herz, Leslie Edwards was also surprised to hear about Reverend W.H.G. Carter in a sermon. "That's my grandfather you were talking about," said Mr. Edwards to a hushed congregation during the discussion afterward. "I never thought I'd hear his name mentioned in a Unitarian church." Mr. Edwards was a member of the board of Northern Hills Fellowship.

"We can't let this drop," Mr. Herz said. "We ought to find out more about this family." So Mr. Edwards and Mr. Herz decided to find out more. What they found out sparked an extraordinary act of reconciliation involving two mostly white Unitarian Universalist congregations, five generations of a remarkable African American family, a city scarred by police brutality and race riots, and Unitarian Universalism as a faith. Here's what they found out.

Reverend W.H.G. Carter was a big man with a big personality. Light-skinned, six-feet-two, a man of charm, energy, imagination, and learning, he towered over his wife, Beulah, who was only five feet tall, and their 15 children. He trained as a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal church, following in his father's footsteps, but never served as a minister in that denomination. He disagreed with many beliefs of the African Methodist Episcopal church, starting with the divinity of Jesus. As an adult, Reverend Carter worked as a photographer, a mural painter, a teacher, a postal worker, a funhouse operator and a real estate speculator. He sold a tip sheet to horse race gamblers, kept a roulette wheel in his church (to make the point that gambling in and of itself was not sinful), and operated a friendly neighborhood pool hall (no swearing allowed).

Reverend Carter moved with his wife and children to Cincinnati in 1918. Like his maternal grandfather, William Henry Gray—a free-born African American—Carter was a political activist. Along with running the Unitarian church he founded in Cincinnati's West End, he ran four times as a Republican candidate for the city council, though he never won. He founded a club called the Grand Order of Denizens, whose initials spelled G.O.D. He was a dedicated provider of food, money, clothing, and advocacy to poor blacks in Cincinnati.

With his own family, Reverend Carter could be playful. One time, at the dinner table, he carved carrots into hearts, spades, diamonds and clubs. He could be generous, too. He took the whole family to the 1934 Chicago World's Fair. But he was also strong-willed, uncompromising and severe.

"You were supposed to come up to a certain standard," Mr. Edwards remembered about his grandfather. "And he'd make you know."

Among the forbidden phrases in the Carter household were "'I don't care" and "It's not my fault."

Once, Carter found two of his sons reading an anatomy book in their father's extensive library. They found the book so absorbing that they didn't hear their father coming until it was too late. "We slammed the book together," Andrew Carter remembered when he was an old man of 79. "He came in. He said, 'What are you looking at?' We were a little reluctant, but we told him. He said, 'I'm going to give you a whipping.' So he whipped us."

And then he told them why. "He said, 'I didn't whip you because you were looking at it. It's because you thought you were doing something wrong. Now open that book up and look at it!'"

Mr. Herz and Mr. Edwards shared with their congregation what they had learned about Reverend W.H.G. Carter — what he was like, and the whole sad story that had happened to his African American church. Other church members started wondering what to do. The most important part, they decided, should be an apology to the Carter family. They felt that, as a congregation, they wanted to admit what they called the "stain on the Unitarian Movement and on our local Unitarian Churches occasioned by our rejection of Carter's Brotherhood Church sixty years ago."

Mr. Herz and Mr. Edwards's church set up a weekend of activities. They invited more than 100 members of the Carter family. An African American minister, Reverend Mark Morrison-Reed, came down from his Unitarian Universalist church in Toronto and gave a Sunday morning sermon which he called "The Burden of Guilt." Here is part of what he said.

"Remembering the past with regret can strengthen the resolve to do the only thing we can do together to shape a more just tomorrow. For in that moment when the one person feels hurt and the other feels sympathy, a bond is established. That connection can be built upon. And as the relationship grows, we can move beyond avoidance, guilt, and self-hatred, and let go of the anger and recrimination to embrace the only things that can sustain us over the long haul — the love of God, which we find in one another, and our shared vision of tomorrow... "

Nobody knew if it would really happen, if one of the Carter family members might accept the apology. Then another person rose to the pulpit. She was Starita Smith of Denton, Texas, a mother with two grown children, and a great-granddaughter of W.H.G. Carter.

As she began to speak, people still were not sure. She said she was skeptical about "apologies to black people for everything from slavery to neglect of Africa. We read the headlines and we say, 'So what changes now?'" She said she expected more from Unitarian Universalists.

"You are supposed to be the most liberal of the mainstream denominations," she said. "It is very meaningful to me that you took the initiative to acknowledge a history that must be embarrassing for you, and to attempt to make amends in the present for what was wrong in the past...."

"But we must also acknowledge that racial reconciliation, true racial reconciliation, requires commitment.... I hope you will reflect on this weekend often and let it galvanize you. I hope that it will cause you to go beyond the comfortable friendships you have with your black Unitarian friends to attempt to bring honesty, light, and

compassion into the thorny arena of race relations beyond the boundaries of your church.

"We Carters encourage you to continue to look into your hearts, ask difficult and complex questions, and take action. We accept your apology."

The silence in the sanctuary was broken by a sudden burst of applause. Starita Smith found herself in the arms of the church's minister, Reverend Sharon Dittmar. The minister's black robe enveloped them both. "When the hug seemed to go on a beat or two too long," Starita Smith later wrote, "it dawned on me that she was crying and leaning on me for support."

FIND OUT MORE

The story, "Rev. W.H.G. Carter and a Step Toward Racial Reconciliation" comes from an [article by David Whitford](#) in the May/June, 2002 edition of *UU World* online.

In 1995, the first post-apartheid South African government instituted a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. A [Wikipedia article](#) gives an overview of this large-scale attempt to facilitate national atonement and healing.

Accepting Responsibility for Wrongdoing: Jewish and Catholic Rituals

Find out more about [Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement](#), on the Judaism 101 website.

Learn about the [Catholic Sacrament of Penance and Sacrament of Reconciliation](#) on American Catholic.org, an award-winning Franciscan website.

Games for Unitarian Universalist Groups

The game, Human Knot, in Activity 2 comes from the online publication, "[Deep Fun,](#)" in the Leaders' Library of [www.uua.org](#). Deep Fun" also presents many additional games popular with Unitarian Universalist youth groups.

SESSION 16: RESILIENCY (HARD HAT)

INTRODUCTION

Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dancing. — Hebrew scripture (Exodus 15:20)

The hard hat symbolizes resiliency. In this session, there are opportunities to reflect about how we use our faith to help us bounce back from hard times. Discussion may include the challenges we face and the qualities of faith we can use when enduring difficult times. Allow time for participants to share bounce back strategies they have tried and strategies they want to try.

In Miriam, the sister of Moses, the session's central story presents a prophetic woman from Hebrew scripture, with a focus on her resiliency. Through challenges and setbacks, Miriam played an important role in her people's escape from slavery. As a girl, her actions helped to save the baby who would grow up to be the leader, Moses. As a woman, her leadership in celebration and gratitude inspired others along their journey into uncertainty in search of a better life. Emphasize that under stress and in difficult times, even prophetic women and men have had to take small steps to reach a larger benefit. As you explore Miriam's role in the Hebrew people's exodus from Egypt, encourage the children to find their own interpretations and wisdom in the classic stories.

As part of this session, the children will explore biblical text using a variety of different Bibles. Whenever sharing stories from scripture, be thoughtful and inclusive in how you present them. The biblical Exodus story attributes many key events to willful actions of God. It is likely that participants, their parents, and program co-leaders find biblical stories true or meaningful in a variety of individual ways. You may like to set a context before you begin. You might say:

The story we will hear today comes from Hebrew scripture and Jewish tradition. Hebrew scripture means the Torah, a book from thousands of years ago that tells the story of the Jewish people. Jesus came from the Jewish people, so faiths that follow the teachings of Jesus also share the faith heritage of Hebrew scripture.

Many stories in Hebrew scripture are about the Hebrew people's relationship with God. You might or might not believe in God, that is

something up to you. But, God is an important character in the story we will hear today.

Miriam's faith in God was a source for her resilience. Whether your faith is in God, in the Eternal with a different name, or in the human potential for goodness, faith can be a powerful source of resilience. It can help you bounce back.

Before the session, obtain the recorded music you want to use. See "Find Out More" for ideas and sources for the traditional song, "Hava Nagila"; the contemporary song, "Miriam and the Women"; and klezmer music.

Activity 3: Making Tambourines and Activity 4: Jewish Celebration in Song and Dance may be used in either order. You may wish to teach a song and dance first, and then have participants make tambourines and use them to sing and dance again. Or, bring tambourines for the group to use, and spend more time in song and dance together.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help deepen participants' Unitarian Universalist identity, ethical discernment and understanding of Unitarian Universalist faith through reflection and discussion
- Demonstrate how Unitarian Universalism is a faith that helps one find the endurance, perseverance, and hope to be resilient in the face of life's difficulties
- Convey the idea that Unitarian Universalism values a free and responsible search for truth and meaning (fourth Principle)
- Through the story of Miriam from Hebrew scripture, connect participants with one of the Sources of Unitarian Universalist faith: the words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love (second Source)
- Engage participants in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn to define resiliency as bouncing back from problems

- Hear the biblical story of a prophetic woman — Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron —whose resiliency helped her lead her people from slavery
- Explore the structure and language of the Bible by searching for chapters and verses in a variety of versions
- Experience a Jewish dance and song as embodiment of the joy that Miriam felt upon the release from slavery
- Reflect on their own experiences of resiliency, including opportunities and strategies for being resilient in their own lives
- Engage in the spiritual practices of chalice lighting, voicing of joys and concerns, and intentional discussion.

As an adult leader, your opinion may have more influence than those of participants. Therefore, your personal disclosure should not become part of the discussion unless participants ask you a question directly. In that case, be sure to preface your opinion by setting the context that each of us, adults and children, has different opinions, and yours is one among many. Then guide the conversation away from your own opinion and allow participants to reflect on their own thoughts.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Welcoming and Entering	
Opening	15
Activity 1: Bible Word Search	10
Activity 2: Story — Miriam: Sister, Prophet, Dancer	10
Activity 3: Making Tambourines	15
Activity 4: Jewish Celebration in Song and Dance	15
Activity 5: Council Circle	10
Faith In Action: Ideas	
Alternate Activity 1: Red Sea Name Game	5
Alternate Activity 2: Watch "The Prince of Egypt"	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Take a moment and let your body and mind settle. If you are comfortable doing so, spend a few moments in peaceful meditation. In preparation for this session, you may wish to reflect on times when you have had to be resilient in the face of life's difficulties and stress. How naturally resilient are you? Do you have to work at it? When do you wish you could have been more resilient? Where do you, or could you, find the strength or faith to bounce or bend when you need to?

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A variety of Bibles that include the first five books of Hebrew scripture: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, Finding Miriam in Hebrew Scripture
- Optional: Copies of Handout 1, Miriam Word Search Puzzle, and pencils, for all participants
- Optional: Tool of the Day — a hardhat

Preparation for Activity

- Set out the Bibles on a worktable.
- Using Leader Resource 1, Finding Miriam in Hebrew Scripture, list the Bible chapter and verse references to Miriam on newsprint, and post.
- Optional: Photocopy Handout 1, Miriam Word Search Puzzle, for all participants.
- Optional: Display the Tool of the Day where participants will see it when they enter.

Description of Activity

This section is intended for the time before the beginning of a session when participants arrive individually over a period of time (that is, "straggle in").

Welcome participants as they arrive. If you have displayed the Tool of the Day, invite them to speculate about what it is used for and how it might represent a tool of Unitarian Universalist faith.

Invite participants to explore the Bibles you have provided and to look for the passages you have listed on the newsprint. You will probably need to show children how to locate text by chapter and verse. After you have shown a few children, they can help one another. Ask them to read what they can about Miriam. Tell them the group will learn more about her during the session.

Optional: Provide copies of the handout, Miriam Word Search Puzzle, and pencils.

OPENING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice and candle or LED/battery-operated candle

- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Tool of the Day — a hardhat

Preparation for Activity

- Print the opening words on newsprint. Post the newsprint where the children will be able to see it when they gather in your Council Circle space.

Description of Activity

Life is sometimes difficult. We all need a "hardhat," or resiliency, to help us through. Participants will learn to define resiliency as bouncing back from problems.

Invite participants to sit in a circle in your Council Circle space. Light the chalice. Indicate where the opening words are posted for any children who are unfamiliar with them. Lead the group in reciting:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Introduce the Tool of the Day — a hard hat. You might ask, "What do you think makes this a Unitarian Universalist tool?" Allow participants to share ideas. Affirm that there truly is no one answer. You may say:

The hard hat represents resiliency. Resiliency means bouncing back from problems. Unitarian Universalism is a faith that values each person's search for meaning and search for truth. One of our Principles says that we value a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Among other things, this means finding out how to bounce back from the hard times. Everyone's hard times are different, and the ways people can get through hard times and bounce back afterward are also different. But for all of us, resiliency is a key part of growing in faith and deepening in religious understanding.

Tell the group, in your own words:

One Source of our faith is the "words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love." These prophetic women and men had to learn how to be resilient. One such story is about the prophet, Miriam, sister of Moses.

Ask participants what they already know about Moses and the story of the Exodus. Tell them that the Book of Exodus comes after the Book of Genesis and before the Book of Leviticus in Hebrew scripture.

Encourage participants to share what they may have discovered, if they had time to browse the Bibles before the session. Provide the context as needed; some may not know that the Israelites (Hebrews) were enslaved in Egypt for a number of generations.

ACTIVITY 1: BIBLE WORD SEARCH (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A variety of Bibles that include the first five books of Hebrew scripture: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, [Finding Miriam in Hebrew Scripture](#) (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Copies of Handout 1, [Miriam Word Search Puzzle](#) (included in this document), for all participants
- Pencils for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Print out and photocopy the word search handout for all participants.
- If you have not already done so for the Welcoming and Entering activity, use Leader Resource 1, Finding Miriam in Hebrew Scripture, to write the list of Bible chapter and verse references to Miriam on newsprint and post.
- Gather a variety of Bibles, such as the King James Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the Picture Bible (comic book version). You may wish to include some illustrated Bible stories about Miriam; find some suggestions in the Resources section. Set out the Bibles on a worktable.

Description of Activity

Participants will become familiar with Miriam, sister of Moses, in preparation for hearing a story focused on Miriam's resiliency. At the same time, the children will explore the structure of biblical text and discover variety among the translations as they search for specific passages in a variety of versions.

Distribute pencils and copies of Handout 1, Miriam Word Search Puzzle. Invite participants to try to complete the puzzle.

Indicate the bible passages you have listed on the newsprint. Ask participants to use the Bibles you have provided to find and read the references to Miriam.

Encourage participants to "prowl" through the Bibles, compare versions of Miriam's story, and see what they notice about the structure and language of the books. You will probably need to show children how to locate text by chapter and verse. After you have shown a few children, they can help one another.

During this activity, you can add a word search handout to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster, to represent resiliency. Or, wait and add a tambourine once the crafts are done.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — MIRIAM: SISTER, PROPHET, DANCER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Miriam: Sister, Prophet, Dancer](#)" (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the story. If you want to tell it dramatically, gather props you may like to use.

Description of Activity

Participants will hear a story about Miriam, a prophetic woman who faced difficult times with resiliency.

Gather participants to hear a story. To introduce the story, you might say:

As you can see from searching for the original mention of Miriam in the Bible, there isn't much to go on. Women's deeds aren't mentioned much in the Bible, probably because of the culture at that time. However, women's roles are often expanded in Jewish "midrash," a body of stories about the stories in the Bible. Some midrash stories date from ancient days. Jewish writers and scholars continue to provide midrash in modern times. From midrash, Bible scholarship, archaeology, and anthropology, we can create a story of what it might have been like to be with Miriam and her people.

Read or tell the story. Afterward, invite participants to share their reflections and initial thoughts about the story.

ACTIVITY 3: MAKING TAMBOURINES (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- **For Paper Plate and Jingle Bells Tambourines:** A stiff paper or plastic plate for each participant, jingle bells, curling ribbon, string or yard, a hole-puncher, and scissors
- **For Plastic Lid and Washers Tambourines:** A large, plastic, coffee can lid for each participant; pipe cleaners; large brass or steel washers, stickers, curling ribbon, a hole-puncher, and scissors
- Optional: Paint, paintbrushes, and newspaper to cover worktables

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how to combine this activity with Activity 4: Jewish Celebration in Song and Dance. For example, you can teach a dance, listen to a song while making tambourines, and then have participants use the tambourines to dance again.
- Set out the materials you need, on worktables.

Description of Activity

Miriam's symbol is the tambourine, or timbrel. Make one of these versions to accompany the dancing and as a reminder of resiliency. You may invite the children to paint their tambourines.

Paper Plate and Jingle Bells Tambourines

Punch holes all around a paper plate. Push the base of a jingle bell through some of the holes, stringing a piece of yarn through each and tying in place. You can also tie some jingle bells onto longer pieces of yarn, and secure the yarn to the paper plate. Tie on curling ribbon and curl with scissors.

Plastic Lid and Washers Tambourines

Punch holes around the plastic lid. String two or three steel or brass washers onto a pipe cleaner and twist one end. Insert the other end of the pipe cleaner through a hole in the plastic lid, and secure by twisting. Place decals or stickers on the tops of the lids.

ACTIVITY 4: JEWISH CELEBRATION IN SONG AND DANCE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Jewish dance music and appropriate media player

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, "[Hava Nagila](#)" (included in this document) and the Hora
- Optional: Tambourines, scarves, and kazoos for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Listen to the song "[Hava Nagila](#)" and other music you want to play for the group. Obtain the CDs, MP3s, or tapes you will need. Find sources for "Hava Nagila," "Miriam's Song," and klezmer music in "Find Out More."
- Print out the lyrics to the song(s) you want to teach. Find the lyrics to "Hava Nagila" on Leader Resource 2, "Hava Nagila" and the Hora. You may like to invite a congregational member to teach, lead, or musically accompany songs.
- If participants will learn to dance the hora, review the dance steps (Leader Resource 2). Watching a video clip of the dance (see "Find Out More") and practicing the steps will prepare you to teach the hora. You may wish to invite a congregational member to help you who has skills in teaching movement or dance.

Description of Activity

Jewish tradition combines piety, Torah study, and the duty to do God's mitzvot (commandments) with festive and joyous occasions celebrating the pleasures of being human. The story of Miriam provides a good example of how, through history, the Jewish people have expressed their resiliency in music. By dancing the hora — a simple, popular Jewish dance — participants embody the joy that Miriam felt upon the Hebrews' escape from Pharaoh's chariots and their release from slavery.

Teach the group the Hebrew words to "Hava Nagila" which they can sing while they dance the hora — and join in the spirit of rejoicing. You can just sing the first words of "Hava Nagila" and hum the rest of the song. Or, dance to a recorded version of the song, and invite participants to hum or sing along as they wish.

You can also teach the group the song, "Miriam and the Women," by Debbie Friedman. You can dance a hora to this song, too. The chorus words are:

And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song.
Sing a song to the One whom we've exalted.
Miriam and the women danced and danced
The whole night long.

Including All Participants

Movement-challenged participants can tap a tambourine in time to the music, or add other musical accompaniment, such as a shaker, a drum, or perhaps a “klezmer” kazoo (the wail of a clarinet in klezmer music might go very well with a kazoo!)

ACTIVITY 5: COUNCIL CIRCLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Tool of the Day — a hard hat
- Chalice and candle
- Safety matches and long fireplace matches
- Small dish for spent matches
- Candle snuffer
- Council candles (a tea light or votive candle for each participant, or some to share if group is very large)
- One tea light or votive candle of a different color
- Tray to hold council candles (preferably lined with sand)
- Woolen or other non-flammable blanket for smothering flames in case of emergency
- Optional: Glass bowl, water, and polished pebbles (for all participants, plus one extra) for alternative to council candles in tray
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Optional: Toolbox of Our Faith poster, a sheet of paper with the word, “atonement” and its definition (see Welcoming and Entering, or Opening), and clear tape or glue

Preparation for Activity

- Choose closing song(s), chant(s), or reading(s) from options provided under “Description of Activity” or from those regularly used in your congregation. As needed, write the words on newsprint, and post. Co-leaders may wish to use the same closing ritual for each Toolbox of Faith session.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Prepare the chalice and lighter or matches for the Reflection. Prepare the tray of council

candles, matches, safety measures, etc. for the Sharing of Joys and Concerns. Place items you will need in the center of the Council Circle.

- Decide how to introduce fire safety and emergency procedures to the group. Have needed safety materials nearby.
- Optional: Instead of using a tray of council candles for sharing, you can fill a glass bowl with water. Place polished pebbles next to the bowl. Ask children to come and drop a pebble in the water as they share. Or, you can have a floating council candle tray. Use a large glass vessel filled with water to hold floating tea lights or votive candles.

Description of Activity

Each session closes with a Council Circle. The goal of the Council Circle is to share our stories, listen to each other, and grow in faith together. Listening to each other is a religious act. The Council Circle includes three rituals: Reflection, Sharing of Joys and Concerns, and a Closing.

Reflection

Gather the group in the Council Circle. Light the chalice. Offer words spoken routinely in your congregational worship, or these:

We are Unitarian Universalists
with minds that think,
hearts that love,
and hands that are ready to serve.

Invite participants to reflect about the story of this session as they pass the Tool of the Day as a talking stick. You might offer this summary and these questions:

Miriam's baby brother faced execution. She bounced back from this horror with quick thinking about how to save him. Later, her people faced recapture by Pharaohs' soldiers at the shore of the Red Sea. Upon their escape across the water, she proved her resiliency by initiating a dance to celebrate. And later, Miriam was stricken with a skin disease after she questioned her brother's standing and power. She endured and returned to her people, cured.

Have there been difficult times when you have been able to bounce back? How?

What ways of being resilient might you like to try that you haven't tried yet?

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

After discussion has closed, invite participants to share important things in their lives. What they share may or may not be related to the session topic and discussion.

Invite participants to light a council candle from the chalice flame as they share. If there are not enough candles, it is OK to snuff out and re-light a candle. Save the candle of a different color for last. When all who want to share joys and concerns have done so, light this candle with the words, "For all the joys and concerns that remain unspoken."

If you are using a glass bowl, water, and stones instead of council candles, invite participants to drop a stone into the bowl when they share. End the sharing by adding one, last stone for unspoken joys and concerns.

Closing

Extinguish the council candles. Gather participants around the chalice; if it has been extinguished, re-light it.

Close with an element (meditation, benediction, song) commonly used in your congregational worship, or use one or more of the suggestions below. Base your choice(s) on the needs and energy level of your group. With your co-leaders, you may elect to use the same ritual to close every session.

Share this reading from W Mitchell. You may tell the group that W. Mitchell is a man who uses a wheelchair and travels around giving talks about resiliency. He is scarred with burns over more than half his body and paralyzed, from two separate incidents, a motorcycle accident and an airplane crash. This comes from his essay, "The 9,000 Things":

My body used to be a prison... The stubs of my fingers, my burned skin — my outward appearance used to be a prison that kept me confined to the world inside myself.

But now, my body and my wheelchair form the platform that supports me. They are the vehicles that have helped me grow beyond myself and travel the world, helping others. I've learned that our bodies are just a thin veneer that can never hide the remarkable gifts that live inside each and every one of us. And I've also learned that even if you can't do some of the things you used to do, there are always 9,000 things you can do.

A. Lead the group in singing "Meditation on Breathing," Hymn 1009 in *Singing the Journey: A Hymnbook Supplement to Singing the Living Tradition*. Hear the simple tune [online](#).

B. Have the group read in unison Reading 452 by Marjorie Montgomery in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

Life is a gift for which we are grateful.

We gather in community to celebrate
the glories
and mysteries
of this great gift.

C. Sing or say the words to "From You I Receive," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. Teach the group the accompanying movements.

From you I receive Scoop the air by reaching toward other participants, then bringing air toward yourself at chest level, that is, receiving it.

To you I give Opposite from above — scoop the air at chest level and push it outward to "give" to other participants.

Together we share All grasp hands.

By this we live Make fist of strength with each hand and stack one hand on top of the other at belly button level.

D. Go around the circle — using the Tool of the Day as a talking stick again, if you like —and invite each participant to say one thing they will do this week that relates to resiliency. A higher-energy version of the above could involve the group repeating back, chant-style, the statement of each participant, and adding, "Go out into the world and be resilient!"

E. Sing a familiar song. Suggestions: "Thula Klizeo," Hymn 1056 in *Singing the Journey*; "I Know This Rose Will Open," Hymn 402 in *Singing the Living Tradition*; or "Rejoice in Love," Hymn 380 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

F. Use this team spirit chant, "Pump It Up!"

Leader: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Group: Pump, pump, pump it up!

Leader: Pump that UU spirit up!

Group: Pump that UU spirit up!

Instead of "Pump it up!" you may use "Fire it up!" or "Keep it up!"

Pass the Tool of the Day around the circle and invite participants, one at a time, to voice a way they plan to use the quality of faith that was explored today. Guide them to say:

With my (quality of faith, e.g., resiliency), I will...

Lead the group in responding to each participant's contribution:

Group: Go, UU, go!

If you have not yet done so, invite a participant to tape a picture of a hardhat (or a paper tambourine) to the Toolbox of Our Faith poster. Write "Resiliency" on the poster.

Extinguish the chalice. Distribute Taking It Home handouts. Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: IDEAS

Description of Activity

Resiliency around Us

In local, national, or international events or history, find specific examples of an individual or a community being resilient. Bring these to the group to explore and discuss. Examples might be individuals who have relocated or are rebuilding their homes after the Gulf Coast hurricanes, Katrina and Rita, or political refugees from other countries who may have settled in your community. Help children examine how and speculate about why the people you've chosen are resilient. What strategies do the people use to act with resilience? Does faith help power the people's resiliency? Faith in whom, or faith in what?

Encourage the group to think of ways they could affirm or support another person or community in their resiliency. Make a plan to do one or more of the actions the group suggests.

Resiliency through Celebration in Jewish Tradition

Extend the group's encounter with Miriam's resiliency into an experience of contemporary Jewish celebration. If it is the time of year for Purim (usually in March), celebrate with a Jewish congregation in your area and learn about another resilient woman from Hebrew scripture, Queen Esther. Or, you may be able to attend a klezmer concert in your area.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Reflect on these questions and discuss them with your co-leaders:

- How do we feel about today's session?
- What parts of the session worked well?
- What can we learn from the experience of this session?
- What preparations do we need to make for the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dancing. — Hebrew scripture (Exodus 15:20)

IN TODAY'S SESSION. . .

Today, we used a hardhat to symbolize the quality of resiliency. The children talked about how we bounce back from hard times, including the difficulty in enduring challenging times and how resiliency helps us. We allowed time for participants to share bounce-back strategies they have tried and strategies they want to try. We emphasized that under stress and in difficult times, even prophetic women and men had to take small steps to reach a larger benefit. We explored Miriam, the resilient prophet in Hebrew scripture who was the sister of Moses, in biblical text and in a shared story, to encourage Unitarian Universalist children to seek their own interpretations and wisdom from classic stories.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about. . .

Miriam's baby brother faced execution. She bounced back from this horror with quick thinking about how to save him. Later, her people faced recapture by Pharaoh's chariots and soldiers at the border of the Red Sea. Upon their escape across the water, she demonstrated her resiliency by initiating a dance of celebration upon their rescue.

Ask your child to tell you about Miriam's resiliency. Invite everyone in the family to share their answers to these questions:

- Have there been difficult times when you have been able to bounce back? How?
- What ways of being resilient might you like to try that you have not tried yet?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A FAMILY GAME

The story of Miriam has many variations. Read together a few different children's books about Miriam, Moses, and the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt. Or, have each family member read a different version. Then, compare the versions you have read.

In many versions, Miriam plays a minor role, with Moses the "star" of the story. Miriam is the protagonist in the picture book, *Miriam and Her Brother Moses: A Bible Story*, retold and illustrated by Jean Marzollo (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2003). The book includes some cute questions and answers, in the voice of a little fish, which run along the bottom of every page.

In *Miriam's Cup: A Passover Story*, written by Fran Manushkin and illustrated by Bob Dacey (New York: Scholastic Press, 1998), a modern little girl named Miriam hears the story of Passover, and Miriam's role. Her mother tells how Miriam foretold Moses' birth to lead their people to freedom, helped ensure Moses' safety as he floated along in a basket, and later led a singing celebration of freedom and was considered responsible for a well of clear spring water that followed the Hebrews through their wanderings in the desert. The author cites Hebrew scripture as well as Jewish commentary, legend, and tradition and includes (on the book jacket) the music and lyrics to "Miriam's Song," by composer Debbie Friedman.

For another version, watch the 1998 animated DreamWorks film, *The Prince of Egypt*. Before you do, you may like to read a [sermon by Rabbi Barry H. Block](#), given January 15, 1999. He illuminates the difference between the actual text of Hebrew scripture (the Torah) and the layers of stories upon stories that make up midrash, added to tradition by subsequent generations. As midrash stories often amplify the voices of the women mentioned in the Bible, in *The Prince of Egypt* both Moses' sister, Miriam, and his wife, Zipporah, play significant roles.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Adults and older children in your family may like to take a ["Resiliency Quiz" online](#) and read about ways to help oneself or another become more resilient. The Resiliency in Action website of Nancy Henderson, MSW offers insights into the qualities that help people bounce back from a significant trauma or crisis. One of these qualities is patience.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: RED SEA NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A variety of Bibles that include the first five books of Hebrew scripture: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

Description of Activity

Sit in a circle with participants, and pass Bibles around. Invite participants to browse the Bible for a noun that begins with the same letter as their name. A child named Carl might choose "camel," and Angie might find "angels."

Once all have had a chance to find a noun, the first person says, "My name is Angie and I crossed the Red Sea with angels." The next person introduces Angie and him/herself, saying "This is Angie, who crossed the Red Sea with angels, and I am Carl and I crossed the Red

Sea with a camel." The third person introduces Angie and Carl and adds what he/she crossed the Red Sea with; for example, "This is Angie, who went with angels. This is Carl, who carried a camel, and I am Travis and I crossed the Red Sea with a tent." The introductions go around the circle with each person repeating all the other names and the items from the Bible before adding their own. Finally, ask the person who went first to repeat everyone's name and item from the beginning.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: WATCH "THE PRINCE OF EGYPT" (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- DVD or video of the 1998 DreamWorks animated film, *The Prince of Egypt*, and a media player and monitor

Preparation for Activity

- Preview the film and select a few excerpts that portray Miriam.
- Optional: Read a [sermon by Rabbi Barry H. Block](#), given January 15, 1999, that analyzes Miriam's role as portrayed in *The Prince of Egypt*.
- Obtain the equipment you need and make sure you know how to play, pause, and fast forward.

Description of Activity

The children will watch pertinent excerpts from the animated film, *The Prince of Egypt*, to enrich their understanding of Miriam's role in the Exodus story and her resiliency as a quality of her faith.

This activity also helps you guide the children to notice embellishments and interpretations that later generations continue to layer onto the stories of ancient scripture. After showing an excerpt that features Miriam, pause the film and ask participants to identify the differences between this version of the story and others they have read or heard.

In the Jewish faith, stories about biblical stories are called "midrash." Rabbi Barry H. Block has this to say about the film and its portrayal of women in the story:

One of the most important functions of modern Midrash is to find and hear the voices of women, too often silent in the Bible and in ancient interpretations. In *The Prince of Egypt*, both Moses' sister, Miriam, and his wife, Zipporah, play more significant roles than they do in the Torah... *The Prince of Egypt* offers us a Miriam who remains consistently active.

STORY: MIRIAM: SISTER, PROPHET, DANCER

This story is based on references to Miriam in Hebrew scripture.

Read or tell the story.

It is said that for many years, the Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt. A slave works hard for no pay. A slave is not allowed to say or do what they want. A slave is a person, owned by someone else.

In Egypt, a young Hebrew girl named Miriam was a slave. Her mother, father, and brother were all slaves, too. The Hebrews were not happy being slaves, but they did not have a plan to change their situation. It did not seem possible. But, escaping from slavery was possible. It would happen soon, and Miriam's family would be right in the middle of it.

The Egyptian king, the Pharaoh, was getting worried about the Hebrew slaves. He needed their hard work as builders and farmers, to do things for the Egyptian people, working for free. He was afraid the Hebrews might try to escape. He was especially worried about the young Hebrew boys. Soon enough, they would grow up to be strong men who could fight for their people's freedom.

The Pharaoh made a rule that the Hebrew boy babies must be killed. He sent Egyptian soldiers to the slaves' small homes near the river, to take their boy babies away from them.

Around this time, Miriam's mother gave birth to a baby boy. Miriam's mother was very frightened, and of course she wanted to protect her son. She wove a basket out of some grasses, placed the baby carefully inside it, and sent the basket floating down the river. Maybe someone kind, an Egyptian, would find the basket, discover the baby, and take him into their home where he would be safe. It was hard to let her little baby go, but it seemed like the only way to save his life.

Miriam was frightened, too, seeing her mother do this. She watched as her little baby brother floated along, his basket hidden by the long reeds that poked above the water. Miriam tried to act as if nothing was wrong, nothing strange. If an Egyptian soldier walked by and glanced at her, she just looked down and kept silent, as a slave girl was supposed to do.

Miriam saw some women in the water, up ahead, washing their clothes. Her brother's basket was floating right toward them. Miriam crept closer. She saw it was Pharaoh's daughter, with her maids. Miriam held her breath in fear, as the women noticed the basket.

"Look, a baby!"

"How lovingly someone has wrapped the baby!"

"This must be a little Hebrew boy!"

Miriam was sure Pharaoh's daughter would pick up her brother and deliver him to the Egyptian soldiers to be killed. But, that is not what happened.

"What a beautiful baby!" Pharaoh's daughter cried. Her voice was full of compassion, and defiance. "I'll raise him myself, as a prince of Egypt."

"Your father will be angry," one of her maids said.

"All the Hebrew baby boys are supposed to be killed," said another.

"I don't care," said Pharaoh's daughter, and she picked up Miriam's brother and held him in her arms.

Miriam had a brave idea. She stepped toward the Egyptian women. "I can find a Hebrew woman to take care of this baby for you," she said. Of course, she was thinking of her own mother!

Pharaoh's daughter thought Miriam's idea was a good one. She sent Miriam to get a Hebrew nursemaid for the baby, and Miriam ran to get her own mother. That is how Miriam's brother survived Pharaoh's terrible rule, and got to live with his own family, at least for a little while.

When Miriam's brother was beginning to walk and talk, Pharaoh's daughter took him back again. She named him Moses and he grew up in Pharaoh's palace, as an Egyptian prince. Miriam, too was growing up. She would see her brother, from time to time. She believed he remembered her. She believed he knew he was really a Hebrew, but she was not really sure.

Miriam's family lost track of Moses for some years. Moses had killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave. Then he ran away from Egypt, became a shepherd, and got married. One day Moses saw a bush on fire, which he understood to bring a message from the God of the Hebrew people. The message let Moses know that he was not an Egyptian prince, but a Hebrew whose family were all slaves. A Hebrew with a special duty to return to Egypt, and lead the Hebrew people out of slavery, to a new land where they would be free.

Moses returned to Egypt. His adopted grandfather, the old Pharaoh, had died. Moses asked the new Pharaoh for the Hebrews' freedom, but the Pharaoh refused. Moses asked again and again, and the Pharaoh still refused. Then a series of disasters occurred. A disease killed the Egyptians' cattle. Frogs rained down from the

sky. Swarms of locusts ate the Egyptian's crops. Finally Pharaoh changed his mind. He wanted the Hebrews gone.

Miriam and her family rushed to pack. They hurried to leave before the Pharaoh changed his mind again. Sure enough, as they gathered their belongings, the Pharaoh did change his mind. The Hebrews left Egypt, the children, the women and the men, with the Egyptian soldiers in pursuit.

Miriam had helped to rescue her brother when he was a baby. Now, with her brothers Moses and Aaron, she would help to rescue the Hebrew people and other slaves from their hard life in Egypt. At this moment of great fear, she had faith that the Hebrews would escape. With Moses and Aaron, she led the others, keeping steps ahead of the Egyptians. When they came to a large sea, the Red Sea, the Hebrews bravely crossed the water, finding to their great surprise a dry path through it. As the Egyptians came after them, the dry path became covered in water, and the Egyptians could not reach the Hebrews on the other side.

Miriam's people would face many hard years of wandering before they found a land where they could settle down and build their community in freedom. There would be more challenges ahead. But, they kept believing that they would find a new home, and from each disaster, they bounced back.

After the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea, leaving Egypt and slavery forever, Miriam lifted a tambourine high in the air and led the people in a song and a dance. Yes, an uncertain road lay ahead, and terrible things behind. But there was great joy to feel now, and deep gratitude to express.

HANDOUT 1: MIRIAM WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Circle the words that are related to the biblical prophet, Miriam. Words may run up, down, sideways or diagonally.

N	S	O	E	M	A	M	K	K	Z	R	T	T	F	V	A	B	N	T	T
B	U	S	A	Z	I	U	L	H	O	X	B	E	G	Y	A	T	G	O	D
R	I	N	E	O	M	G	N	U	T	A	U	G	K	B	R	L	D	J	H
I	N	B	G	C	I	A	X	I	S	C	C	Y	Y	Y	O	V	E	E	D
A	B	Y	L	V	N	N	I	K	M	S	N	P	L	X	N	P	W	L	N
F	V	L	J	E	Y	I	E	X	R	L	L	T	I	A	A	H	Z	U	A
S	U	D	O	X	E	T	R	A	W	B	K	W	J	S	A	B	H	D	L
P	C	P	T	K	W	R	B	P	A	E	L	A	F	Y	H	G	M	A	D
A	X	O	Y	P	E	M	K	Q	F	E	C	A	P	W	O	A	X	U	E
V	D	P	H	A	R	O	A	H	R	M	W	Y	J	W	I	X	F	Q	S
E	X	J	S	P	B	H	H	B	Y	O	P	O	Q	R	P	R	K	H	I
S	C	T	S	I	E	D	M	L	U	S	T	Y	I	W	L	F	O	X	M
A	U	T	T	Y	H	I	S	A	D	E	S	M	L	T	J	Z	H	N	O
M	U	G	N	Z	T	L	C	W	P	S	S	F	C	K	F	E	X	D	R
F	V	M	I	C	Y	F	I	Y	C	V	R	P	G	J	A	V	G	Q	P

- AARON
- BABY
- BASKET
- BIBLE
- EGYPT
- EXODUS
- HEBREW
- MANNA
- MIRIAM
- MOSES
- PHAROAH
- PROMISED LAND
- PRINCESS
- TIMBREL
- YAHWEH

LEADER RESOURCE 1: FINDING MIRIAM IN HEBREW SCRIPTURE

List the book, chapter, and verse for these bible references to Miriam on newsprint and post.

**Book and
Chapter:
Verse(s)**

Description

Exodus 2:1-10 Moses in the bulrushes. While Moses in his basket floats on the river, Miriam watches from a hiding place to see that the baby is safe (Exodus 2:4). Miriam sees the Pharaoh's daughter take Moses. She offers to find a Hebrew woman (having in mind their own mother) to take care of Moses for Pharaoh's daughter until he is older (Ex. 2:7-9).

Exodus 15:20-21 Miriam's victory song. Miriam led the women of Israel in a song and dance of celebration after the Pharaoh's men were drowned in the Red Sea (Ex. 15:20-21).

Numbers 12:1-12 Miriam complains about Moses' choice of a wife from another tribe, and then speaks out that Moses does not have a monopoly on conversations with God. Then she is stricken with *tzaaris*, or leprosy (Num. 12:10). When Aaron pleads on her behalf, she is cured (Num. 12:11).

Numbers 20:1 Miriam dies in the desert before the people reach the Promised Land.

Micah 6:4 Miriam, with her brothers Moses and Aaron, is named as one of the leaders of the exodus.

In Jewish *midrash* (post-biblical interpretations and embellishments of stories in Hebrew Scripture), Miriam is said to be the ancestor of other creative geniuses in Israel's history: Bezalel, the architect of the *mishkan* (the portable sanctuary used in the desert) (Ex. 31:1-3) and King David.

According to Jewish tradition, because of Miriam's righteousness, a well followed the people through the desert throughout their wanderings, and that well remained with them until the day of Miriam's death.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: HAVA NAGILA AND THE HORA

The song "Hava Nagila" and the simple dance called the hora are common at traditional Jewish weddings, bar and bat mitzvah celebrations, and other festive occasions.

Sing "Hava Nagila"

Learn how to pronounce the Hebrew words. Teach the song by singing each line, one at a time, and having participants repeat it. (Note: "CH" is pronounced as in "LOCH.")

Transcripted Hebrew	Translation
Hava nagila,	Let's rejoice,
Hava nagila,	"
Hava nagila venismecha.	Let's rejoice and be happy.
Hava neranena,	Let's sing,
Hava neranena,	"
Hava neranena venismecha.	Sing and be happy.
Uru, uru achim!	Awake, awake, brothers!
Uru achim b'lev sa-me-ach.	Awake, brothers, with a happy heart.
Uru achim b'lev sa-me-ach.	"
Uru achim b'lev sa-me-ach.	"
Uru achim b'lev sa-me-ach.	"
Uru achim! Uru achim!	Awake, brothers! Awake, brothers!
B'lev sa-me-ach.	With a happy heart.

Dance the Hora

Teach the movements without music and repeat several times. Once everyone has had a chance to try the steps, start the music.

Form a circle, and all hold hands.

On "Hava nagila...," step to the side, passing your left foot behind your right.

Move the right foot beside the left foot.

Step to the side again, passing your left foot in front of your right this time. Continue rotating the circle with these steps, adding a little hop to your steps as you go faster.

On "Uru, uru achim!" move toward the center of the circle and throw your hands up in the air, still holding to the hands of the people beside you.

Once together in the center, when you throw your hands in the air let out a yip, or beat the tambourines.

Lower your hands, move backward, and resume moving the circle around together.

FIND OUT MORE

"Hava Nagila" and the Hora

The song, "Hava Nagila," and the dance, the hora, are common at Jewish wedding receptions and other celebrations. Often played in the klezmer style of music, which originated among Jews of Eastern Europe, "Hava Nagila" also appears across musical genres including surf rock, punk rock, and Caribbean music. Tapes and/or CDs including this song are usually available from a public library.

You can [hear "Hava Nagila,"](#) read a bit of its history, and see sheet music and transliterated Hebrew lyrics online. On another website, [hear Harry Belafonte](#) sing "Hava Nagila." Hear "Hava Nagila" and see a group of people dancing a hora on the YouTube website ("[Israeli Dance Hava Nagila](#)")

"Miriam's Song"

The chorus to "Miriam's Song" by composer Debbie Friedman begins with these words:

And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song

Find the [complete lyrics](#) and [hear "Miriam's Song"](#) online, on the [Ritualwell.org](#) website.

Klezmer and Other Jewish Music

Originating during the Jewish diaspora in Eastern Europe, klezmer was the traditional music played for dancing at weddings and other celebrations. Modern klezmer music is characterized by violin, flute, clarinet and percussion blended with a certain amount of dissonant tones and minor chords.

Hear clips of the band, [Dobe Ressler and Di Bostoner Klezmer](#) online. Another band is the award-winning Klezmatics. There is good dance music on most of their releases. The track, "Makht Oyf (Open Up)," on the CD, *Rise Up*, is features a bit of silliness with pops, squeaks and repetitions which would appeal to children. Another fast tune on that CD is "Kats Un Moyz (Cat and Mouse)."

The *Fiddler on the Roof* soundtrack might be another source for Jewish dance music, particularly the song "L'Chaim (To Life!)" or the wedding music.

Assess Your Own Resiliency

On the [Resiliency in Action](#) website, take a quiz to assess the resiliency-building conditions present in your life. From the website:

Resiliency is the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity. An increasing body of research from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology is showing that most people—including young people—can bounce back from risks, stress, crises, and trauma and experience life success.

Our favorite definition of resiliency, in fact, was given by a 15-year-old high school student who, after a semester of resiliency training, described resiliency as "Bouncing back from problems and stuff with more power and more smarts."

The Prince of Egypt — the Movie

A 1998 animated DreamWorks film, *The Prince of Egypt*, tells the Biblical story of Moses and the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt. In a sermon given January 15, 1999, Rabbi Barry H. Block analyzes the film's version of the story, including its portrayal of Miriam and other women. Read [Rabbi Block's sermon](#) on his website.

Miriam the Prophet

The website, [Judaism 101](#), offers concise descriptions of the siblings [Miriam, Aaron and Moses](#), based on information about them in Hebrew scripture and a variety of sometimes contradictory stories that have been added since.

Online, watch a *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly* (PBS) episode from April 11, 2003. Reporter Kim Lawton visited a [feminist Passover seder](#), where particular attention was paid to Miriam's role in the Exodus story. You will also hear a bit of the Debbie Friedman song, "Miriam and the Women." Here is an excerpt from the segment transcript:

Rabbi Joy Levitt: She [Miriam] was a source of great energy, power, comfort, and nourishment to the Israelites as they made their way out of Egypt.

Kim Lawton: In the traditional Seder, there is a cup of wine for the Prophet Elijah, who many Jews believe will herald the Messianic Age. In this meal, there's also Miriam's Cup, which is filled with water.

Rabbi Levitt: I like to think of Elijah's cup as the cup that symbolizes the future, whereas I think Miriam's cup really symbolizes the present. We wait for Elijah, but we work with Miriam.

Kim Lawton: According to the Bible story, Miriam celebrated the exodus from Egypt with singing, dancing, and tambourine playing — a hallmark of every feminist Seder.

W Mitchell

"It's not what happens to you. It's what you do about it."
That is the message of [W Mitchell](#), an inspirational speaker. Mitchell had a motorcycle accident that left him burned over 65% of his body, including his face and fingers. After four years of recovery, he was in a plane crash and became paralyzed from the waist down. Visit his website to learn more and find quotations from him. You may wish to start with [a newspaper article](#) about a 2002 presentation he gave at a Santa Barbara, California, school.